Canadian Literature / Littérature *canadienne*

A Quarterly of Criticism and Review
Number 205, Summer 2010, Queerly Canadian
Guest Edited by Janice Stewart and Laura Moss
Published by The University of British Columbia, Vancouver
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Articles, *continued*

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GST R108161779

Publication of *Canadian Literature* is assisted by The University of British Columbia, the Faculty of Arts (UBC), and SSHRCC. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP) toward our mailing costs, and through the Canada Magazine Fund toward web enhancement and promotional costs.

Canada

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

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: $52.50 INDIVIDUAL; $105 INSTITUTIONAL, GST INCLUDED. OUTSIDE CANADA: US $80 INDIVIDUAL; US $130 INSTITUTIONAL.

ISSN 0008-4360

Managing Editor: Donna Chin
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Illustrations: George Kuthan
Printing: Hignell Printing Limited
Typefaces: Minion and Univers
Paper: recycled and acid-free

Editorial

Queerly Canadian: Introduction

Janice Stewart

> Politics exists because those who have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account, setting up a community by placing in common a wrong that is nothing more than this very confrontation, the contradiction of two worlds in a single world: the world where they are and the world where they are not, the world where there is something 'between' and those who do not acknowledge them as speaking beings who count and the world where there is nothing.
> — Rancière 27

> How will we go about dismantling our desire to read the alien? How will we disrupt our desire to be seduced by that which does not seek to seduce in the first place?
> — Goto 268

In June 2009 the University of British Columbia's interdisciplinary program "Critical Studies in Sexuality" celebrated the life and work of writer Jane Rule with a conference entitled "Queerly Canadian: Changing Narratives." We might say that Jane Rule exemplifies, in her singularity, those precise tensions and complexities of identification that come together in our organizing idea: *Queerly Canadian*. Jane Rule chose Canada (see Shilling). Born in New Jersey, she moved to British Columbia in 1956 and made Canada her home. Eight years later, *Desert of the Heart* was published, a novel that made visible same-sex desire with a surprise ending of happiness rather than the more genre-normative motifs of death or punishment. The positive representation of same-sex desire was unprecedented in Canadian fiction. Indeed, the distinctiveness of the novel was so conspicuous, that, for a time, Rule felt the media portrayed her as "the only lesbian in Canada" ("Jane Rule: B.C. Novelist"). Rule's extensive body of creative work

(11 volumes) continues to impress, offend, and astound readers both nationally and internationally. As *The London Times* reported in her obituary, "her novels remain an incisive quietly outlandish view of postwar Canada." Exploring the boundaries of sexuality and the limits of desire and human relationships, Rule contributed significantly to a Canadian nationalist framework—a contribution recognized by her induction into the Order of Canada in 2007. A fierce advocate for gay rights and community acceptance, Rule was very much a public intellectual who tackled some of the most significant issues related to the academic treatment and public discussion of sexuality, marriage, censorship, insisting that Canadians consider their public obligations to multiple and diverse communities. In a long and arduous fight with Canada Customs, Rule fought passionately against censorship and for the rights of Canadians to be able to choose what they read. At the same time Rule, in an article for *BC Bookworld*, equally fiercely opposed gay marriage stating, "to be forced back into heterosexual cage of couple-dom is not a step forward but a step back into state-imposed definitions of relationship."

The "Queerly Canadian" conference foregrounded an interdisciplinary body of scholarship that critically rethinks modernist discourses located at the nexus of Canadian nationalism and critical considerations of sexualities and genders in their multiple configurations. The papers featured in this special issue further offer a deeper and fuller understanding of the relationships amongst language, thought, and actions in the construction and contestation of the amorphous and plural, and historically and geographically disjunctive categories at issue here, including sex and nation. Rather than framing arguments that stop thinking and promote notions of coherent cooperation, these post-identitarian queer theorists question the rhetorics of pigeonholed identity and initiate an engagement with complexity and intersectionality.

Two landmark works that were particularly influential to the conference organizing committee in thinking about key themes and their various intersections were Terry Goldie's *Pink Snow* (2003), and Richard Cavell and Peter Dickinson's *Sexing the Maple* (2006). Goldie's *Pink Snow* entices the reader to engage with canonical Canadian texts from a queer perspective as Goldie rethinks Canadian classics at the borders of national discourses in order to redefine perceptions of Canadian culture. Playing with the trope of snow as a major international identifier of Canada, Goldie challenges this iconic image with a playful merging with queerness: "snow is very important, especially when it is pink" (2). *Sexing the Maple* likewise provides a reconsideration of the Canadian literary landscape that insists that sexuality matters. Cavell and

Dickinson explore national ideology at the varied intersections of sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity (and other key axes of difference) across an extraordinary range of Canadian literary, theoretical, and historical texts. The essays in this issue further complicate notions of sexuality, gender, place, and space in relation to national discourses that engage critically with the multiple meanings of *Canadian*.

Whereas it would not be possible in this brief introduction to provide an exhaustive overview of our key terms—queer and Canadian—suffice to say that in its adjectival and adverbial forms, *Queerly* in conjunction with *Canadian* produces a provocative and recombinant referent that is characterized by what could appear *ad initio* to be a fundamentally contradictory and politically ambivalent assemblage. *Queerly Canadian* oscillates around signifiers both of uniqueness and of seriality held in an inexorable, inextricable, and productive tension that has been the scholarly focus for virtually all of the academic work conducted within the rubric of "queer theory."

One could say that a key point of reasoning in queer theory, in Foucault's work in particular, is an emphatic insistence on an intellectually sophisticated and careful consideration of the particularity of relationality and related historical and geopolitical disjunctures. As Pollman argues, "The experience of self-sameness is thus never unmediated . . . ; it operates through a system of signs and recognitions that intrudes alterity into the heart of identity." Pollman notes further, concerning national identification, that "the passport proves uniqueness by reference to a series." In other words, "identification is the detour through the other that defines a self." And so we might conclude then, that "in theory" scholars have articulated *Queerly Canadian* in terms of particular documentary (and other systemic) modes and practices of legibility, visibility, and recognition that as an assemblage, constitute the mechanisms by means of which identification is simultaneously emancipatory and assimilationist.

It is commonplace today to encounter interdisciplinary discussions of the mediated, mobile, and hybrid subject framed by discourses of cosmopolitanism. For the sake of an economy of argument, we might simply say here that, as Jean-François Lyotard so aptly argued, it is in an anti-mythologising manner in the modality of pedagogical object lesson: "we must work through the loss of the modern we" (319). Discourses of nationalism work by means of the instantiation of seemingly stable attributes and characteristics that can function as essentializing, and therefore as limiting, modes of positionality. Relative to discourses of nationality, Benedict Anderson problematizes the

logics of "bounded seriality" that have organized modernist discourses of national identifications both in official practices and artifacts of governmentality and their quotidian counterparts. The by-now classic Molson's beer advertisement, "I am Canadian" works by making reference to a set of familiar images (e.g., the beaver, the maple leaf) that permit the narrator's legitimation and recognition as properly belonging to a population bound together by visible tokens of nationalist iconography. It is, then, as a purpose-built grammatical agent of disruption that the conjunction of *Queerly + Canadian* is here invoked so as to disrupt such essentialist or bounded notions of what it might mean to invoke the identification of either a modality of sexuality (queer) or of nationality (Canadian).

Nancy Kang's article "Ecstasies of the (Un)Loved" provides a fabulously complex reading of Hiromi Goto's *The Kappa Child*. Kang's work charts the multiple lines of confabulation in Goto's work that articulate a queerly Canadian *mise en scène* that engages multiple identificatory narrative tropes including desexualized Asian identities and violence in immigrant family narratives. Kang charts Goto's novel mapping of immigrant experiences to reconsider sexual frontiers and the ways these discourses function transnationally. Adroitly, Kang insists upon the reader's reexamination of national tropes to allow for the ways in which Goto's characters challenge stereotypical readings of Asian Canadian identities in hopes of allowing "new places and spaces for negotiating twenty-first century Canadian identity."

Susan Billingham's "Écriture au Trans-féminine: Trish Salah's *Wanting in Arabic*" engages critically with existing theoretical boundaries to make legible a space for trans women's voices and bodies. Billingham's provocative article challenges readers to take up and participate in "liberatory gendered discourse" and to explore the complicated underpinnings of the normalizing discourse of "woman." In her innovative reading of Salah's poetry, Billingham is able to reconsider identification as neither essential nor eternal but fluid and changing.

Marni Stanley, in "Drawn Out: Identity Politics and the Queer Comics of Leanne Franson and Ariel Schrag," explores the complexity of female queer identity formation in the "highly heteronormative and male-biased" genre of comics. Stanley examines the characters in the comics to comment on the ways that identity offers characters place and space while highlighting the normative injunctions that inflect their own alienation. By pointing to the challenges of normalizing pressures in queer subcultures, Stanley pushes the reading of these comics to demonstrate the multiple and non-self-identical

layers and potential of sexuality and human desire. Stanley, like Franson and Schrag, questions rigid and deterministic social and sexual hierarchies in favour of a celebration of difference.

L. Chris Fox's "The Paradise Alms House: Siting Literary Thirdspace in Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*" explores literary thirdspace with an aim to articulate the impossibility of cultural, ethical, and sexual homogenizations. Fox provides a reading of Bhabha, Derrida, and Fanon that reconsiders the limits of a celebrated hybridity to yield a more nuanced reconsideration of relational hybridity. Through an integration of past and present, agency and subjectivity, Fox argues that Mootoo's characters are able to "live with and through difference in community." Fox insists upon a recognition of the singularity of identifications and the acceptance of the incommensurability of those differences by means of which community is forged in the Paradise Alms House. It is through such a reading that an interstitial future emerges.

Linda Morra's "'Vexed by the Crassness of Commerce': Jane Rule's Struggle for Literary Integrity and Freedom of Expression" brings insight to the relationships that Rule had with her publishers. Morra captures Rule's desire to "resist censorship in daily practice." By tracing her relationships with publishers and publishing houses through letters and contracts, Morra reveals the battles that Rule fought for literary integrity and freedom of expression. As an author publishing in a Canadian context, Rule discovered her "literary freedom was circumscribed by both overt and implicit expectations about who could make claims to be an author" as well as the limits of expression in political contexts.

Marilyn Schuster traces the correspondence between Jane Rule and Rick Bébout in "Jane Rule & Rick Bébout, Private Letters/Public Lives: A Queer Love Story." By reconsidering the perverse and the normal, Schuster cleverly investigates the space of what she terms the new "genre of life narrative" to rethink the boundaries of memory, memoir, essay, and diary. An examination of private documents allows for an opportunity to experience a "sense of the community in the flesh." By offering us the Canadian "community of flesh" that life writing offers as a way into the complicated relationship between Rule and Bébout, we are presented with a way into the self through a glimpse of the other in a moment of queer identifications.

For the authors of the articles featured in the *Queerly Canadian* special issue there is an important relationship between the potential for democratization in cosmopolitanism to the extent that the very acts of national

identification are themselves complicated by hybridity and singularity, or Anderson's "unbounded seriality." And so it is critical here then, to emphasize that this project of complexification is precisely the useful work that is done at the conjunction that we have here demarcated as *Queerly Canadian*.

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Julie H. Zhu

As I Reach Up and Out

Reach up and out, one foot in front of the other,
Ankle sinks with shifting weight; knee collides on a stony plane.
I must be expecting bruises or would have taken a bigger step;
Even just a little bigger, I would land on the next island.
Balance on one sole, feel the rumble underneath.
The earth trembles and the gravels shake.
I can see the reflection of the steels: they beam under the bright white light but lie still.
One more step forward, this time I am secure in position.
A test for bipeds, concentrate on each strike.
The hip must do the counting if the knee does not wish to fall again.
I shut my eyes. Imagine: no foreseeable obstacles.
No walls. No tree branches. No tripping as long as the feet are level.
It's taking me out of the alley.
I am hardly alone. Each step is a manmade platform. I am with its creator.
A few blocks have oily markings. One is paler. A rock shaped like a diamond.
I could only notice these at the instance of motion, neither by looking back nor forward.
If I stop in the middle, the past and the future are archived the same.
I am that keen to try what it is like to walk on it.
I will not be lost,
On a railway.

Nancy Kang

Ecstasies of the (Un)Loved
The Lesbian Utopianism of Hiromi Goto's *The Kappa Child*

become real; follower become leader; Mouse turned sorcerer
—Merle Woo, "Yellow Woman Speaks"

I had thought this place I inhabit would house me forever, but the surface of my body aches for something which cannot be found here. How can it ache for what it has never known?
—Hiromi Goto, *The Kappa Child*

"What happened during the eclipse? Everything impossible": Dreaming Utopia

During her plenary address "Narrative of the Invisible" at the University of British Columbia's "Queerly Canadian: Changing Narratives" Conference, poet-novelist Nicole Brossard called for "a new menu of sexual practices." It would celebrate the lesbian body as inspiration for "spending entire days dreaming of utopia." She also meditated on how "homos" are often the subject of ridicule while "queers" are construed as unique and mysterious. This binary remains unstable given that the terms are often used interchangeably, pejoratively (even within the LGBT community), and without much meaningful qualification. The nexus of the "invisible" in the talk's title with the "unknowable" or "unaccountable" associated with queerness is particularly relevant to Hiromi Goto's *The Kappa Child*.[1] This is a transnational novel characterized by two journeys: one that stretches toward a cosmos of previously de-sexualized mythic experience, and another that trudges through the all-too-terrestrial world of domestic violence in immigrant families.

Readers may initially view the major motifs in the text—planetary alignments and galactic collisions—as either steeped in scientific abstraction or faddish New Age occultism. In Goto's work, however, the speaking subject is concrete, a specific kind of woman-lover constructed with both symbolic potency and queer audacity. Unnamed in the text, she is a Japanese Canadian immigrant and an adult daughter raised in a family whose ratio of men to

women is 1:5. Although the majority, the females were belittled and often physically abused during a hellish childhood on the Alberta prairies. As the text opens, the narrator depicts herself as a "short ugly Asian with a bad attitude" (84). If Brossard's vision is peopled by invisible dreamers seeking a lesbian utopia, Goto's narrator—perhaps unbeknownst to her—is one such seeker. She spends her days in luxurious sleepwear, even donning these typically nocturnal (and hardly work-ready) clothes as she collects abandoned shopping carts in Calgary's downtown core and its rural environs. Once, meandering through suburban Nose Hill Park, she imagines "tiny hands undressing [her]" and smiles at this frenzy of imagined touch (219). She dreams, "I am sleeping on the moon and I'm surprised, filled with wonder, at how warm the body of the moon is, when she looked so cool" (220). Her epiphany comes when she realizes an ontological mirroring between her and the Japanese water sprite known as the kappa: "I dip fingers in a pool wet with possibilities and something touches me back. I don't know if it is some green, mischievous creature, or just my nightly reflection" (222).

In this reflection, she has touched herself through an/Other; the inner and outer spaces coalesce. The touch is tender, subtly auto-erotic, supernatural, and most important, reciprocal. It is a celebratory moment for someone so used to being alone—indeed, in her own universe. If we recognize the morphological similarity between the kappa and pop-culture aliens, we realize the narrator has been "alienated" all her life. "The split and contradictory self," explains Donna Harraway in "Situated Knowledges," is "the one who can construct and join rational conversations and fantastic imaginings that change history" (183). This observation gains more traction as we move toward an inclusive feminist epistemology of alternative worlds: "'Splitting' in this context should be about heterogeneous multiplicities that are simultaneously salient and incapable of being squashed into isomorphic slots or cumulative lists. This geometry pertains within and among subjects. Subjectivity is multidimensional; so, therefore, is vision" (Harraway,"Situated" 183). Cruising between vision to re-vision, this essay examines how Asian Canadian lesbians can help map new frontiers of utopian desire by personalizing myth and creating diverse, non-conformist spaces for self-love and same-sex desire. Much of the momentum for the former comes from the Asian immigration experience: kappa stories were first carried to these shores by Japanese immigrants, including the narrator's Japanese parents. Another form of less positive cultural baggage is an obligatory deference to parental—especially patriarchal—authority out of

fear rather than respect and autonomous choice. A deficit of self-love may result from placing filial imperatives (often a strong part of traditional Asian-diasporic households) above personal fulfillment. I situate *The Kappa Child* in the matrix of domestic abuse, recognizing as part of this violence the alienating attitudes of some immigrant parents towards having a "homo" in the family and, by extension, in the community at large.

While inverting popular depictions of extraterrestrials in "Alien Texts, Alien Seductions: The Context of Colour Full Writing," Goto herself offers a perspective on "alienated" sexuality in a systemically oppressive society. Acknowledging that "[t]here are many ways in which 'aliens' are constructed," she criticizes how "[t]he prurient horror of an apparently 'ungendered' being betrays a homophobic subtext that speaks volumes of a society that continues to assert heterosexist patriarchal primacy" (267). Dana Y. Takagi broaches this concern on a disciplinary front, speaking of the disapproving academic "family" that chooses denial or silence: "That the topic of *homo*-sexuality in Asian American studies is often treated in whispers, if mentioned at all, should be some indication of trouble" (357). Takagi polarizes Asian North American and gay identities as "separate places—emotionally, physically, intellectually. We sustain the separation of these worlds with our folk knowledge about the family-centeredness and suprahomophobic beliefs of ethnic communities. And we frequently take great care to keep those worlds distant from each other" (356). Similarly, Helen Zia recalls being pressed to clarify her sexuality, especially after her Asian American activist peers announced, "Homosexuality is not part of our community." She admits having repudiated her lesbianism out of fear of rejection, an abiding concern that still tortures closeted Asian Canadians with intense acuity: "My Chinese upbringing taught me to value my family above all. Suddenly my extended family, my community, was threatening to disown me. Was I a lesbian? I answered, 'No, I'm not'" (229). Filmmaker Richard Fung reiterates the pain of anticipating rejection or conditional acceptance: "As is the case for many other people of colour and especially immigrants, our families and our ethnic communities are a rare source of affirmation in a racist society. In coming out, we risk (or feel that we risk) losing this support" (340).

To counteract these forces that seek to destroy the lesbian subject's agency and humanity, symbolic social death is required: first, of the attitude that makes her cast herself as aberrant, grotesque, and alien; second, of the disapproving, homophobic family which exists less in the novel literally than as a conceptual corollary of the narrator's physically and emotionally abusive home. One

mechanism that would reassert the subject's sense of pride and self-respect would be what Goto defines as "Colour Full writing . . . a site of strength, possibility, and change" ("Alien Texts" 266). The writer argues that human aliens are plentiful in sites where systemic racism, sexism, and homophobia keep them "in their place" (i.e. "Loveable E.T. not only has to phone home but must go home, for the alien's own good" [264]). Colour Full writing is a way of asserting that they are here, queer, and "home to stay" (266). Borrowed from fellow Asian Canadian writer Larissa Lai, this expressive strategy is premised on placing one's own world at the center and then "imagin[ing] and creat[ing] new worlds that may not otherwise be written or welcomed" (266). This tactic is especially vital for Asian Canadians who are told through media representations that they are not only different and comparatively ugly (because of their features, especially eye shape), but also perpetual foreigners, sojourners, and non-English speakers. *Queer* Asian Canadians, particularly lesbians, have to worry about layered alienations: racism, sexism, homophobia, and generationally or ethnically polarized groups. While some Asian female bodies may be valorized through the lens of heterosexual erotic fantasy, outside of that, many become *personae non-gratae*. Rainbows—colourful signifiers of diversity, pride, promise, and reconciliation—have increased symbolic potency for LGBT Canadians of colour. Because they emerge after the rain, banishing drought (another leitmotif in *The Kappa Child*), rainbows suggest how a lesbian utopia requires the irrigation of self-love; these would be mental landscapes "wet with possibilities," a community of empowered women who love each other without fear from within and without. Such factors would create the optimal environment for transformation of the diminished self into a self-certain, mature lesbian subject.

The Sea Inside: A Search for Salvation

Through recourse to Japanese folklore, namely the (sexual) intervention of the kappa and its myth-to-flesh transformation, Goto's novel interrogates the complex interiority—and inferiority complex—of the lesbian narrator. Something as seemingly prosaic as finding love becomes a utopian dream. With an attitude problem that continually forecloses the possibility of a rewarding relationship, she meditates darkly, "There are no love stories waiting for me and I'm not up to invention" (11). Much of this self-bashing arises from her childhood trauma. She grumbles about being "an ugly, pregnant Asian born into a family not of [her] choosing" (14) and sarcastically discounts suicide as a viable option for improving her muddled life: "I can make a tragedy out

of my personal life without having to die" (14). The mere mention of killing herself indicates that she has considered it; it is an act which places in stark relief both the severity of the purported abuse and the lack of support offered by her family, struggling themselves as immigrant farmers on the often inhospitable landscape of the prairies. Her unhappy childhood persists even after it has been abandoned for the seeming independence of adulthood.

After flirting impulsively with Genevieve, a white retail clerk who works at a sleepwear boutique, the narrator scurries off in excited agitation, denouncing herself as a "dork" and a "geek" prior to gorging neurotically on cookies (52). Although she sublimates her nascent desire into lavish spending at the store, she confesses feeling "horribly self-conscious" as "a short and dumpy Asian with bad teeth, daikon legs, stocky feet. A neckless wonder with cone-shaped pseudo breasts" (122). The early part of the text is littered with these disparaging descriptions, all of which underscore how she does not *fit*, just like the regular clothes she discards for the fancy pyjamas. She criticizes herself not for the same-sex attraction but her failure to conform to a wider spectrum of expectations, namely beauty ideals, and wears bulky sleepwear to be "saved from [her] body" (122). Ironically, doing so attracts rather than deflects attention, her sartorial mask becoming a costume and a uniform of sorts. She fails to realize that it is precisely her idiosyncrasies that make her unique and worthy of love.

Being unfit, not fitting in, and not being fit enough are ontological positions that prove a lack of self-esteem that is consistent with many young minority women's experiences, especially lesbians of colour. Explains Ann Yuri Uyeda from the 1989 Asian Pacific Lesbian Network Retreat, "All too often, we have felt isolated from others because of our ethnicity and then later on because of our sexualities. No matter where we were—with our family, friends, other Asian Americans, the queer community, or the straight white world—we always had to choose what we were: we were either Asian American or we were queer, but never (seemingly) would the two meet in the same breath" (117). The narrator, female yet unfeminine (therefore, in some ways, beyond gender or even gender-less, recalling Goto's aforementioned alien allusion), sighs about the whole unsatisfying reality of her body: "Clothing does not fit me. . . . It was excruciating torture when what clothes I'd finally found started threading into tatters. I held out as long as I could until the state of my unravelling would lead to public nudity" (51). This image conjures up a spectacle, but not the liberating Otherness of drag show or pride parade: it is humiliating exposure, a stripping away rather than a controlled or playful disrobing. She is, literally, falling apart. In many ways,

she epitomizes Brossard's maligned "homo": a Wildean disgrace made out of a sensitive and private individual. By the end of the text, the narrator decides not to forego her unconventional wardrobe, admitting, "I'm a basic pajama person" (250) and embracing this quirkiness as a mark of her *positive* rather than destructive difference. Donning sleepwear during the day, by this token, is more than a choice of clothes; it exposes an increasingly self-certain queer subject who apparels herself for pleasure and personal expression rather than strangling herself in tight clothes and the social arena—a heterosexist, racist society—that they obliquely represent.

Mythic Process: Two Models of Lesbian Subjectivity

In "The Politics of Separatism and Lesbian Utopian Fiction," Sonya Andermahr argues that "Imaginative extrapolation, by virtue of being oppositional or because it envisions an alternative, serves to denaturalise the status quo and to interrogate the nature of the 'real'" (144). She cites Rosemary Jackson's *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* as positing that the modern fantastic flanks the real as "a muted presence, a silenced imaginary other. . . . [that] aims at dissolution of an order experienced as oppressive and insufficient" (Andermahr 144).[1] What these critics define as the "real" has a paradigmatic relationship to what might be considered the "norm," namely the supremacy of heterosexuality, the conception and raising of children through nuclear families, and the celebration of women in accordance with oppressively narrow parameters of beauty and worth. Much stock, for instance, is placed on being white, straight, thin, and middle-class, none of which describes Goto's protagonist. It is because of this perceived failure that lesbian utopias must rectify what is "oppressive and insufficient." Such disparities underscore *The Kappa Child*'s agenda to effect social change, particularly in critiquing Asian immigrant attitudes toward unrestrained patriarchy, domestic violence, and by association, homophobia in these more traditional homes. This space of awareness can reconfigure attitudes that affect how LGBT children of immigrants (second-generation Asian Canadians and beyond) are identified and understood.

Andermahr outlines two discursive models for lesbian-centered subjectivity: the utopian and the political. The former focuses on community-building and solidarity between women who love women. It espouses the vision of a Lesbian Nation, an unencumbered space of safety and affirmation while stressing the need for personal journeying and sustained feminist activism that begins within (136-7). This position espouses same-sex love as a legitimate, positive, and inclusive identity. Alternatively, the political model

is more combative, demanding a staunch, demonstrable commitment to overthrowing male supremacy (137). In many ways, society (mis)construes the political model as more radical, the kind that would advocate male-female separation as the only way of achieving equality.[2] Perhaps society's comfort with relegating a complex paradigm to a theoretical extreme reflects the sad reality that to many, feminism still equals "man-hating." While both the utopian and political models are useful, each has limitations and should be understood as complementary rather than competitive. *The Kappa Child* gravitates closer to the utopian model because of its focus on the *emotional* needs of individual lesbians rather than insisting on the primacy of group-centered social, economic, or legal coalition-building (Andermahr 137).

For example, in the interior monologues of the kappa child that punctuate the narrator's story, we are offered a gynocentric vision from a parallel universe: the Other is again within the self, this time literally. The creature is a hybrid oddity conceived through the narrator's mythic tryst with a kappa (the "Stranger") on an abandoned airstrip. Surrounded by 6000 "egg sisters" in a space "lovely and rich," the child describes a "perpetual sense of potential, vibrant and miraculous" as it explores the sensuously oneiric, quasi-marine womb-world (18). This paradisiacal imagery, a Lesbian Nation *in utero*, contrasts the dystopian suggestion that kappa are creatures that devolved into humans by succumbing to despair and dryness. In many ways, the idea of kappa self-contempt is reminiscent of self-hating minorities, yet with kappa, the real future lies in reclaiming the past. As the kappa child explains, "[W]hen kappa eyes succumb to pain, when kappa parents turn aside their kappa children, when kappa deny water, they rip the tender skin from between their fingers and toes. They turn their eyes away from all things kappa. They become humans" (176). Having deformed ourselves through false consciousness (e.g. a withholding of parental love, a repudiation of natural desires, deliberate self-mutilation), we must return to myth and hope for salvation. The narrator reasons, "The cusp of a new century, *hope*, such a small word in the face of global disintegration, I turned to the solar bodies with clenched teeth and fists" (81). Later, she meanders through a dark city centre and reiterates her belief that "maybe when humans are gone, our myths will come alive, wander over the remnants of our uncivilization. Kappa, water dragons, yama-uba, oni. Selkie, golem, lorelei, xuan wu. The creatures we carry will be born from our demise and the world will *dream a new existence*" (223; emphasis added).

Few of the aforementioned mythical beasts come from a Western context, and none directly from a North American base. This transnational,

multicultural vision—clearly Canadian—suggests that although the text is situated in Alberta, its scope transcends borders. The utopian model's focus on journeying does not coincide with the political model's tendency to discount myth as "inimical to political praxis" (Andermahr 139). Yet myth neither confuses nor dilutes the political message so much as renders it in a form that is more abstract and memorable: a challenge to be met. The anxiety that myth provokes may result in part from issues of imaginative accessibility; not everyone, for instance, knows what a kappa is, or why the beak-faced, green-skinned, bowl-headed monster has any relevance to a millennial moment on the Western prairies. Overall, both the utopian and political models can theorize positive change, giving context to personal struggle and adding depth, breadth, and nuance either within the individual lesbian's consciousness or amongst those of a larger group. After all, lesbian utopianism in *The Kappa Child* stretches far beyond an ideal freedom from any number of publicly codified, privately scrutinized, or institutionally policed encounters between same-sex individuals; it encompasses an amorphous, de-centralized, powerfully cosmic consciousness, one that believes there is a lot we do not know "out there." Such renewed awareness of our profound ignorance as a species (a "universe/all" knowledge deficit) requires a greater openness to alternative dimensions, perspectives, and life-worlds. This ideal flexibility also applies on the human level, specifically in regard to LGBT people, immigrants, women of colour, and others charged with being "aliens," interlopers, undesirable, and doomed. The fin-de-siècle English writer Edward Carpenter suggested in "The Intermediate Sex" that homosexuals were part of the future, not degenerate and moribund. He estimated, "At the present time certain new types of human kind may be emerging, which will have an important part to play in the societies of the future—even though for the moment their appearance is attended by a good deal of confusion and misapprehension" (186). Like Goto's, his utopian rhetoric is pluralistic ("new *types*") and ("societ*ies* of the future"), anticipating a global sea-change.

Cosmic Corporeality: Claiming a New Sexual Space

The kappa child is an embryonic mystery, an "abnormal' pregnancy" (Goto 12) borne by an Asian Canadian who feels the most joy, support, and fulfillment in the company of other women. Yet the word "lesbian" is never used in the text; this may be a way of normalizing the identity, as if mentioning two women in a romantic relationship was nothing spectacularly different from the pairing of a man and a woman; or, it may be a means of shedding

past assumptions and asking for new terminologies to depict the multiple manifestations of women's desire. The kappa child partakes in a semiotic of queerness because it cannot be adequately explained, and copulating with it beggars description. "But it wasn't exactly sexual intercourse" argues the narrator as she recalls her arousal while watching the "slender green creature," clad in a Chinese wedding-dress, disrobing in front of her (104). In typically femme posturing, the kappa Stranger enjoys "rollllllling" stockings seductively down her hairless legs (122). Here, their interpersonal juncture (human with more-than-human, known with unknown) epitomizes the utopian model more than the political model. There is neither a "war of the worlds" encounter between human and alien nor any abduction effort fuelled by a plan for terrestrial colonization. Instead, this pair wrestles and grunts in the honesty of nakedness, perhaps even a parody of intercourse itself as a clichéd "battle of the sexes" ("we kiai, loud enough to shatter trees, kiai" [124]). This moment of first contact, while combative, appropriates the language of human seduction and splices it together with the exhilaration of new sexual frontiers. The phrase "the earth moved," while most identifiable as a literary allusion (to Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*), is now a platitude describing incredible heterosexual sex.[3] In this kappa-human coupling, a whole array of celestial bodies shifts and aligns, not clashing as they might if this were a cataclysmic, abhorrent act. The climax is appropriately cosmic:

> I thought she came. Came in waves of pleasure. Hearts pounding. The celestial bodies slow moving across the fabric-space of time. Arms clasped around each other, still. . . . I couldn't say where the stars lay. They glittered and spun, constellations chasing planets toward the horizon. Time spiralled and inflated, how could I know? A moon rising to seek the darkness, the earth just a mote in the breath of the universe. I wanted to laugh, to weep, to keep this moment forever. (124)

This scene reminds us of how small humans are when juxtaposed with massive bodies in space. We also recall two earlier episodes when the narrator's family first settled in the "dry, dry prairies" (126). This new location is a stark contrast to the moist, verdant fields of British Columbia. The father, Hideo, insists on growing Japanese rice, a rather outlandish idea given the arid climate. When Slither, the oldest child, laughs at his choice, she is locked outside, "howling in the dust heat tornado" (113). The narrator, with her own suggestion of wild rice, finds herself banished for impudence. Both are forced to weather "the storm of [the] father's anger" together (114). The only comfort they derive—especially the narrator from her "beautiful" sister—is playing a game of touching tongues. They are left "[g]iggling, giggling with joy" (114).

While harmless, the game points to two females, thrown out of doors, abject and unwanted by family; this is easily the position of gay teens exiled for speaking their truth. Only here, they would be "sisters" metaphorically rather than genealogically. This pseudo-kissing game is guilelessly homoerotic, a queerly symbolic collusion of individuals set apart for "disobedience" when in actuality, no crime was committed. Aware of their father's punitive character, the children later overhear their parents having sex. The sounds illustrate the dynamics of the parents' conjugal relationship, an extension of the parental-filial relationship in its violence: "Slap! Slap! Smack of flesh on flesh. Thud, smack, slap, thud. Smack, slap, smack, slap, the bed thudding, thumping, creak, squeak— . . . "(79). These auditory images could easily apply to a scene of battery, in the bedroom or elsewhere, and the daughters silently reproach their mother for engaging with "the enemy" (230). The contrast of cacophonous brutality with the fluid eroticism of the kappa "sex" is both telling and profound.

"Sex" with the kappa Stranger exemplifies revolutionary social potential by underscoring the importance of sexual diversity. To encounter a phrase like "Sex, of course, is not the only way to find yourself pregnant" (Goto 80) is de-centering for those accustomed to easy social scripts about how babies are made. The cucumber-craving kappa child is implanted through air, a strange sort of post-penetrative, quasi-immaculate conception with no males required. By that token, Hideo's attempts to fertilize the land fail because "He had no idea how to grow anything at all" (126). While he may be a kind of "sperminator" type, producing four children through a grunting economy of hard work and rigid patriarchal authority, he also stunts their growth, "his fingers squeezed into knuckles" (72). We learn that Genevieve, conversely, is studying to be a masseuse, someone specializing in the healing potential of gentle, regenerative touch. The promise of the pyjama shop encounter, alongside the airstrip tryst, reverses the narrator's assumption that "Love doesn't figure in [the narrator's] life, never did" (268). When she describes a variation of oral sex—"Stranger nimbly clambered over my exhausted body and nudged between my legs. Blissfully, I let them part. Mouth. Wetness. Cool as a dappled pond in a grove of trees. The Stranger blew"(124)—the scene recalls the time when she re-entered the sleepwear store. Here, too, there is an otherworldly encounter, but this time integrating culturally significant allusions to the queer kitsch of *The Wizard of Oz* and Botticelli's iconic *The Birth of Venus*. Slipping on an outfit, she finds herself immersed in comfort, these clothes "shimmering in [her] hands like water" (53). Genevieve arrives, half-Dorothy, half-Glinda: "Red shoes stepped up and a woman crouched in

a cloud of sweet air" (53). The narrator enthuses that in the rich cloud of this (potential lover's) breath, "some magic" neutralizes all of her own self-hatred: "Unselfconscious, I stepped from the protection of the cubicle and stood proudly under the glare of the spotlights, in front of three hinged mirrors and three mermaids." She exhales, "I was found" (53-4).

Alien Nation: The Real War of the Worlds

When the narrator was younger, Okasan affectionately called her a "strange child" (44); now an adult, her sister PG jokingly labels her a "freak of nature" (211). She is aware of being an alien presence to others, just as the kappa child is an alien presence to—and within—her. Jenny Wolmark remarks that the term "alien" is resoundingly negative; built upon Manichean oppositions like civilized/savage and friend/foe, it "reinforce[s] relations of dominance and subordination" visible in the archetype of the Western white male who perpetually saves the world from foreign invasion and conquest (2).[4] While acknowledging this context, including the alien colonization trope, Goto's novel deviates from expectations. The alien straddles internal and external worlds. When the narrator's emotionally stunted sister, nicknamed Mice but usually called "*Bagatare!*"(stupid idiot) by their father, discerns the pregnancy by peering into her older sibling's face, the younger woman jumps back as if she has seen a "monster" (92). Aside from her own identification as monstrous, the narrator admits her discomfort at "knowing there's someone in my body, this other*ness*, that's what really gets to me" (92). Medical testing offers psychosomatic readings to dismiss the literal presence of any pod or foetus, probably because it was not conceived in a typical (that is, heterosexual, terrestrial) fashion. The narrator comments sardonically, "Over six months and no outward sign, no one asking if I'm in the family way with that tone of universal admiration. Pregnant in a way no one will ever notice" (12). Her feeling of being slighted is expected given that pregnancy and motherhood are usually feted as signs of a woman's fertility and maturity. They are often construed as signs (albeit fallible) of her heterosexuality and partnered state. Single mothers like Bernie, the Korean Canadian grocer who becomes the narrator's love-interest, still do not receive the same respect received by their married peers; the same goes for lesbian parents. That is why Bernie depends on the powerful backing of her family (here, the Amazonian Yoon sisters) and her elderly child-rearing father, a distinct contrast to Hideo who discounts his wife Okasan's words as "foolish kitchen talk" and disperses his children with cuffs and shouts (113).

The narrator's alienation only deepens when she goes to consult her doctor and realizes more disconnections between herself and the society that either ignores or pathologizes her: "Funny thing. People willing to overlook an ugly patient in pajamas in a doctor's office. Because, obviously, she's sick" (100). "Sick" here refers less to a physical than a psychological malady, a handy means of invalidating the unruly, unlovely, and the queer. Similarly, Mice's earlier fright at some unnamed monstrosity might refer as much to the narrator as to the secret entity growing within her belly. The narrator's individuality (including her sexuality, ostensibly part of her "sickness" according to well-worn anti-gay rhetoric) have been suppressed all her life; she was "doing time" with her family (226). This prison metaphor implies hard labour, corporal punishment, and emotional incarceration; in such a place, dreaming utopia would come naturally. The surreal kappa sex—or in the narrator's words, "I-don't-know-what" (124)—and its millennial timing represent a merging of incongruous beings, a "mythic process" initiated by merging the mundane with the ecstatic unknown (250). The utopian dream thus flickers into being like light across the water.

Goto imparted in an interview with the *Globe and Mail* that the gist of the text is "the wave of possibilities the kappa symbolize[s], a sense of not knowing if you can ever trust it" (Bouchard). She explains that these creatures can both hurt and heal, sharing secrets like the art of bone-setting and how to relieve droughts, but also acting maliciously, for example, by sucking entrails out of human anuses (Bouchard). The author freely admits the similarities between these traditional myths and Western extra-terrestrials: "There are parallels: stories about people vanishing into fairy rings are very similar to stories about people being abducted by aliens, right down to the idea of missing chunks of time" (Bouchard). In *The Kappa Child,* however, the alien *is* the queer self, is *inside* that self, and slides from being the uncomfortable and even grotesque to the acceptable and entirely plausible. How else does the narrator correspondingly shift from condemning her "short neck . . . [and] huge, flat face" (187) to praising a neck "long enough to kiss" and a "lovely, curved skull" (248-9)? The kappa's interventions into her life open her eyes to the "mirrored infinity of all [her] selves" (249). Gestation gives rise to her new self-concept rather than any literal offspring. She comments that every event in her post-tryst life has pushed her to "normalize the incredible" (218), with the kappa child exemplifying "[e]verything impossible" (274). This depolarization process underscores the utopian agenda; just as Goto's narrator has "become tolerant of incredible stories" (116), her own example asks us to become more tolerant of those whose stories are lost, neglected, or muffled among us.

"Home"-ophobia: Domestic Violence, Dystopian Space

Feminist of colour bell hooks has stressed the need for "clear and meaningful alternative analyses which relate to people's lives," especially in regard to minority sexualities. Groups of women that feel excluded from the white bourgeois mainstream will find their niche "only if they first create, via critiques, an awareness of the factors that alienate them" (hooks 138). Major criticism of *The Kappa Child* has tended not to concentrate on domestic abuse or the hermeneutics of lesbian sexuality, but has instead dissected tropes of eating and gender indeterminism as they relate to oppressive patriarchy.[5] Too much reticence exists about domestic abuse in Asian immigrant families, likely because of prevailing stereotypes: the sexist, overbearing husband-father paired with the submissive, downtrodden wife-mother. It may be unpopular to belabour these constructions, especially when Asian-descent males have been portrayed by Western media as somewhere between effeminate geeks and kung fu fighters. Nonetheless, such individuals—as with any race—do exist, and their complicity in the open secret of domestic violence requires continued examination and feminist critique. In Goto's text, the above description of the skewed conjugal dynamic portrays Hideo and Okasan accurately. Discussing this unhappy environment underscores the importance of re-reading texts to empower minority women, especially lesbians. Only by doing so will readers be able to "envision and create a counter-hegemony" against violence in all of its forms and then "share the work of making a liberatory ideology and a liberatory movement" globally as well as locally (hooks 145). Homophobia within the family, I suggest, is domestic abuse at its most emotionally damaging, an extension of the terror, shame, and self-effacement that arise through physical battery. When attacked by intolerant or overly controlling intimates, especially one's parents, dreaming utopia into reality becomes even more imperative.

For native-born Asian Canadians and their more recent immigrant counterparts, speaking out against homophobia and domestic abuse tends to be frustrated by the threat of familial and community ostracism. This is not an exclusively Asian diasporic concern, but it does coincide with the fears of many image-conscious immigrant families. There is a powerfully nuanced connection in *The Kappa Child* between domestic abuse and the silences—whether through deliberate avoidance or passive ignorance—about gay and lesbian children. Not all Asian Canadian families are like the narrator's, of course. Yet as Asian American critics like Ben R. Tong have observed, there can be a marked tension between earning the respect of others and attending

to the specific needs of the family: "Children of the new generation were taught 'the gracious heritage' of 'filial piety,' thus stifling the possibility of bringing serious and critical question to bear on their own oppressed condition" (52). Speaking from the vantage point of a ten-year-old, Goto's narrator explains why her mother could not leave the abusive household: "[S]he couldn't save herself, let alone her children, and that was that. Going to white outsiders wasn't an option for an Asian immigrant family like us. If you ditched the family, there was absolutely nothing left" (199). Both the physical abuse in the text and the emotional abuse incurred by homophobia are family secrets, largely construed by the older generations as sources of shame. The goal of "saving face" and avoiding a loss of status are central deterrents to honest disclosure about sexual identity.

In *The Very Inside: An Anthology of Writing by Asian and Pacific Island Lesbian and Bisexual Women,* mixed-race writer Darlena Bird Jimenes explains that in her family, sexuality was never directly discussed nor was she ever formally asked about it (135). She shrugs this reticence off with, "I was always a 'different' kid in every respect anyway" (135). Although she sounds confident and centered now, we may recall how the mixed-race character Gerald, the narrator's childhood friend, felt uncomfortable about his differences. Half Japanese and half First Nations, he grew up a misfit, with "red, red lips" (189), "beautiful eyes" (200), and a gentleness that was almost surreal compared to Hideo's aggressive and destructive masculinity. Although it is not explicit, Gerald may also be gay, divulging to the grown-up narrator that his move to metropolitan Vancouver allowed him choices he never had in a small town, including autonomy, an accepting community, and access to lovers (240). In childhood, the narrator calls him a "sissy-boy" and a "pansy" in a climactic fit of cruelty spurred by a fresh beating from her father (201). His mother, the Nisei (second-generation Japanese) neighbour Janice, relates that he was emotionally scarred for five years following the incident. Only when the narrator belatedly apologizes is she able to mourn the loss of their camaraderie and the potential ally she could have had in him on her quest for self-acceptance. She also awakens to her ironical complicity in the abuse of others, a fact that brings her closer to her father, an undesired complement to their physical similarities.

Alice Hom's "In the Mind of An/Other" explains how Asian Pacific American (APA) lesbians have to contend with a "natural self-contempt" that stems from multiple sources: a lack of familial support, the dominant culture's racism, an alienating lesbian community that fails to offer equal

validation for lesbians of colour, and a hostile APA sub-group that seeks to deny the very existence of gay people amongst them (274-75). Kitty Tsui's poem "A Chinese Banquet *for* the one who was not invited" depicts a mother, "her voice beaded with sarcasm" (17), who realizes that her lesbian daughter will not be getting married and no longer inquires about it. When the daughter attempts to share news about her partner, the mother "will not listen, / she shakes her head" (31-32). Ann Uyeda summarizes the position of Asian North American lesbians:

> Our Asian and American heritages encourage us to be invisible, unspoken, non-identified. Our families demand us to conform to their expectations and fears. And, as well-raised Asian daughter and women, we are often both afraid and ashamed of the conflicts we experience from these contradictions and our sexualities; consequently, we do not talk about the resulting trauma we suffer. (118)

Hom's paradigm of self-hatred is amply illustrated by the narrator's aforementioned self-bashing. She never had the support system of women and fellow lesbians that might have nurtured stronger self-esteem. Okasan informs her that had the family stayed in their native Osaka, the narrator would be "happily married with two kids" and the younger siblings would never have been born (13). Clearly, there is room for supportive dialogue between gay and straight women, but immersed in her own personal turmoil, Okasan remains much in the dark about her daughter's sexuality. The latter envies Genevieve for having a bisexual grandmother: "My mother probably didn't even know what it meant!" she sputters (82). This comment is ironic given that Okasan eventually leaves Hideo to embark on an extended road trip with Gerald's mother, a "tiny, brown woman" with a "deep and raspy" voice (162). The nature of Okasan and Janice's friendship, whether it is a sisterly intimacy or lesbian bonding, remains ambiguous, but the fact that one is immigrant and the other Nisei suggests the possibility of divergent experiences coalescing into affection and reconciliation. The narrator's myopia and destructive egocentrism prevent her from seeing Okasan as anything other than a female victim or a spineless accessory to patriarchal power. Goto enunciates the need for knowledge and understanding on the part of both children *and* their parents when it comes to accepting the unexpected valences and manifold consequences of female desire.

"The creature inside me curls around my heart": Still Dreaming Utopia

In many ways, the narrator's job as a collector of abandoned shopping carts enacts her own struggle to be "found," just as she imagined when she

experienced her initial attraction to Genevieve and later to her best friend, the sharp-tongued Midori. When she apologizes for isolating herself from both women (who eventually become a couple), she pleads, "I've been sorting through my life. My baggage. It's been hard." Midori retorts, "How long?! When will you stop sorting through life and just bloody well act?!" (235). This bluntness, although somewhat parental in tone, propels the narrator to kiss her long-time crush on the mouth, "almost shudder[ing], with longing, loss" (235). As a shopping cart collector, the narrator is a kind of postmodern shepherdess who corrals "the abandoned, the lost, the vandalized" (138) into the safety of her milk truck. Whether found on top of a tree or roof or teetering off of a bridge, these seemingly negligible steel skeletons represent individuals who have been treated "in the most disrespectful ways" (139). Called trackers, the narrator and her coworkers are less like scrap-hunters than rescue workers attempting to retrieve those who have become invisible (recalling Brossard) or unwanted (recalling the aforementioned APA writers). She explains, "Some of the trackers drive their trucks, what have you, slowly up and down alleys, hanging out the window for that errant gleam of silver" (139). Although shopping carts do not mean much to the average consumer, "errant gleam of silver" speaks of a treasure that requires attention and care, a strong allusion to untapped human potential. The narrator details how she scours the downtown core, examining crowded alleys, looking past garbage and cardboard, and rooting through the "oddest of places" (139) in order to bring these runaway or abandoned items home. She treats them as if they were people, enacting a complex if joyously exaggerated choreography of retrieval and salvation. The process allegorizes LGBT young people who move from a position of being "home-less" (that is, lacking a sheltering, positive space of their own) to being "home." Unlike sci-fi aliens, they *come* home rather than go home.

By the end of the novel, planetary images, especially lunar cycles, parallel the emotional *synastry* (or in non-astrological terms, compatibility) of the protagonist and the community of women that now nourishes her. Among them are lesbian friends, potential lovers, her three emotionally recovering sisters, and mothering people (a porous category that includes some of the aforementioned individuals as well as feminist and/or feminine men). While the kappa child was conceived on an airport landing strip during the "last visible lunar eclipse of the twentieth century" (81), the text concludes with another lunar alignment: a conjunction. Under this positive light, the narrator, Genevieve, Bernie, and Midori (friends, lovers, or lovers-to-be) frolic in a scene

that celebrates both vitality, natural elements, and female fecundity: "We jump from the van and tear into the field. Moon to sea, sea to moon, earth to sky, earth to water. We leap, bound, in the sweetness, our laughter soaring, we leap skyward, leave perfect footprints in the rich mud. New green shoots of life twine at our feet, rising leafy in the warm night air" (275). The phrases "perfect footprints" and "new green shoots of life" signify the perfection—not so much social or physical but metaphysical and interpersonal—of the celebrants. As a stock feminine and utopian symbol, the moon speaks to us of something desirable and distant yet reachable; it is not unlike the liquid-dark eyes of the kappa Stranger, "filled with unbearable promise" (124).

In the address that concluded the Queerly Canadian Conference, Richard Cavell posited that immigration experiences create "queer dislocation" and prove that homosexuality functions transnationally, across borders, bodies, and matter—and across bodies that matter. As such, the vibrant hermeneutic potential of gay and lesbian difference can offer "new places and spaces" for negotiating twenty-first-century Canadian identity. Such observations strike at the core of what I read as *The Kappa Child*'s utopian and political mandates, which are to agitate for change in attitudes toward "different" children in the family and to envision easier lives for those encountering friction with abusive, less-than-accepting, or simply uninformed families. For Goto's narrator, as for many young Asian Canadians, the home remains a particularly challenging space for negotiating acceptance of self. If no such space exists, alternatives must be sought, even at the expense of familial solidarity and much-revered traditions of filiality and obedience.

In Brossard's early experimental novel *Le désert mauve* (*Mauve Desert*), referenced during her plenary session, we follow the young Mélanie traversing a desert through dusks, dawns, and feverish days in her mother's white Meteor. In many ways, her journey resembles that of Goto's narrator who also has her own white car (albeit the less romantic fourth-hand milk van), with which she explores new frontiers of language and love. Like Mélanie's mother, Okasan explores close partnerships—and possibly love—with women, and readers accompany these characters into a utopian space of fluidity, continual movement, and often lyrical crests of same-sex desire. The narrator's concluding vision in *The Kappa Child*—"And the water breaks free with the rain" (275)—offers rebirth and hope. Water breaking free—whether in the form of undammed rivers or drought-quenching showers—duly refers to the rupture of the amniotic sac during childbirth. It may also foreshadow older children breaking free into less encumbered spaces. Surrounded by

rain, a direct contrast to the dryness of the prairies that inhibited the growth of successful rice crops, the ultimate stance of these women argues that rebirth is not only possible, it is already in process.

NOTES

1 For a recent critical collection on queerness and science fiction, see Pearson et al. For the alien angle and alternative sexualities, see Pearson's "Alien Cryptographies" and review of Goto's text ("Saturating the Present"). As one anonymous reviewer at *Canadian Literature* suggests, although Goto's text won the 2000 James Tiptree, Jr. Award for innovative gender representations in sf, its adherence to the typical conventions of sf is debatable, since the award can also go to fantasy. Some critics may prefer this identification instead.

2 For examples of utopian sf that advocate, or at least experiment with lesbian or all-female societies, see Tiptree and Russ.

3 Cf. Samuel Delany's extensive meditations (from *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw* to *About Writing*) on the language of sf, particularly with regard to how the genre, while highly allegorical, often literalizes what other genres render figuratively.

4 See Weinstock on the connection of extra-terrestrials and multicultural writing; see also Harraway's *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*.

5 See Harris; Latimer.

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Zoë Landale

The Road to Ella's

You travel toward a fast-running oxbow river
that in warmer weather, you'd yearn to swim,

green pools and frills where water pours white
over rocks mounded like giant turtle shells.

You travel alone,
just you and the cold spikes in your blood,

the blue ghosts, who graciously pace
the new weightless you. Welcome

to the congregation of the disembodied,
the enormous lure of water.

Meanwhile, flute and drums, a willow with its yellow
shrill of twigs against the patient sky.

Did you know a skinned bear looks human?
You've reached transformation's country now, blink

in and out of the visible, descend the ridge
in the road where you will come at last to the river.

Hey, that shape looks like you, only grainy
with freezer burn, wrapped and sheeted,

going somewhere light doesn't scratch
like grass against cheeks. How will you cross

Lethe when music the colour of February sun tangles
through the waiting, expectant afternoon?

Susan Billingham

Écriture au Trans-féminine
Trish Salah's *Wanting in Arabic*

> Where "difference" is founded upon a model of the "same," we are in the realm of Law, serving only what has been previously established.
>
> This the death of *philosophy* and of *poetry*. But how not to already "suppose" the very thing we question?
> — Erin Mouré
>
> The question is how I can here try to rewrite this body which is less truth than occasion. . . . The fantasy is specific, singular.
> — Trish Salah

Trish Salah's first collection of poetry, *Wanting in Arabic* (2002), offers a new twist on the notion of writing (in) the feminine. A male-to-female (MTF) transsexual, Salah seeks ways to think through her body and embrace her feminine subjectivity. Salah's desire to "rewrite this body which is less truth than occasion" resembles Sandy Stone's perception of the "*intertextual* possibilities of the transsexual body" (297):

> In the case of the transsexual, the varieties of performative gender, seen against a culturally intelligible gendered body *which is itself a medically constituted textual violence*, generate new and unpredictable dissonances which implicate entire spectra of desire. In the transsexual as text we may find the potential to map the refigured body onto conventional gender discourse and thereby disrupt it, to take advantage of the dissonances created by such a juxtaposition to fragment and reconstitute the elements of gender in new and unexpected geometries. (296; italics in original)

In her "Posttranssexual Manifesto," Stone urges more transsexuals to forego the clinical and social imperatives to pass and become legible *as* transsexual, to make visible their formerly "erased histor[ies]" (295). Like Stone, Salah refuses to pass and actively seeks to be read.[1] I am engaged by *Wanting in Arabic* for the variety of its performances and the challenges it poses to gender theory.

The volume is divided into four sections: the eponymous "Wanting in Arabic," "Language Becoming a Girl," "Hysteria of Origins," and "Enduring this Future." My reading traces a continuum between French feminist *écriture féminine*, québécoise/Canadian *écriture au féminin*, and Salah's oeuvre. If *écriture féminine* returns to the woman's body to reconsider sexual difference, recuperate suppressed voices, and construct feminine subjectivity, then what I call an *écriture au trans-féminine* seeks to achieve similar recognition of the trans-woman's voice and body.

Wanting in Arabic shares many traits with *écriture au féminin* as it has evolved in both québécoise and anglo-Canadian works: a feminist approach to writing that emphasizes gender in all aspects of being and textuality; a fusion of creative and theoretical modes, employing ludic wordplay and intertextuality to contest existing paradigms; the concept of the subject-in-process or reinvention of self through writing/reading; and the desire to achieve communal, collective political consciousness through writing. Salah acknowledges her affiliation with *écriture (au) féminin(e)* through deliberate re-citation of numerous precursors, including Erin Mouré's *Furious*, Hélène Cixous's *The Book of Promethea*, and Nicole Brossard's *Mauve Desert*. At stake in the notion of *écriture au trans-féminine* is precisely the question of agency: the trans-woman's claim to participate in liberatory gendered discourse *as* a woman.[2]

Politically and theoretically, feminist and queer scholars often seem to idealize hybridity and transgender as though they were automatically transgressive and radical. But as Jay Prosser points out in *Second Skins*, queer and transgender discourses tend to co-opt transsexual narratives and elide the physical experience, the psychic and ontological investments, of transsexuality:

> there are transsexuals who seek very pointedly to be nonperformative, to be constative, quite simply, *to be*. What gets dropped from transgender in its queer deployment to signify subversive gender performativity is the value of the matter that most often concerns the transsexual: the *narrative* of becoming a biological man or a biological woman . . . in brief and simple the materiality of the sexed body. (32; italics in original)

Paradoxically, Salah's poetry seems to be both performative and constative. It proclaims her to be both transsexual and woman, recognizing simultaneously the social construction of gender and the impulse to ground notions of womanhood in experience of the female body. Malcolm Woodland asserts "*Wanting in Arabic* is . . . a text that wants to be 'read' *as* transsexual, rather than to 'pass' as an *écriture féminin* [sic]" (40). I contend this is a false dichotomy:

for trans-women to be accepted as women, they must be read as *both* transsexual *and* women, rather than one or the other. The current article offers close analysis of selected poems from the first three sections of *Wanting in Arabic*, focusing particularly on tropes of liminality, pronominal wordplay, and the practice of an *écriture au trans-féminine*. Engaging with debates critical to sexual (in)difference, feminist and transgender revisions of psychoanalysis, and myths of origin, Salah's exuberant and irreverent writing enters into dialogue with other lesbian feminist practitioners of *écriture au féminin*.

The opening poem "Phoenicia ≠ Lebanon" introduces several leitmotifs at play throughout the collection. The speaker recalls a father born in Lebanon, "transformed / in the middle passage" and dead of stroke at thirty-seven, and a mother "*Irish Catholic, with her own 'troubles'*" (21-22, 26; italics in original). These genealogical clues establish a diasporic context of past religious, national, and colonial struggles that bleed into the present. The speaker invokes the patriarchal figure of Odysseus as counterpoint to her father; this classical allusion anticipates other canonical figures appearing later in the collection, as Salah reinvents myths of origin. As imaginary birthplace, Phoenicia holds particular import for a language poet, since the Phoenicians invented a phonetic alphabet later disseminated to other civilizations through trade.[3] The opening page also reveals the speaker's transition from male to female: "i am my father's *daughter* / May he rest in— / who, as a small *boy*, intimidated at the thought of the priesthood— / of following in my father's footsteps . . ." (14-15, 17-18; emphasis added). It is surely significant that Salah "outs" herself on the first page of the book. The historical past, the geographical boundaries marking former empires, nations and peoples, are non-identical with the present; Lebanon is no longer Phoenicia, just as the speaker is no longer the small boy s/he once was. But layers of past transformations and their (emotional) traces continue to resonate in the present. The speaker speculates that while the father did not live to see his son "caught dead in a crossfire in Beirut or Belfast," that son "died" in another fashion: "*and after my surgery comes / that boy's dead by any other name*" (64, 67-68; italics in original). Salah's poetry trades "*in the in between*"—the rise of "daddy's little girl" from the (un)dead boy, the spectres of the past in the present—since "*what the dead do best is rise / Phoenix-like, again*" (95, 61, 69-70; italics in original). The literal death of the father becomes intertwined with Salah's repudiation of the law of the father, though haunted by his lost homeland and language.[4] As Woodland observes in his reading of memory and refrain in the volume's ghazals,

> To be *Wanting in Arabic* is, for Salah, to lack a particular kind of relationship to a cultural patrimony; it is to lack the patriarchal language, and to lack the sexed patriarchal body that grants the subject a particular identity in relation to that cultural patrimony. Or, rather, it is to have refused that identity and that patrimony, and to have chosen something else—not simply a cultural and sexed 'opposite' but an in-between space that challenges such binary thinking. (49)

My discussion focuses on the balancing act involved in identifying as both transsexual and woman, and the textual strategies Salah adopts to devise an *écriture au trans-féminine*.

The figurative death undergone by the subject in the process of sex-reassignment surgery is interrogated in "Reading *The Book of Suicides*" (21-24). A poem in six parts, the first begins with the lines "Sometimes death begs permission to approach / Sometimes we are confused, death and I" (I, 1-2). This reminds readers of the trauma and health risks involved in surgery. In contrast, the second section insists, "A change of sex is not a suicide note / Or, it goes across death, to a particular word" (II, 1-2)—an assertion that picks up a key meaning of the prefix "trans." The confusion may not be the speaker's (the assumption implicit in a clinical label like "gender disorder"), but the observer's, who mistakes sex reassignment for suicide rather than (re)birth. Reflecting on desire and language, the sequence revisits a variety of motifs with deep resonances in poetic tradition, including moon, sun, earth, rose, snow, the veil, the fall, and mourning. Salah juxtaposes symbols conventionally linked with masculinity (the sun) and femininity (the moon, earth), symbols linked with death (snow, night) and regeneration (dawn, light, fire), to convey the speaker's liminal position. "Reading *The Book of Suicides*" is as much about the promise of transformation and hope for the future as it is about mourning for what is lost:

> A rose is kept for your garden.
>
> And wilder growths allow you to imagine
> Vast expanse beyond slant pale of headstones
>
> Neither the world nor Ghalib[5] dead, imagine—
> Your promise fulfilled, snow rising to heaven.
>
> Roses bloom inward, a miniscule infinity
> Bubbles of earth aflame, efflorescent with air. (IV, 4-10)

Sometimes Salah inverts the expected connotations of an image, as when "snow rising to heaven" signals resurrection rather than death. Similarly, the motif of falling that recurs throughout the collection carries a private

meaning for Salah: "I used to think dysphoria meant falling, / to fall out of, or even, within" ("Surgical Diary Nov. 3, 2000" 1-2). The term dysphoria actually comes from the Greek roots "dys" (bad, abnormal) and "pherein" (to bear), so in this context, despite its ominous associations with (original) sin and immorality, "falling" is somehow more bearable than the alternatives: "Veiled, pressed to the ground, and proud. / I fell long hours to endure this *peace*" ("Reading" I, 9-10; italics in original). Imagery that might suggest the abject—obscurity beneath the veil, prostration, a fallen condition—is revalorized to express pride and peace.

In "Reading *The Book of Suicides*," as elsewhere in the collection, pronominal use is slippery and undecidable. For example, when the speaker asks "With what body are you leaving?" (II, 4) it remains unclear whether the question is addressed to a lover or friend who is abandoning the speaker, or whether this constitutes an apostrophe to the transitioning self—or both. The decision to transition often has profound effects on loved ones. Friendships, intimate relationships, even kinship relations will inevitably alter and may even end, after surgery:

> Suppose, when next we meet you do not know
> This face or flesh, suppose my name is changed.
>
> Reincarnated, skipping over death, the lovers.
> I know you distrust the tale already. (II, 7-10)

If the formerly male subject "dies," he is "reincarnated" as the new woman (echoing the phoenix imagery of "Phoenicia ≠ Lebanon"). Alternatively, it is love itself that will be reincarnated, surviving the death of one embodiment and birth of another. For of course there is no corpse here: "Where who is dead is a different dead / Or word for who is a rose, has arisen" (III, 1-2). Who, or what, has died? Is the post-operative body the "same" body? Where, exactly, does gender identity reside, in relation to body and mind? Reformulating Freud's famous dictum that biology is destiny, Judith Shapiro suggests "For transsexuals, gender is destiny and anatomy is achieved" (272). One of the most striking things about *Wanting in Arabic* is the relative absence of the male body from the story. Salah reveals little or nothing about her decision to transition; she does not represent the male body or her feelings towards it in any detail, avoiding the common motif of being trapped in the wrong body, with the concomitant expressions of hatred or disgust for that body.[6] The emotional affect is almost exclusively invested in the female body. Like other (lesbian) feminists practising *écriture au féminin*,

Salah celebrates the woman's body. Any difference lies in the material specificity of trans experience.

The final section of "Reading *The Book of Suicides*" sums up the vagaries of desire and identification for the "third sex":

> A change of sex is not a suicide note
> What is a crypt? She heard him with his word.
>
> Veiled, crossed out, divide of his mouth still open
> She made her up—a language—we can only imagine
>
> For the future, divide of the world still open
> Not man or woman then—angelic, childish, feral, undead
>
> Language keeps its secrets, pink tongue roses, blooming
> The intoxication of death or you, a body becoming its own
>
> Name or sounding it out, slivers of cool wrists
> Broken, inscribed as accident, an accent encrypting
>
> A change of sex, the languish of your shadow.
> Or the sounding bell of this word's breach:
>
> What a sex is, is *forever* misled. (VI, 1-13; italics in original)

Woodland understands the "crypt" as figure for the former self; he argues "the reduction of the pre-operative self to mere object or empty sign is also marked by the way the first-person speaker relegates the former self here to a third-person status" (41). While it is true that the second and third person often appear to refer to the vanished masculine identity, Salah also uses the third-person "she" throughout the collection, and the antecedents of these pronouns are invariably uncertain. For instance, a line like "She made her up" alludes to the subject's self-invention in the third person, and possibly to the application of make-up—to constructions and performances of femininity. If there is dissociation from the former male self, because this poetry is written in the voice of an already transitioning (if not always fully transitioned) subject who identifies as woman/lesbian,[7] the third-person feminine marks a certain distance between the speaker and the emergent female self as well. But the shifting pronouns also mark that which is in excess of the frame—a constant dynamic transformation. At the same time, this poem declares twice "a change of sex is *not* a suicide note." Someone, some body, some consciousness and memory, continue across "death," from the past into the present. Surely it is significant that Salah phrases this as an unanswered question (what is a crypt?)—gender imperatives can never be fully comprehended. Apart from the obvious burial chamber, figuratively

a crypt can mean a hiding place, as implied by the pun on "encrypting." Perhaps the masculine aspect of the self is not fully dead, but occluded, much as the feminine side had to be disguised formerly. Consequently, he is now "veiled, crossed out, divide of his mouth still open" while she is made up, in language among other things—here, a language "we can only imagine / For the future," given the seemingly relentless binary gender "divide of the world." Language keeps its secrets, codifies human communication and behaviour far beyond the will of any individual. But meanings change, codes can be broken—as suggested by "the sounding bell of this word's breach." Feminist theory and writing have been speculating for decades about the gendering of language and discourse, the extent to which change in language effects change in the (social) world. Salah poses fascinating new questions about what *écriture au féminin* means in the context of a trans-woman's body/text. As she puts it in "when there are three" from "Language Becoming a Girl,"

> who is writing *in* the feminine on whose body
> whose cheesy equation of *the feminine*
> with desire
> is giving, getting
> off here
> and *who* slips (34-39; italics in original)

The transsexual body apparently breaks the rules—but if gender is always impersonation and approximation, how is this particular embodiment any more "misled" than any other?

At the end of "Reading *The Book of Suicides*," this "body becoming its own / Name or sounding it out" is characterized as "Not man or woman then—angelic, childish, feral, undead." These competing alternatives imply the transsexual is either more or less than human—"a figure of mythology, monstrous or divine," according to the caption accompanying the image of one transsexual's naked body in Catherine Millot's *Horsexe: Essay on Transsexuality* (48). Millot asserts that "Transsexuals want to belong to the sex of the angels"—an inference based in part on the statement of the FTM informant she calls Gabriel, who tells her that "transsexuals are neither men nor women, but something else" (126, 130). Salah's line catalogues a history of attitudes towards transsexuality: whether infantilized, derided as subhuman animals,[8] or idealized as transgender warriors, transsexuals have frequently been relegated to the limits of personhood. The undead seems a particularly apt metaphor for the "intermediate nonzone" of transition (Prosser

3), not living yet not quite dead, a revenant. While tropes of liminality continue throughout the volume, those related to death and haunting recede somewhat; the final section "Enduring this Future" rather emphasizes the healing of the post-operative body, the caring, supportive circle of family and friends, and the speaker's active engagement in grassroots protest (such as a demonstration against poverty in Toronto held on June 15th, 2000). Images of death and loss are counterbalanced by images of crossing and rebirth, and the re-mythologizing impulses that give the text its energy and vitality. At the heart of the collection lies a series of intensely sensual poems exploring sexual fantasies and celebrating the trans body and sexuality, a poetic response to existing psychoanalytical and medical discourses on transsexuality. Salah locates contemporary transsexual/transgender (TS/TG) realities at the very roots of Western culture.

Collectively, the poems in "Language Becoming a Girl" and "Hysteria of Origins" perform a similar function to Luce Irigaray's project in *Speculum of the Other Woman*—a title that takes on whole new meanings for transwomen. Salah deconstructs foundational discourses and myths of origin central to Western civilization, with a twist. "Language Becoming a Girl" suggests both language becoming to (appropriate for) a girl, and language itself in process, becoming-feminine. The first poem in this section, "when there are three" (27-33), is characteristic of Salah's *écriture au trans-féminine*. The title alludes to notions of the third sex or third gender, the indeterminate status of TS/TG people, picking up a cryptic remark from "Reading *The Book of Suicides*": "The third sex is always dead to the first / Transcending, to the second, susceptible" (IV, 1-2). Alternatively, if the speaker envisions hirself[9] as double, both male *and* female, then the third refers to a (former) lover or partner, and the effects of the decision to transition on this "third party" and their relationship. The poem's numbered sections count backwards, iii, ii, i, like a patient going under anaesthetic; the movement towards a singular "i" may also reflect progression towards a more unified sense of self, post-op—three becoming one.[10] (Salah uses the lower-case "i" for the personal pronoun in this poem, although the standard upper-case appears elsewhere in the collection.) In "iii," the pronominal play chiefly revolves around doubling of the second person, marked by periodic repetition of "& you." Second-person address thus oscillates between apostrophe to the speaker's alter ego and to the lover—and by extension to readers, drawing us into the drama. The indeterminacy is heightened by the fact that Salah frequently opens a parenthesis without closing it:

if i called you "darling" you would know all words are laden
what's next? you might ask, roses?
well, i'm in the grip of something you won't like
& i might call you (& you
as a prelude to stealing you away
the delusion i could call (that you must answer
must be symptomatic
of what? my rapture in proximity?
my lack of ego boundaries? (1-9)

There are eight opening parentheses but only six closing ones in this section; as the asides accumulate, readers must decide which syntactical units belong together, constructing complex layers of meaning. Interpretation of the poem depends in part on whether one reads "the grip of something you won't like" as desire *for* the beloved, or desire to become *like* the beloved. Does the poem represent a political ally suddenly getting romantic, hir desire unreciprocated, or an existing sexual partnership in the grip of sudden change? The syntax creates multiple open-ended possibilities. Salah contemplates what transpires when abstract theorizing about transgender as revolutionary politics meets the material reality of sexual desire, combined with the yearning for a different sexed being:

the other night, we three (i thought we were three
the perfect revolutionary couple
poised for radical intervention, engaged art and hot sex
well, my mistake, and thank you (& you
for your protests
because i was caught up in my own narrative, careening towards your
thighs, your lips & yours,
white tusks shining
like knights on white chargers off to slay sexism,
you know, though progressive non-possessive, wet and wild,
truly liberatory
my dispute with penetration
could hardly be called chivalrous (or disinterested . . .
(10-25; italics in original)

Gender politics take on a whole new dimension when they get into bed beside you. People who consider themselves "progressive" may discover their own preferences, prejudices and internal barriers when faced with profound and ongoing physical, psychic, and ontological changes in their partner. As Prosser puts it, "In transsexuality sex *returns*, the queer repressed, to unsettle its theory of gender performativity" (27; italics in original). In a few compressed lines, Salah wittily sends up a whole history of chivalric romance and

the complicated courtship dances of men and women; I particularly enjoy the collision between the shining white tusks (of the male chauvinist boar?) and the idealistic knight hoping to slay sexism. Casting "seduction as sedition" (31), Salah points to the treacherous nature of desire, its polymorphous threats to the status quo—of the relationship, the gender system, the nation, and for the transsexual subject hirself, the supposed integrity of the sexed body. Whether such changes are condemned as betrayal or welcomed as subversion depends entirely on one's point of view. In this context of shifting motives and mixed messages, the question "who is writing *in* the feminine on whose body" calls for urgent reconsideration of the notion of *écriture au féminin*. If to write the body is to recreate the world, what happens when the body itself is reconstructed? (This is one of the few poems in the book that refers explicitly to the male organ, asking facetiously "anyway what's / one more cock / or less" [27-29].) Inscribing the feminine on hir body, the transsexual subject seeks to write the female body materially as well as symbolically. Sandy Stone's conception of transsexuality as intertextuality is pertinent here, as she aims to "seize upon the textual violence inscribed in the transsexual body and turn it into a reconstructive force" (295). In this sense, surgery itself becomes a kind of performative re-writing of the body that may have wider implications for how gender is conceived. In contrast, sex-change operations are frequently viewed with horror as mutilation by the broader community: "we've had enough of mutilation from our enemies, thanks, / don't really need more from our friends" (48-49). The transsexual moment throws into question notions of embodiment, experience, essentialism, feminist epistemology, the social construction of gender—and numerous vested interests are threatened by the answers that might result. This segment ends with the speaker "stuck . . . in this unfinished / poem" (67-69), the line-break between "unfinished" and "poem" inviting the reader to supply the word "body" as well.

In "ii" attention shifts to the third person singular, which unlike first and second person in English is always gender-inflected. This poses practical as well as philosophical difficulties for TS/TG individuals, routinely misrecognized or compelled by law and social convention to tick only one box, either M or F. Here, pronominal play revolves around experimentation with gender-ambiguous constructions like "s/he":

> s/he's wearing her hair the way nostalgia does
> mirrors, tucked behind ears
> under reversed baseball cap s/he boundlessly

collapses in to you, these touches,
your in)difference
more than s/he could hope for
given the shape s/he left you *in* (76-82; italics in original)

The oblique stroke in "s/he" acts as visual cue for the surgical cuts required to transform male into female. Salah's "in)difference" re-opens a complex set of feminist and queer debates surrounding sexual difference and what Luce Irigaray calls "sexual indifference" (*Speculum* 28). Deconstructing Freud's essay on "Femininity," Irigaray demonstrates how the supposed sexual difference between men and women is predicated on the logic of the "*same re-marking itself*," "caught up in the dream of identity, equivalence, analogy, of homology, symmetry, comparison, imitation" (21, 27; italics in original).[11] Where both principles are conceived solely in relation to one of the terms, there can be no genuine difference. *Écriture féminine* consequently seeks to foreground women's embodied experience and libidinal desires as a means of resisting phallogocentric institutions and signifying practices that render women mute and invisible. Salah's textual strategies frequently bear the traces of such tactics. For instance, the lines "as *in* as it gets / (and out of / all her—enveloping frictions / touches of, the very *in*side)" (83-86; italics in original) are reminiscent of the sensuous touching lips from Irigaray's *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Salah's writing, however, is explicitly grounded in the trans-woman's body: the italicized repetition of "*in*" and ensuing play on outside/inside draws attention to the procedure that uses penile tissue to construct a vagina. Salah also revisits Daphne Marlatt's conceit of history as "hystery," "the excision of women" (88), with cutting humour:

never has the hystery of this body been so un/clearly
a case of his story (that old saw)
going madly after hers
après hors
this *in* seme(s) less
in sides taken, turned
out of, or,

after (87-94; italics in original)

The provocative pun on the "old saw" humorously compounds the revulsion of the average citizen at the thought of physical castration with the symbolic castration of women. According to the symbolic economy of specula(riza)tion, to have no penis is to have no value, no significance—as signalled by the pun on semes/seems less. Irigaray's explanation of women's castration as

having "*no sex/organ* that can be seen in a *form* capable of founding its reality. . . . *Nothing to be seen is equivalent to having no thing. No being* and *no truth*" (*Speculum* 48; italics in original) is echoed by Salah's lines,

> the new girl is no
> thing to me
> no girl now not like you no way no how not ever (119-21)

If women have been rendered redundant, "après hors" (after, outside, beyond, without a version), where does that leave transsexuals? These lines also suggest to me the potential political tensions between trans-women (the "new girl") and so-called "women-born women," epitomized by recent conflicts surrounding women-only spaces and organizations.[12] One accusation levelled against MTFs by some feminists and/or lesbians alleges transsexuals reinforce patriarchal hierarchy, reinscribe the conflation of biological sex with gender expression, and usurp women's power from the inside, as it were (his story going madly after hers). Yet those who wish to exclude MTFs from women-only spaces also risk accusations of biological determinism when they imply that only women socialized as girls from birth have fully experienced gender oppression. In effect, Salah's *écriture au trans-féminine* stakes a claim to greater diversity in the politics of sexual difference—all the while knowing that indifference (in the sense of mere tolerance) is often the best transsexuals can hope for, posing such threats to the social/symbolic order.

The expression "après hors" also incorporates an allusion to Millot's essay on transsexuality, *Horsexe*. As her title suggests, Millot believes that transsexuals are "outsidesex," that they incarnate the phallus:

> [Gabriel] feels neither man nor woman because the phallus is neither male nor female. Inasmuch as he personifies the term relative to which both sexes must situate themselves, he is outsidesex. . . . Incarnation of the phallus inevitably carries with it the obliteration of sexual features, and an attempt to join the abstract being beyond sex, the angel-being of the pure spirits. (135)

This type of logic, just one brief sample of the existing medico-psychoanalytic discourses that have shaped transsexual lives, helps explain Salah's insistence upon her physical body and active sexuality in her writing. Although elsewhere in the collection Salah appears to cite Millot approvingly—"Millot writes that we transsexuals make a demand upon the Real, for its adjustment. Just so" ("Surgical Diary Oct. 23, 2000")—Salah actually goes far beyond Millot's rather conservative Lacanian argument, a creative misprision.[13] Millot's abstract identification of transsexuals with the phallus

evacuates their subject position, misreading the transsexual in the same old tired terms once more:

> horsexe/whore sexed
> —hardly a fit subject for desire
> speaking the whole story of a sex (k)not spoken
> /hor plaisir/our pleasures were telling
>
> the (h)our of an other us . . . (156-60)

Salah's wordplay clears space to speak the story of transsexual desire, deemed unfit and unspoken in the conventional Oedipal triangulation: "'the unconscious oedipus complex takes the form of a k/not' / a can/not" (123-24). The speaker is also made to feel "whore sexed" by hir interlocutor's unspoken but implicit words, "how / like a boy," which figuratively "unspeak" (deny, undo, unsex) the transsexual: "like a boy cannot be spoken . . . uncut my tits, my clit, / *my womanly body*" (131-32, 134-37; italics in original).[14] In contrast, erotic poems such as "in this reel July is humid" and "where skin breaks" materialize and celebrate the transsexual lesbian body. The deconstruction of a phallogocentric discourse is just as urgent, if rather different, for Salah as it is for other feminists and lesbians.

The third section of *Wanting in Arabic* engages with what Salah calls "Hysteria of Origins." Alluding both to the pathologization of transsexual subjects, still defined by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM*) category of gender dysphoria,[15] and to the MTF's desire for a womb, "Hysteria of Origins" consists of five poems meditating on mythic or legendary figures of ancient Greece: Pandora, Tiresias, Eurydice, Orpheus, and Sappho. All five feature transgressive desires in some form, or straddle the bounds of life and death. If the purpose of classical myths is to establish taboos and account for origins, by transposing them to a contemporary transgender context Salah re-imagines what such figures might be and mean for the twenty-first century. The story of Tiresias, for example, has obvious resonance for a transgender mythology because he reputedly lived for seven years as a woman.[16] A prophet famed for accurate predictions of the gods' will, Tiresias retains traces of the sacred function of the hermaphrodite in ancient religious rites. This narrative is double-edged, however, from feminist and MTF points of view, because Tiresias's transformation into a woman is involuntary and carries punitive undertones. In "Tiresias' *Confession* (. . . in the snow)," Salah's twentieth-century incarnation occupies an analyst's couch, wondering "*what lies under?*" (5):

my obsession is benign
is *love* is *a gift* is *not*
a mortal sin, not a demand, notanobsession, notadestruction,
Willnotresultinruin, in
Ruin . . . (9-13; italics in original)

Demoted from oracle to sinner and then to patient, the gender-crosser is now interpreted according to psycho-medical discourses rather than sacred ones—though the fateful apprehension of disaster forms one point of intersection. For the modern Tiresias, the "chemical castration" of hormone therapy replaces the magical metamorphosis. But the figure continues to exert the powerful fascination of the individual who gains forbidden or otherwise inaccessible knowledge—the experience of living as both man and woman:

the things you learn about snakes, eh?
wanting, to be the beloved
wanting, to woo the beloved for the rival
to be the beloved of the rival
to fix the vectors of that triangle
forever, angling obliquely toward survival,
laterally against playing
judge, jury and executioner, for all my sex (23-30)

While queer and transgender theorists may dream of an apocalyptic narrative that forever *unfixes* the vectors of the Oedipal triangle, a transsexual may long for certainty, to end the ambiguity of 'hir' in favour of the stability of 'her.' For Tiresias, though, having crossed and re-crossed that gender divide, taking sides is hazardous, and the meaning of "all my sex" remains an open question, as the line immediately following indicates: "which sex? who wins?" (31).

If Tiresias symbolizes transition itself, or the doubleness of being both man and woman, then Pandora represents the newly born woman. "Pandora's Machine" (47-48), the first poem in "Hysteria of Origins," explores the clinical and social pressures on TS individuals to pass, both before and after surgery:

what sex was I?
don't ask, don't tell
give it here
keep it safe, a little keepsake
from the good old days (1-5)

In Greek mythology, the first mortal woman was designed at Zeus's command as revenge against Prometheus and humans for the theft of fire. Literally meaning "all-gifted," the name Pandora has become synonymous

with the gift that proves to be a curse. Salah's poem thus plays against a misogynist myth concerning the origins of women, the classical counterpart to the Christian account of Eve as prime instigator of original sin and source of all men's misfortunes. In Salah's poem, Pandora's notorious box becomes a metaphor for secrets and prohibition, a variation on the closet which should not be opened on pain of dire consequences:

> sometimes veering a girl/ flung
> aground/ it's nails hanging on
> the force of the explosions
> the unbounded questioning
> (unhinged, you shout—*Make it shut*
> *up!*—slick razor daddy, i loved you so
> even with your tools and your big ideas)
> a then verging boy with such pretty hands
> uncertain stare and auburn curls
> scrambling for the key
> like for dear life, for the inevitable *afterward* (6-16; italics in original)

These lines can be interpreted in multiple directions: it is conceivable that both the suppression of the former self and his history, and the denial of the longing to become a woman, create "the force of explosions." Colloquially, to open a Pandora's box is to begin a process that inevitably entails problems and complications, to start something that becomes unstoppable, so in this context it can also refer to the sex change procedure itself. Later in the poem, the "dissolution box" also stands (in) for the "cut up boy body, cut into girl body" (39). Salah's reference to being "unhinged" puns on the hinges of the box but also madness—the deeply-ingrained tendency to pathologize (a) woman (b) lesbian (c) effeminate boy (d) transsexual. Here the speaker scrambles for the key for dear life; paradoxically, only *releasing* the demons brings any hope for a (potentially) happily-ever-afterward. The transsexual subject must also accept some degree of pathologization as the only route to achieve surgery: "*in order to go awry you must confide in strangers / desire strangers' desires*" ("when there are three" 167-68; italics in original). The "slick razor daddy" with his shiny tools and big ideas expresses ambivalence towards the powerful authority-figure of the doctor/surgeon who has ultimate control over the fate of the transsexual; this may also explain why in the penultimate stanza the speaker "won't come on *Hope* / won't come on *Perhaps* / but on a knife's flared edge" (46-48). For the MTF transsexual, then, Pandora stands as a figure of temptation, desire, and identification, but

also as a cautionary figure, a scapegoat—she who possesses the longed-for "gifts" and cannot resist opening the box, but may be made to suffer for it. In a sexist, homophobic, transphobic world, the "good old days" were never that good in the first place. The formerly-male subject relinquishes his patriarchal power and privilege to achieve her feminine gender and identity—and the threat of oppression or injustice that may entail. Indeed, a transsexual lesbian subject is triply vulnerable. The pressures to conform also originate from multiple sites:

> you came with a manual
> cribbed lines from Hall, Woolf, Stein
> telling me *to decide*
> telling me *not to say*
> telling me *keep it closed*
> and so, I apologize
> but again—explosions— (19-25; italics in original)

The "manual" here refers equally to medico-psychiatric discourse (the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* [DSM]) and to potentially prescriptive foremothers of the lesbian canon against which the MTF might be measured and found wanting. These lines reflect the disjunction between the utopian celebration in queer theory of transgender as symbolic disruption of the oppressive two-gender system and the lived experience of transsexuals who are frequently excluded from women-only spaces, denied access to key services because institutions fail to recognize their existence,[17] or accused of usurping women's powers after a former lifetime of male privilege. Janice Raymond's infamous diatribe against transsexual women is only the most extreme expression of a set of fears and vested interests that often take much more mundane but insidious forms.

In the closing lines of her "Surgical Diary," Trish Salah asks "If desire is always a ruse, why this time or shape? / Why this cut, here?" Elsewhere she offers a partial reply: because "*the body never does cease to matter*" ("where skin breaks" 59; italics in original). Like other Canadian exponents of *écriture au féminin*, Salah foregrounds the gendered body as site of contestation, the feminine subject in the process of be/coming through writing. Transsexuals who opt for sex-reassignment surgery have a deep-seated investment in the materiality of a specifically-gendered and sexed body. While Salah does assert the strategic importance of being read *as* transsexual, she also expresses her necessary identification with the re/made female body—her being as a woman. In theory, the prefix "trans" in my neologism *écriture au*

trans-féminine is redundant. In practice, TS/TG narratives often "produce not the revelation of the fictionality of gender categories but the sobering realization of their ongoing foundational power" (Prosser 11). Foregrounding the notion of transsexuality as intertextuality, Salah writes back to an impressive cross-section of the metanarratives that perpetuate sex/gender norms. *Wanting in Arabic* invites readers to (re)consider the potentially exclusionary assumptions that underpin feminist and queer politics.

NOTES

1 Judith Shapiro makes a thought-provoking point about this notion of passing, however: "Since the term 'passing' carries the connotation of being accepted for something one is not, it is important to consider the complexities that arise when this term is applied to what transsexuals are doing," given that many transsexuals would view the "masquerade" as being the other way around. The pre-operative body is often felt to be the "wrong body," at odds with the "core self," so the subject struggles to perform the gender role assigned at birth on the basis of anatomical sex (255-56).

2 This does not mean that Salah's stance should be taken as representative or typical of (MTF) transsexual subjects more generally. For an important critique of transsexual activism as currently framed in relation to queer and transgender politics, see the work of Viviane K. Namaste in *Sex Change, Social Change*. Namaste argues the emphasis on identity politics and human rights issues obscures the substantive, pragmatic issues facing transsexuals in daily life: "an uncritical engagement with identity actually pre-empts any kind of institutional analysis" (19).

3 My thanks to Julia Emberley for reminding me of this point.

4 According to the poem, Salah has never been to Lebanon, and she subsequently comments on her inability to speak the language in "Wanting in Arabic." But "Araby" also has particular resonance for transsexuals, since Dr. Georges Burou's well-known clinic for performing sex-reassignment surgery was situated in Casablanca, Morocco, at a time when such surgery could be hard to obtain in the West (see Shapiro 249-50). Marjorie Garber plays on such associations in her title "The Chic of Araby: Transvestism and the Erotics of Cultural Appropriation," included in *Vested Interests*.

5 Pen name of the nineteenth-century master of the ghazal in Urdu. See Woodland for detailed interpretation of the collection's ghazals.

6 For instance, Jan Morris writes of her post-operative condition, "I felt . . . deliciously *clean*. The protuberances I had grown increasingly to detest had been scoured from me. I was made, by my own lights, normal" (qtd. in Millot 69-70). More recent observations by trans theorists suggest transsexual narratives reproduce the rhetoric of being "trapped in the wrong body" in order to conform to the conservative expectations of the psychomedical profession, to obtain surgery. In this context, Salah's refusal of the "wrong body" trope is consistent with resistance to such regulatory discourses.

7 A possible exception occurs in poems about Tiresias and Orpheus in "Hysteria of Origins," where the first person is used; however, it depends whether the reader interprets these as dramatic monologues adopting these personae, or as in the voice of a contemporary subject contemplating their stories.

8 "Feral" might also be read as a more liberatory descriptor—a being formerly domesticated but now escaped and running wild.

9 Salah adopts the constructions "s/he" and "hir" in this poem, to express the equivocal location of individuals in transition, or those who do not wish to be forced to choose between the dichotomous M or F. Compare Leslie Feinberg, who similarly uses the pronouns *hir* and *sie*, which she notes are pronounced like "here" and "see" respectively (*Trans Liberation* 1).

10 Or perhaps simply more isolated, as some friends, acquaintances and lovers fall away. The final section's layout on the page reflects this: the text is sparser, the lineation more disjointed, and words or short phrases hang suspended in blank space.

11 Teresa de Lauretis reprises this material in the opening pages of *The Practice of Love*, adopting the spelling "(in)difference" to express the discursive double bind she seeks to resolve.

12 Two case studies that might demonstrate points of intersection and tension between feminist and TS/TG politics are the controversy surrounding the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival's admission policies, and the *Nixon v. Vancouver Rape Relief* case. Both revolve around the ethical dilemmas raised when the concept of safe spaces for (sometimes vulnerable) women clashes with TS rights. It is impossible to do justice to these sensitive and complex issues in this article. For a brief overview, see Section III on "Inclusion & Exclusion" in Scott-Dixon.

13 First published in 1983, Millot's essay is most useful when she stops regurgitating the existing literature—which betrays all the sexist biases and limitations of its mid-century origins—and actually speaks with trans individuals. Not surprisingly, this has the effect of unsettling almost every assumption she has drawn to that point, and the essay closes rather abruptly just as it is getting interesting.

14 This notion of "unspeaking" is reminiscent of critical concepts like "*déparler*" and "*délire*" (unreading/ delirium) in France Théoret, Lola Lemire Tostevin, Nicole Brossard and others.

15 The declassification of transsexuality as mental disorder is rather more controversial for some transsexuals than it was for lesbian and gay activists, because of the continuing need for access to expensive sex-reassignment surgery. Ironically, the medicalization of transsexuality at least holds out the *possibility* of coverage under health insurance plans. For more on this issue, see Namaste, who rejects the campaign of TG activists like Leslie Feinberg and Riki Ann Wilchins to de-list gender identity disorder from the *DSM* (as inadvertent support for the privatization of health care) and offers as a counter-example the activism of Margaret O'Hartigan, who worked to get surgery covered by state insurance in Minnesota (*Sex Change, Social Change* 7-8).

16 Lacan and Millot both invoke Tiresias, a circumstance which may have prompted Salah's take on this figure.

17 Namaste has written extensively on this topic; see especially Part III of *Invisible Lives*.

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Tikva Hecht

Knob

When the door opened
When the door swung
When the door creaked
When the door
Opened
You were standing there
And I did not care.
I've always liked doors

I broke my tooth
My toe
My nose
My aunt's vase
Against doors

I've closed them on fingers
And at the wrong time and at the right time
And leant against them for the drama
And scratched
My fingers, and banged
My fingers, and pressed
My fingers against
So many doors. My favorite

The big wooden ones or glass
Ones that slide and hide
Nothing. I'd make
A world full of doors where
I could always arrive and never
Get in. I'd like it that way

I'd just open doors and close
Doors and listen to them bang
Or be knocked.

Marni Stanley

Drawn Out

Identity Politics and the Queer Comics of Leanne Franson and Ariel Schrag

The world of comics has traditionally been highly heteronormative and male-biased. That Leanne Franson and Ariel Schrag, two women, would engage this discourse with comics that tackle questions of identity formation for their queer heroines is, therefore, remarkable. It is in this generally hostile (homophobic, misogynist) atmosphere that their highly autobiographical characters each struggle to forge an identity that is not simply the one she is called to but one that also situates her uniquely in a subculture that has historically internalized homophobia itself. While this journey of self discovery is not portrayed in dramatic/traumatic terms in either text, each heroine is consciously trying to position herself in relation to conflicting ideas of what an acceptable identity, especially in the form of self-presentation, should look like.

Issues of sexual identity and the meaning of difference are explored, both visually and textually, in the comics of Ariel Schrag (US b. 1979) and Leanne Franson (Canada b.1963). Almost a generation apart in age, their works nonetheless expose similar anxieties about fixed sexual identities and the issue of how the adoption of a specific identity serves to position one in queer discourse. Schrag exhaustively chronicled her emotional life in her high school years in comics now collected into three large volumes, totaling almost 700 pages, which she began to publish in small self-published splits while still in school. Franson writes *Liliane, Bi-Dyke* which is available as a web comic and which has also been collected into mini-comics and small books dating from the early 90's. Both artists/writers are engaged in a conversation about the reductive and divisive nature of sexual identity politics. They argue against adopting any hierarchy of particular sexual identities and instead focus on proffering a challenge to normativity in general, and heteronormativity in particular.

Schrag and Franson aren't just telling queer stories in the highly heteronormative world of comics; they're telling their own stories. Schrag's comics are autobiographical; Franson describes hers as semi-autobiographical but often adds the phrase "true story" in small print at the end of a narrative sequence. Schrag uses the term "dyke" or "lesbian" for herself but portrays Ariel having sex with men as well as women, while Franson uses the term "Bi-Dyke" for her alter ego Liliane and represents her as also sexually involved with both men and women. The use of the autobiographical mode for these stories creates an authentic challenge to heteronormativity because it asserts an existing alterity. As authors, artists, and, in their original formats, distributors of these representations of their experiences and desires, Franson and Schrag are activists because they refuse silence and discretion, a discretion demanded by many heterosexuals, French philosopher Didier Eribon argues, because it "would allow the reassertion of peaceful certitudes, of the comfort of a normalcy built on the silence of others" (54). As well as creating a platform to speak their desires, the use of the autobiographical mode creates the expectation in the reader that the distance between the author, the narrator, and the central character is minimal. As Smith and Watson argue in *Reading Autobiography*, "the writer becomes, in the act of writing, both the observing subject and the object of investigation, remembrance, and contemplation" (1). Thus, if either Liliane or Ariel explores an issue in identity politics it is also likely an issue Franson or Schrag are investigating both for and in themselves. For example, in an untitled strip from 2004 Franson floats a series of nine characters on the page, beginning with her lead, Liliane, who announces that "labeling seems to be a big problem for sexual minorities." Each of the subsequent eight women proceeds to problematize in direct address to the reader, not interacting with each other, at least one of the following categories: lesbian, dyke, queer, butch, femme, bisexual. Clearly drawn distinctions in age, race, and styling imply, but don't clarify, that these issues of identity may be linked to other cultural viewpoints related to class, ethnicity, and so on. Franson concludes the strip with the ominous: "stay tuned for the 'more-radical-than-thou' wars!!" Her conclusion is that these identity positions are deliberately divisive, even competitive and combative—certainly not designed to build community. Because she positions Liliane as introducing the subject, but then not speaking to it in one of the testimonials, Franson appears reluctant to take a specific position on sexual identity. She creates a spectrum of characters to take stands while she remains a not-quite neutral observer, upset by the nature of the

character's statements but unwilling to adopt a fixed identity herself. She sees this self-labelling as combative, but does not explore the ways in which it may also be a defensive strategy.

Schrag's Ariel also struggles with the function of labels in relation to identity: while she is entitled to accept or reject any label attached to her, Ariel's mockery of others might be seen as a symptom of internalized homophobia. Eribon argues that because all homosexuals exist in a world saturated with insult, negative allusions, insinuations, and so on, which function

> to produce certain effects—notably to establish or to renew the barrier between "normal" people and . . . "stigmatized" people and to cause the internalization of that barrier within the individual being insulted, . . . [i]nsult tells me what I am to the extent that it makes me be what I am. (17)

Thus the climate of insult in which all homosexuals live contributes to the investment in nuances of identity difference which Franson observes, as well as to a tendency to criticize those like one, as Schrag explores. In *Likewise* by Schrag, Ariel rejects the recently-embraced identity "dyke" after her girlfriend Sally breaks up with her and tells Ariel that she, Sally, is not a dyke. "What the fuck is a dyke, doesn't exist if Sally's not one" (*sic* 7), Ariel tells herself; she then recounts how she and Sally mocked a lesbian teacher, Ms. Salt, over what they see as her "pro-dyke=pro-nothingness" position. At the same time as she insults Ms. Salt, it is Ms. Salt who sits in the art workroom day after day during her lunch break letting Ariel cry over Sally. Ariel recognizes that it is the very thing she mocks, Ms. Salt's pride in her identity, which makes the teacher so caring and so willing to provide "queer teen support" (7). Ms. Salt is able to "take care of [her] own" (7), because she acknowledges that being in a sexual minority may have eroded or even exiled students such as Ariel from earlier communities they may have inhabited. Ariel is affirmed, though not directed, in her sexual identity by the mentoring of her teachers, Ms. Salt and later also Ms. Nocatz. By the end of the volume Ariel has matured enough to acknowledge the debt she owes Ms. Salt. One of the things her teachers help her to understand is that she cannot mend her broken heart simply by rejecting the associated sexual identity.

One of the things that drives Ariel and Sally to mock Ms. Salt is internalized homophobia in the form of shame. Eribon theorizes that shame is the most isolating of the emotions created by insult. He ends his discussion of the function of insult in homosexual identity with the following summary:

> because it is always collective in nature, because it writes an individual into a group, one of the effects of insult is that it encourages the individuals in question—

> or those who wish to avoid being brought into question—to find any means to separate themselves from the "species" to which the social and sexual order would have them assigned. Precisely because it collectivizes, insult encourages individualism. (73)

Eribon reminds us that it is not just an accidental consequence of insult, but instead one of its functions, to put barriers in the way of community and collectivity. Schrag illustrates this beautifully in Volume II, *Potential*, when Ariel and her girlfriend Sally discuss the dyke scene at school and who is out and proud. To contrast themselves with that group Ariel declares, "*We're* like not proud," to which Sally adds "We're proud to be *ashaaaamed*! Let's hear it for shame!" (125, her emphasis). Further to Eribon's argument, as each subculture develops its own normative injunctions it creates further alienation by creating a hierarchy of compliance and authenticity. To Ariel and Sally there is something wrong, even inauthentic, about the proud dykes whom they see as having developed their own normative rules of style and behaviour.

One of the ways people can express notions of identity is through bodily gesture and adornment. In autobiographical texts questions about embodiment proliferate. To what extent does the author write of and inhabit a body as well as an intellect? Do readers expect even more embodiment in queer autobiographies because what is sexual identity if not of the body? In comics the author must be embodied, even if they draw themselves as caricature. In *Alternative Comics* Charles Hatfield argues for the effectiveness of caricature as self-presentation:

> Like the subversive subalterns who reappropriate hateful epithets for their own ends, a cartoonist may actually find him or herself through a broad, cartoony, in some sense stereotypic self-depiction. . . . Paradoxically, playing with one's image can be a way of asserting the irreducibility of the self as agent. (115)

Schrag is particularly diverse in her self-representations. Not only is her style changing as she matures and practises her technique, but she also varies techniques for emphasis and for emotional effect. In the final volume, *Likewise*, she has pages in her dominant line-only style, a small number of pages in ink washes which have an almost photographic effect, and pages in a loose and chaotic rough sketch style which exaggerate the drawn effects. Occasionally she makes hatch marks over a series of drawings, almost obscuring them. She uses this technique on a series of panels illustrating Ariel having sex with a girl she has no particular feelings for (Figure 1). The effect of all these lines over the awkwardly drawn images creates a visual, but

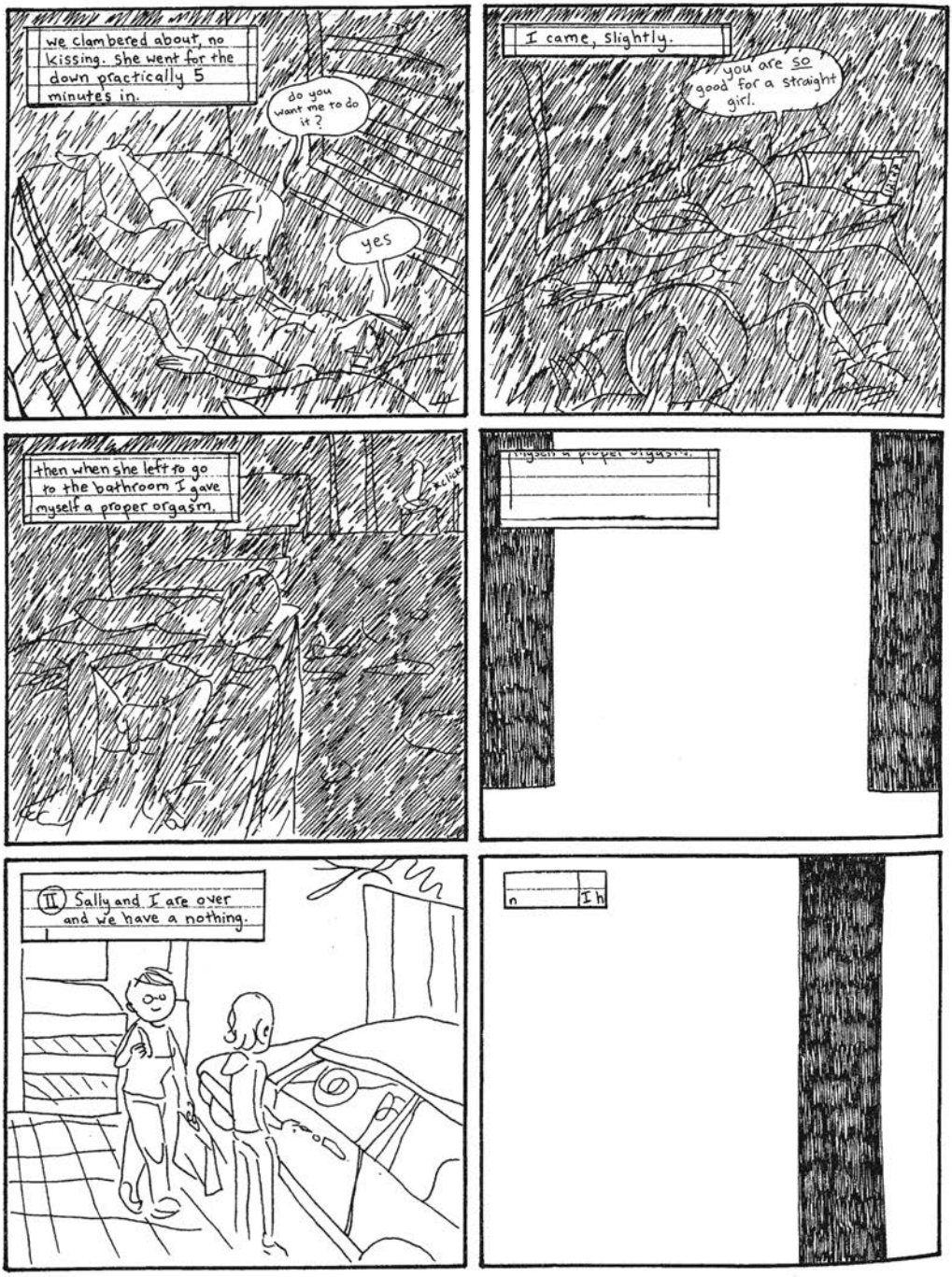

Figure 1: Ariel Schrag, *Likewise*.

unspoken, rendering of shame. The way she handles this scene also reminds us that there are things we come to know or understand through the body and she wants that knowledge even if she feels sad about the way it was learned. She may not wish to celebrate this moment, as both the shortness of the scene and the cross-hatching over it suggest, but she does not want to omit or obliterate it either. As Smith and Watson point out:

> By exploring the body and embodiment as sites of knowledge and knowledge production, life narratives do several things. They negotiate cultural norms determining the proper uses of bodies. They engage, contest and revise cultural norms determining the relationship of bodies to specific sites, behaviors and destinies. And they reproduce, mix, or interrogate cultural discourses defining and distinguishing the normative and ab-normative body. (41-42)

Both Schrag and Franson, by writing and drawing their own lesbian or bisexual bodies, challenge both the dominant heteronormativity and the norms within their subcultures. When they write about sex with men they are not celebrating heteronormativity but their prerogatives as non-heterosexual women to have sex with men if both parties so desire. By including their desire for men as well as women they resist being coerced into an either/or position by the subculture. By labeling herself "Bi-Dyke" Franson chooses to reflect an identity, reiterated in the title of every episode of her comic, which resists containment by all three of the popular labels of hetero/homo/bi-sexuality. In their works both artists engage in self-display, as is the essence of autobiography. But, as Eribon argues: "self-display . . . [is an] important means of defying the heteronormative hegemony. . . . Shame cedes its energy to self-exhibition . . . and thus to self-affirmation" (106). Even when Schrag scribbles over a scene she does not completely obscure or omit it—telling the truth about what we know through the body includes telling the truth about what we are not proud of and instead being proud of the honesty that conquers shame.

We dress the body for public display and thus the labour of constructing identity takes place on the outside as well as the inside. Both authors talk a lot about "the look"—where jeans should fall on the hip, the right t-shirt, and so on. Because comics must also give us the outside, the characters interacting on the page, it's easy for both artists/writers to show the importance of the haircut, the posture, the walk, the facial expression, in the codes of sexual identity their characters inhabit or wish to inhabit. *Likewise*, Schrag's final volume ends with Ariel in the bedroom where she, and her readers alongside her, have spent so much time. She stands in front of her mirror, her high

school graduation over, celebrations and farewells made, and she peers closely at her face looking for "zits." Her final line of narration is "this is what I do with my time" (359). The final panel of the trilogy is of the framed mirror within the framed panel of the comic, reflecting a reverse Ariel back at us and reminding us, one final time, that this is how she chooses to represent her identity. As we reflect on her drawing of her reflection we are left to ponder with her all the time spent in front of that mirror, and by association in front of our own mirrors, where we, in turn, think about whether our reflection represents us as we wish to be seen at any particular moment in time.

While for some, embodying desire is all about projecting a consistent message, for others, such as Franson's Liliane, desire has a certain fluidity and may be embodied in a playful world of sometimes contradictory codes. Comics provide her with an ideal medium to reveal the possibilities of changing looks and performing identities. In "Playing with Perruques", a story in *Teaching Through Trauma*, in which Liliane buys four very different wigs and then notes the very different reactions she gets to this much more feminine hair than her usual short hair style (Figure 2). Her wigs range from a short precise brunette Louise-Brooks-style bob to long lush blond curls. Some of her own ex-lovers don't recognize her at the bar, she gets served differently in stores, and some friends complain she has turned herself into a feminine bimbo. She puts different outfits with the different wigs (a corset with the bob, a flowing summer dress with the long blond curls) and concludes that this ability to pull off completely different looks is evidence of her versatility and the fluidity of identities. To underline the connection, Franson has her author's photo for the book taken in one of her wigs. The narration on the final six panels of the story claims: "Despite the blatant femme privilege . . . the political crisis . . . the anti-femme prejudice . . . and the mistaken identities . . . I'm having a blast!!! Know someone looking for 'versatile'?!!" (19, her ellipses). Her choice of the word "someone" suggests that in spite of presenting her desire as fluid and multiple, she really is looking for one person who enjoys her multitudes. Each of the conflicting experiences is illustrated to amplify the point. For example, Franson illustrates "the anti-femme prejudice . . . " with Pierre telling Liliane she looks "gruesome . . . like a blond bimbo!!" to which Liliane replies " . . . nice misogynist sentiment, Pierre!" But at the same time the small text of narration at the bottom of the panel with an arrow pointing to Liliane tells us, she "has, of course, said same herself" (19). Now that she is dressing up femme on occasion, a type

Figure 2: Leanne Franson, "Playing with Perruques," *Teaching Through Trauma*.


Despite the blatant femme privilege
Get out!! This is the WOMEN'S toilet!
...i better say something! that was me yesterday!!
...the political crisis...
...is this me fulfilling my inner self, or me bowing to the pressures of patriarchal conformity?!!
always did love little summer sundresses!!
...the anti-femme prejudice...
...how gruesome, liliane!! You look like a blond bimbo!!
...nice misogynist sentiment, Pierre!
has of course said same herself!
...and the mistaken identities...
hi liliane! Had hoped to see you yesterday, but i saw some other girl walking your dog... ...your sister?
no, it was me...
...i'm having a blast!!!
...wish i had your lovely hair!!
...you can't HAVE it, but you can try it on!!
Know anyone looking for "versatile"?!!
all of me...
Why not take all of me?
19
END!!

she herself is not attracted to, she feels defensive of an identity which is a field for play, rather than a space in which she lives. But even just visiting that identity allows her to see how the privileges and problems of femme identification differ from those of butch identification. Because of her strong interest in how different people read the performative or coded aspects of identity, Franson is watching for, and learning from, the different responses to her alter-ego, Liliane, as not just femme, but different styles of femme.

One technique autobiographical comic writers can use to distance themselves from the primary character and create an observational distance is through narration (what French comic theorists call *récitative*) as well as speech and thought balloons, which allow for a commentary on characters and events. Franson uses narration relatively minimally; Schrag uses it extensively in some sections, up to fourteen lines of tiny writing boxed off across the top of a single panel. It is in the use of narration that we can most easily see the shaping and constructing of the autobiographical text grappling with identity. Unlike speech and thought balloons which are always in the present, the narration allows for hindsight and interpretation. Ann Miller explains the distinction in *Reading Bande Dessinée*:

> the split between the presenting and represented self corresponds. . . . With a further distinction between the immediacy of texts attributed to the autobiographical self in speech balloons, and in the retrospective effect of the recitatives, where dissociation between character and narrator is maximal. (218)

In the opening sequence of *Potential,* Schrag narrates her way through the school hallways at the beginning of eleventh grade, imagining the occasional naked girl in the hallway, or even astride the frame of a panel of the comic. She takes her desk in a classroom, grabs the edge of the desk with both hands and stares out at us while the narration above her declares: "This year was just not the time for frivolous sexual orientating to take place. I had a boyfriend and a damn good one at that. It was time to settle down and learn some math" (3). She has just spent the last two pages fantasizing about girls but her narrator self can instruct her to redirect her sexual feelings precisely because it is not in the moment of the action. Even when she is having a "nothingness" moment and provides a blank panel as evidence, she will sometimes put a blank narrative box into the frame (*Likewise* 326) reminding us of the ongoing distance between character and narrator even when neither has anything to say.

Schrag chooses as her author photos, not photos contemporary with the edition, but with the year of high school in which the comic originated.

These comics (written from ninth to twelfth grade) depict an adolescent's struggle to construct identity in the face of insecurity, sexual confusion, unreciprocated desire, separating parents, and the general social, emotional, and psychological complexity of those teenage years. Schrag catalogues her high school world in 667 pages of, at times, exhaustive detail. As her friends come to know of the comics and their own appearance in them the whole enterprise becomes increasingly fraught with self-consciousness. Still, we know she shapes it carefully because she often discusses the comic process and draws herself critiquing segments with her art teacher and so on. However thorough it feels, there is much left out. In contrast, Franson's carefully crafted short pieces may show more evidence of shaping in terms of the structure of story, but she shares with Schrag a propensity to return repeatedly to the questions of sexual identity—what does it mean, in this context, to say I am queer? How does my understanding of my identity shape the interactions that make up my day? How does being queer empower or disempower me? Alienate me or help me find community?

The characters of both Schrag's Ariel and Franson's Liliane ponder the meanings of masculinity and femininity in relation to queerness and desire, including their desire, as women, for sex with men as well as the relationship of such desire to heteronormativity. In one of her post break-up conversations with Sally, the 18-year-old Ariel struggles to understand if female masculinity and female homosexuality are connected. She tells Sally that "dyke=manly and straight=feminine" (123) and that therefore Sally's femininity is evidence that the latter was trying to go straight. But in the next panel she admits that, like Sally, Ariel has enjoyed sex with men so she concludes that perhaps that is proof that homosexuality doesn't exist at all and she must be "really straight but like, living in Berkeley or whatever" (123). In other words, Ariel asks herself if she has simply acquired a metrosexuality because of where she lives, so that geography may also create desire, at least to the extent that a place tolerates, or even makes available, particular sexualities. After Sally hangs up, Ariel writes in her notebook, and that text and her process of revision of it become part of the comic. Because Sally has told Ariel that Ariel is a dyke even though Sally is not, Ariel can conclude, "her voice: confirmation, and my state's confirmed" (127). Someone who has rejected both a lesbian identity and Ariel herself still assumes the power to define Ariel's sexuality. This moment emphasizes the role of others in the shared social and cultural spheres in defining a person's identity. As Eribon argues,

> A personal identity in fact takes shape through the degree of acceptance or refusal of this 'interpellation' and through the often difficult and painful evolution, over years, of this relationship of submission and rebellion. (24)

In this instance Sally's interpellation matches Ariel's understanding of her own desire so she embraces it.

Liliane, for whom masculinity and femininity are very performative and variable, puts on a harness, goes to a gay leather bar, and jokes with a friend that he would be a very cute butch dyke in the 2004 story "Boy George." He, in turn, calls her "Dyke Bitch" and tells her she didn't have to butch it up so much. Franson draws the two characters relatively similarly (though Liliane never has a nose). When the owner, Vince, christens her "George," Liliane is thrilled and Franson labels her "the happy bi [woman] in the leatherfag bar." In a subsequent strip she takes her friend's advice to dress less butch and puts on a long blond wig (an accessory that features in other strips about femininity and self-representation) and goes back to the bar. This time she cannot get in even though she tells them the name of the owner, the bartender and the friend, and about her previous visits. Her performance of femininity has crossed the line of what the bar will tolerate. The men in the strip who think it is nice to "see a girl / have some pussy in here" have a very particular image of a girl in mind. In her mini-comic "The Fucking Faggot" Liliane flirts with a gay man in a bar and makes out with him, but in the end he goes home with his unseen, but presumably male, friend. Because Liliane desires butch women (and long-haired men) it is easier for her to include a cute guy than a feminine woman in her world of desires though she will drag up as the latter occasionally—trying out other versions of her sexual self. Unlike Ariel, Liliane never comes out and says feminine=straight and feminine lesbians appear as friends in her world if not in her desires.

Although in a recent interview with Anna King for *Time Out New York* Schrag has stated "I didn't grow up with homophobia, there wasn't a sense of shame about sexuality," in the comics Ariel talks about her internalized homophobia. While in eleventh grade she and Sally embraced shame in opposition to pride, in twelfth grade she became fixated for a short time on the idea that homosexuality is an evolutionary defect and, to her, this partially explains why Sally seems to have gone back to boys. In one of her many conversations with her art teacher and ally, Ms. Salt, Ariel states that sex is "really all about wanting to *complete* yourself with something *different*, the opposite that locks in and makes sense *plus* reproduction" (her emphasis

77), Ms. Nocatz, like Ms. Salt, wears her pants "suspiciously high" (82) but Ariel believes that in spite of this defect they are "really gay" (82) and she recognizes that they both talk to her honestly and try to provide her with a caring and compassionate space in which to come out, space, in other words, to explore what coming out means to her.

Because all geopolitical states regulate sexuality, and because most of them regulate or have regulated homosexuality much more aggressively than heterosexuality, homosexuals often have an understanding of sexuality informed in part by laws specific to their nation and state/province. Although both comics are set in a specific time and place their authors are less interested in identity in terms of geographic and political states than in identity as a product of emotional and psychological states. But Franson's Liliane is well aware of the differences in her rights as a Canadian in relation to her peers in the United States. Franson lives in Montreal, but grew up in Regina. Only in issue #38, "I am thankful . . . " (2005) does she literally fly the geopolitical flag. This issue has Liliane on the cover waving the Canadian flag and wearing a t-shirt that says "~~N~~o% American" (her erasure), her response to the re-election of George W. Bush late in 2004. The text consists of a series of illustrated statements each beginning "I am thankful for . . . " praising aspects of the Canadian political landscape not specifically related to sexuality, such as universal health care, as well as aspects which are, such as inclusive marriage rights.

The most significant use of geography as related to the discovery of identity comes when Franson's hero, Liliane, leaves Montreal to visit her mother in a prairie city. For those stories she draws an opening panel of a grain elevator or the flat extended view around the city (#28, 1995). Liliane walks around the city looking in vain for signs of a visible lesbian presence. On the plane back to the east she sits next to another lesbian and they share their escaping-the-prairies stories. But this story also makes clear—in the panel that shows Liliane walking past a newspaper turned to a page of personal ads which we see, but Liliane does not—that the lesbians are there, just not visible the way they are in Montreal. Living in a more open environment, Liliane, but not Franson, who drew the panel, has almost lost the ability to read more subtle and underground identity codes. The point of this journey is to demonstrate the degree to which Liliane has begun to take a varied and diverse subculture for granted, so much so that she seems oblivious to the more subtle cues that signal a less "out," perhaps less extensive or diverse queer subculture.

Both Franson and Schrag tend to draw backgrounds in a generic rather than particular way. Franson's Liliane is often sitting at a table, talking against a white ground. She sketches in more details for an interior sequence in a bar, living room, or bedroom, but in exterior scenes the outdoors is merely suggested by a few blades of grass, some sidewalk pavers, and perhaps a lone tree or piece of fence. Schrag's comics also occupy a world of interior spaces. Ariel and her friends hang out in school and in domestic spaces, especially bedrooms, which are drawn with loving attention to the specific details of teenage décor (such as movie posters on the walls). The family dinner table, bathrooms, a few key classrooms at school (especially the art room), and some music venues, make up the primary locations of Schrag's three volume *High School Chronicles*. Rare outdoor scenes have minimal backgrounds, although they get a bit more detailed in volume three. When she moves about in cars or buses the windows are blacked out. What movement there is, is mostly within interiors; the map of her outer life seems small. She may live in Berkeley, but she rarely mentions the place or references anything of American political life. Popular culture references, such as to the films of Juliette Lewis, her favourite actor, give us some sense of time and place. The only real glimpse of a cityscape comes near the end of volume three when she goes into the city to purchase her first dildo at a sex shop; it's clear she has fun drawing the *mise-en-scène* for that interior. Although Ariel goes to a school with some progressive teachers, including out homosexual women, and where her comics are taken seriously as part of her "potential" (the title of her second volume), she is mostly preoccupied with interior spaces, reflective of Ariel's inner life. Her own bedroom, where she writes her diaries and illustrates her life in comics, documenting every emotional up and down, where she masturbates to fantasies of both males and females, where she tries on clothes and stares into the mirror contemplating her look, is the space of Ariel's discovery of identity. The oppositions of Ariel's world are archetypal; they are the great chasms of adolescence—joy or depression, cool or reviled, loved by your one true soul mate or eternally lost, normal or not normal.

In the more mature world of Franson's Liliane the great emotional rollercoaster of adolescence may be over but the judgmental world of identity politics continues. In "Tax Evasion Liliane", when she donates a work of art to a lesbian fundraiser, Liliane finds herself in a fight after the auction with the woman who purchased her drawing. The purchaser is incensed that Liliane is bi and wants her to admit that she is really a lesbian who sleeps with men. When Liliane won't, the woman expresses her regret

that she bought the art at all since it no longer represents what she thought she was buying. She implies that it shouldn't have been in the fundraiser! The purchaser's outrage stems from the fact that the art is literally devalued for her by Liliane's revelation. Later in the same collection, in the story "Yes, We Don't Want No Bisexuals" Liliane volunteers to go into schools as part of an anti-bullying initiative in her province. At the first session she is taken aside and told she can't participate because she is bi even though volunteers who were once married to the opposite sex or admit to still having heterosex are acceptable if they identify as homosexual. Only the word bisexual, not the act of sex with a member of the opposite sex, is contested. Both these strips expose absurdities within the world of identity politics, but both also expose the deep investment and sense of value that these terms convey for those committed to them. These nuanced identities may be accurate, but they also have the potential to create normalizing pressures within subcultures already engaged in challenging the pressures of heteronormativity.

Fragmented and particular sexual identities can be seen as challenging heteronormativity by expanding our understanding of the complexity and fluidity of human sexuality. To try to contain these identities within a generalized vocabulary is counterproductive because it suppresses the enrichment of difference. Autobiography as a genre seems designed to explore difference. As Smith and Watson argue:

> We are also witnessing, in an outpouring of memoirs, the desire of autobiographical subjects to splinter monolithic categories . . . and to reassemble various pieces of memory, experience, identity, embodiment and agency into new, often hybrid, modes of subjectivity. In this pursuit, life narrative has proved remarkably flexible in adapting to new voices and assuming new shapes across media, ideologies, and the differences of subjects. (109)

Furthermore, if Eribon is right when he claims that the "intensification of 'subcultural' life" is a major challenge to the powers of normalization, why would anyone not embrace expanding that challenge? (Surely it is partially the progress of homosexual and/or queer identities in articulating themselves that has encouraged some of the hetero subcultures of recent years).

These comics I've looked at briefly are all about carrying on conversations—in interviews, in phone calls, in schools, bedrooms, and bars. They are all images of talking about identity and sexuality. People explore their sexuality through experience and feeling but also through knowledges and through the continuing privilege of conversation. By foregrounding the processes and politics of identity these two queer comic artists, Leanne Franson and Ariel

Schrag, add to the conversation by telling their own stories and exploring part of the complexity of human sexual desire. Schrag reminds us of the exhaustive adolescent roller coaster of making meaning (often too much meaning) and forging identity from experiences, and Franson reminds us of the life-long complexities of identity politics. By consistently poking fun at characters who are over-invested in small differences, Franson invites us to see the potential for celebrating difference as spectrum rather than hierarchy. Through their comic explorations both writers/artists have become, to revisit Eribon's point, questioners of the social and sexual orders and of the institutions that uphold them.

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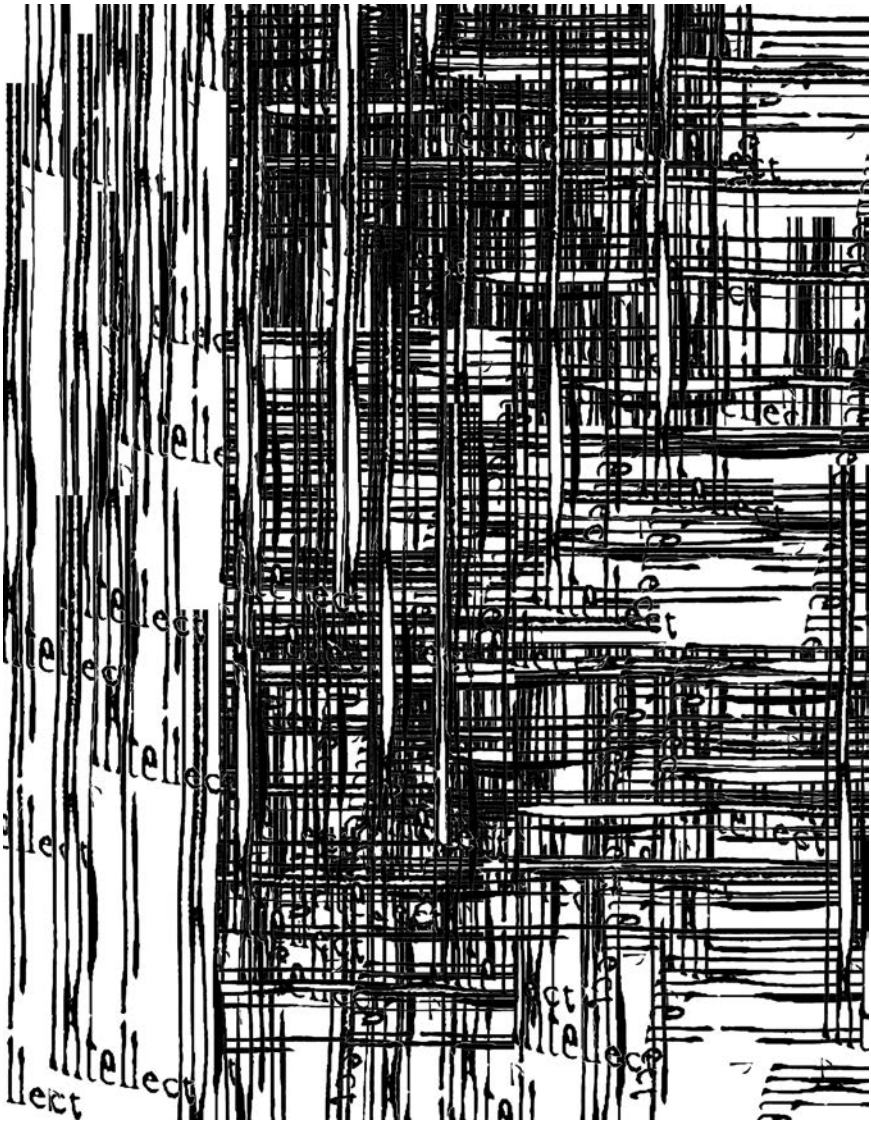
Jesse Patrick Ferguson

Black Noise



L. Chris Fox

The Paradise Alms House
Siting Literary Thirdspace in Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*

Although most criticism of Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night* focuses on the Ramchandin garden, my analysis reveals that the comparatively neglected institutional space of The Paradise Alms House is central to both the narrative and the ethics of the novel. The overwhelming focus on the Ramchandin garden appears to be related to the critical dynamic noted by Christine Kim, who argues that *Cereus* "is typically packaged as post-colonial" (154) and discussed "within the cultural politics of the academy rather than the lesbian feminist politics of activism out of which it emerged" (159). Thus, while the destructive effects of colonization on the Ramchandin family are generally recognized, the equally destructive effects of sexism and heterosexism, which are inseparable from and interlocking with those of colonization, are less often discussed. Kim suggests that "reading texts solely through common postcolonial tropes and the popular theoretical lens of hybridity poses its own set of limitations" (163). This article balances the critical focus by identifying the alms house and its residents' garden as a place of productive literary thirdspace. This strategy restores the novel's full range of ethical engagement, which presents hybridity in a context of community and concerns with gender, and sexuality in the postcolonial setting of Lantanacamara, a fictional Caribbean island.

Sarah Philips Casteel's focus on the Ramchandin garden is typical of existing *Cereus* criticism. Although she concedes that "much of the action takes place" in the Paradise Alms House, she argues that "the [novel's] centre . . . is a semi-magical garden that is set against the experience of displacement . . . that is so characteristic of the Caribbean and its literature" (24, 16). Isabel Hoving's reading differs in that it illustrates the limitations Kim warns

against. Hoving focuses on the Ramchandin garden as a postcolonial trope. She "links the intense experience of the plant world to pain" and claims that "at first sight, this pain lives in sexual trespassing, not in colonization." Although Hoving eventually concludes, more equitably, that "like the concept of hybridity, the metaphor of the garden analyzes the colonial as both racial and sexual," her assertion that the novel "*seems at first* sight to be about incest" (my emphasis) denies that *Cereus* is, in fact, about incest, as well as homo- and transphobia, sexism, and colonialism. Hoving's wording also disturbs because it includes incest and lesbianism under "sexual trespassing" (217).[1] This does some violence to the novel because it promulgates a confusion specifically repudiated in *Cereus*. Mala's nurse, the transgendered Tyler, explains, "[I]t was a long time before I could distinguish between [Chandin's] perversion and what others called mine" (51). Perhaps the focus on the garden represents a retreat to the familiar in the face of the more transgressive and challenging themes of incest, marginalized sexuality, and gender identity. Judith Misrahi-Barak unwittingly suggests this in her observation that, in *Cereus*, "the traditional [Caribbean] theme of childhood is intertwined with the two more unusual ones of homosexuality and incest, which are not immediately associated with Caribbean writing" (94).

In this article, I focus on the more unlikely space of a Catholic alms house and argue that it and the literary thirdspace that Mootoo creates there,[2] rather than the Ramchandin garden, form the ethical heart of the novel. I stress from the outset that literary thirdspace, like Homi K. Bhabha's "Third Space" (53), is not fully representable. Its relational geography is an intangible born of a web of invisible connections within and between characters, identifications, and the inhabited landscape. The alms house is not, itself, thirdspace. Instead, it provides a locational frame within which cultural meanings are reworked so that characters may perform self-coherent versions of themselves and be appreciated *as themselves* by others. Siting literary thirdspace at the Paradise Alms House introduces a focus on community and argues that *Cereus* presents a spatialized community, an interwoven network of the social and physical wherein the ethics of living difference in community may be observed. My explorations suggest that recognizing the qualities of witnessing, kindness, safety, and radical acceptance of self and other within a relational geography not only serves to distinguish literary thirdspace from Bhabha's originary concept, but also (re)claims these qualities from liberal humanism. I suggest that they belong, instead, to the critical conversation that seeks radical, effective, and peaceful social change.

On the level of narrative and content, the novel presents a way to, as Judith Butler suggests, "pose the question of 'identity,' but no longer as a pre-established position or uniform entity; rather, as part of a dynamic map of power in which identities are constituted and/or erased, deployed and/or paralyzed" (117). Coral Ann Howells asserts that "Mootoo writes about liminal identities positioned on the margins or between worlds. Such issues relate not only to the immigrant condition but also to sexual and racial politics and the legacy of colonialism" (7). I argue that *Cereus*' textual and ethical concern with relational and interlocking multiple identifications (on the individual and the community level) encompasses both postcolonial commentary and the feminist shift towards viewing identity as interlocking or intersectional (see Dill, McLaughlin, and Nieves).

At the Paradise Alms House, multiply hybrid subjectivities are able to perform themselves openly and, by so doing, undermine the power of hegemonic norms. Each performance is relational, and the ineffable thirdspace created through this hybrid community recalls the "thinking of community that is open to the contingencies of singularity . . . in the spacing, the together-touching, of singularities" advanced by Samira Kawash in the context of African American narratives (213). The relational geography of literary thirdspace in *Cereus* inaugurates a radical integration that I deliberately misspell as *inter*gration to parallel Bhabha's "*inter*national," which places the emphasis on relation, on between-ness, on "*inter*" (56). My neologism signals an integration that privileges "singularities" by resolutely refusing to homogenize the different parts of an individual or a community whilst nevertheless achieving a degree of harmony. To borrow from Bhabha, this represents "how newness enters the world" (303). It is "newness" that indicates the radical potential of interdependent qualities such as kindness and openness.

Although it would be presumptuous and reductive to attempt to reprise the extensive critical discussions of thirdspace and hybridity,[3] literary thirdspace, like Bhabha's Third Space is grounded in language and linked to hybridity. Bhabha links Third Space to hybridity through his reading of Frantz Fanon and, following Fanon, asserts that "the liberatory people who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change are themselves the bearers of a hybrid identity" (55), an assertion with relevance to Mootoo's fictional characters and to literary critics. The link between performing hybrid identity and initiating cultural change accounts for much of the theoretical and activist enthusiasm for "hybridity" and "Third Space." The possibilities these concepts imply are available to subjects of gender and

sexuality as well as to postcolonial subjects. While Bhabha declares that it is "significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance" (56), he also recognizes that "[w]hat is at issue is the performative nature of differential identities . . . [and] the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of difference—be it class, gender or race"—or sexuality (313). Nevertheless, the North American deployment of Bhabha's "Third Space" and its attendant terminology of cosmopolitan hybridity have set off an important critical debate around what Rey Chow calls "the euphoric valorization of difference" and the "insufficiency of hybridity." Chow claims that this, "in North America at least . . . must be recognized as part of a politically progressivist climate that celebrates cultural diversity in the name of multiculturalism" (62). My reading of *Cereus* demonstrates both the dangerous insufficiency of an individualistic or narcissistic hybridity and the revolutionary possibilities of relational hybridity.

The example of Chandin forestalls a celebratory reading of hybridity in *Cereus*. I largely agree with Hoving's assessment of the effects of colonialism on Chandin, despite her slighting of the effects of patriarchy. Hoving links hybridity in postcolonial texts to representation and relation (as discussed by Édouard Glissant) rather than through the postmodernism of Bhabha, but nevertheless observes that "the father's crime is situated within the context of colonization: he is one of the tragic persons meant to be part of the Caribbean colonial elite, a mimic man who found at a crucial moment that he was not quite white and British" (217). Of course, he also discovers that his wife does not "belong" to him and he cannot control her. But it is Mootoo's careful delineation of the damage done to Chandin by the workings of colonialization that allows him to seem tragic.

Early on, readers, along with the immigrant workers who discuss Chandin's rare good fortune in being informally adopted by the Reverend Ernest Thoroughly, are exhorted to "Remember that name." However, the pain wrought through his interpellation into the Wetlandish church and culture cruelly mocks this early optimism. By the novel's end, Chandin's hybridity clearly contributes to the alienation that allows him to become a drunken, violent, and incestuous father rather than an exemplary man of God. It is understating the case to say that cultural hybridity has served neither Chandin nor his family well; he certainly does not initiate any positive cultural change. Positive change remains to be wrought by the hybrid community that evolves at the Paradise Alms House and which struggles against sexism, racism, homo- and transphobia.

As the narrative of *Cereus* entwines familial and colonial history in the ironically named town of Paradise, literary thirdspace is conjured at the alms house, which is situated, significantly, a little *beyond* the town's limits. More specifically, Mootoo's textual thirdspace is grounded in the newly created residents' garden, which offers fertile soil for the cereus plant that gives the novel its title and for the various human (trans)identifications that enact themselves socially and successfully at its borders. The resident that inspires the Paradise Alms House gardener, Mr. Hector, to create this garden is the elderly Mala, who has been "taken into the alms house . . . to receive proper care and attention until the end of her days" after being exonerated from charges of murdering her father (8). Mala and a cutting from her lush cereus plant are the key survivors who escape the Ramchandin property, where Mala has lived outside in the increasingly wild garden that surrounds the house for most of her solitary life.

Some background helps demonstrate how literary thirdspace comes to be located at the Paradise Alms House rather than in Mala's house or in her wonderfully exuberant garden. Mala and her younger sister Asha are left alone with their father after Sarah (Mala's mother), and Sarah's lover, Lavinia, fail in their attempt to take the children with them to begin a new life together in the Shivering Northern Wetlands (Mootoo's renaming of Great Britain). As the four are about to leave, Pohpoh (Mala's childhood name) returns for "her bag with all the seeds and the shells and the cereus cutting" (67). A suspicious Chandin returns home early and manages to detain both daughters while the two women flee his rage to catch the year's last sailing for the Wetlands. Asha eventually escapes Chandin and Paradise by leaving Lantanacamara and Mala becomes the sole recipient of her father's abuse.

A decade later, a suspicious Chandin returns home early once again, but this time finds a young man, Ambrose, visiting Mala. Chandin attacks Mala viciously, wielding a cleaver "high above his head" (245). In self-defence, Mala fells him.[4] Later, she "drags his inert body downstairs, and after locking him up in the sewing room, she builds a barricade of furniture to protect herself against him" (Howells 155). It is *fitting*, as Joanna X. K. Garvey observes, that it is the sewing room, an area that is typically "women's space," which earlier "sheltered and hid the transgressive love of Sarah and Lavinia [and that] ironically now serves as crypt for the abusive father" (102). Following this, Mala "never lit a lantern in that house again. Nor did she, since that day, pass a night inside its walls" (Mootoo, *Cereus* 249). Mala takes solitary refuge in the garden, and it thrives while Mala survives and becomes

part of the garden's ecology, removed from human discourse and at some distance from her culture's definitions of sanity.

Mala's garden refuge is indeed compelling; however, I argue that no part of the Ramchandin property may be read as productive literary thirdspace. The house, in particular, is the novel's primary site of trauma and betrayal; it is there that Chandin sexually abuses Mala and Asha. After Chandin's death and Mala's withdrawal to the garden, the house becomes first "crypt," then crematorium. The narrative event that unmistakably signals the impossibility of the house's reclamation, and the impossibility of Chandin's recuperation, burns both house and body to ashes. Moreover, "the life-robbing cloud" of smoke and particles from the fire envelops the complicit town of Paradise and does not lift until Judge Bissey exonerates Mala and entrusts her to the care of The Paradise Alms House, which lets "light shine in Paradise once again" (8). As Mary Condé asserts, the cloud is "the visible metaphor for Paradise's wilful ignorance" (67). Given that coloniality is *thoroughly* implicated in the brutal and sexualized violence that Chandin visits upon his daughters, it is not surprising that the house built by him with his mimic-man wages is too tainted to provide thirdspace. However, the garden, too, is burnt. Notwithstanding the refuge it gives, and the critical attention it receives, it is not the site for literary thirdspace.

The dynamic difference between house and garden in *Cereus* reflects Mootoo's lived experience. She explains that her childhood "garden was the safest place, the best place. . . . much safer than inside the house, because there were repercussions from . . . being abused inside the house" (Mootoo, "Interview Sherman" 3). *Cereus* is not, of course, simply autobiographical; Mootoo's abuse did not occur at the hands of her parents. Gardens, however, do play an important role in Mootoo's literary and visual art as a result of Mootoo's early attachment to her Trinidadian garden. The Ramchandin garden offers Mala, as Mootoo's garden offered her, temporary refuge.

Indeed, in *Cereus*, refuge appears to be a necessary resting place on the journey to the possibilities offered by literary thirdspace. Howells claims that "[l]ike the wilderness landscape of much Canadian women's fiction, the garden functions as the site of spiritual and emotional healing for a damaged female psyche" (155).[5] Mala's garden is a refuge where hegemonies (colonialism, patriarchy, and heterosexism) decompose, which mirrors the decomposition of Chandin's body within the house. Even the human tendency to priorize human life over all other lives falls away as Mala *inter*grates into the garden that is freeing itself from human colonization.

But any paradisiacal reading of either garden or postcoloniality is precluded by the continuing psychic *dis*integration of Mala and the greed and rapaciousness of the men of Lantanacamara, who destroy the heart of her garden by "harvesting" the mudra tree and the rare peekoplat birds after the police take her into custody (201).

The surest indication that Mala's garden cannot provide a site for literary thirdspace is that both garden and owner cease to be in relation with human community. Mala's refuge becomes a site divorced even from human language. Without language, and despite its "fecundity" (Kim 162), the garden cannot become literary thirdspace because the productive instability of both hybridity and thirdspace is related to inherent qualities within language. Bhabha argues that his "Third Space" is similar to Jacques Derrida's notion of *différance* in that it occurs within the "indeterminate space of the subject(s) of enunciation" (55). This slippage within language "constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (53). The relational use of language is what facilitates social change. Moreover, because it is the foundational instability in language itself that underwrites thirdspace, literary thirdspace is a natural extension of Bhabha's "Third Space" since the literary is wholly concerned with language and its effects. The narrative action of Mootoo's novel reinforces this view as *Cereus* offers layered and multiple expressions of productive "discursive conditions" through its subjects of characterization and its presentation of subject matter.

In siting thirdspace, it is significant that the Paradise Alms House is the source from which *Cereus*' language, the complex and multi-layered storyline, springs. "Nurse Tyler" becomes Mala's recording witness and the entire novel is framed as an open letter from him to Mala's sister or anyone who might know her (3). It is perhaps even more significant that both the cereus plant and Mala must be moved from the Ramchandin property to the Paradise Alms House before the novel's most positive Lantanacamararian transformations are enacted.[6] Notable within these transformations is Mala's return to speech. The Paradise Alms House is where the main characters gather together in nascent community at novel's end. Tyler and Mr. Hector work there and the abused, reclusive, and mad Mala arrives through court order. This draws her childhood sweetheart, Ambrose, and his now-grown child, the transman, Otoh, to visit. The cereus plant—almost a character in its own right—is brought there by Otoh. By the end, all six are set to bloom.

The eponymous cereus is the novel's primary symbol, as is noted by most critics. Casteel notes "its powers of metamorphosis" and argues that "as a metaphor for identity, the cereus plant simultaneously points to hybridity, mutability, and mobility on the one hand and to attachment to place on the other" (26). Casteel's comment makes a welcome link between the cereus and the hybridity and mutability of thirdspace. To her analysis, I would add that the cereus plant also functions as a symbol of Mala herself. Howells implies something similar when she writes that "[t]he cereus plant is intimately associated with Mala Ramchandin" (151). The cereus also acts *for* Mala. For instance, although she cannot, Mala "would pull the walls of that [Ramchandin] house down, down, down" and the lush growth of the cereus begins this process for her (153). Garvey observes that the cereus also shelters Mala "from the traces of trauma. . . . [f]or it resembles the inner barrier she builds in the house . . . and this growing rhizomatic wall hides the sewing room from outside eyes" (104). Simultaneously, the cereus plant is (re)covering the house on behalf of the land itself, which symbolically reinforces Condé's contention that Mala, herself, "comes the closest to being a personification of Lantanacamara" (69). Mala, the cereus, and the land of Lantanacamara are inseparable in Mootoo's novel.

It is, therefore, of the highest significance that both Mala and the cereus cutting are able to start new lives at the Paradise Alms House. There, Mala begins to re-experience supportive and interactive human community and the cereus roots in the residents' garden. The alms house becomes a site of hybridity and *inter*gration despite its oppressive role as a religious institution, but it is not coincidental that the ideals of kindness, and caring for need within the community, which inform the ideal of an alms house, are germane to its suitability as the site of literary thirdspace. The text self-consciously alludes to the site's surprising potential. In a distinctive small caps font that is used only in this one place in the novel, the narrator declaims: "Point number one: The Paradise Alms House is not en route to anywhere." The comment implies that the site is a kind of elsewhere, "off the main road." Moreover, "[t]here is nothing beyond" (131).

Garvey interprets this passage, usefully, as an indication that the alms house is a "paradoxical space . . . both destination and nowhere, presence and lack, clearly not center . . . and yet complete in itself. It is a peculiar 'home'" (106). I argue that, as well as being, as Garvey has it, "home" to a Butlerian kinship, it is also home to a literary thirdspace of intersectionality and *inter*gration. The Paradise Alms House is the only space

where intersectional identifications that include racial, gender, class, and identifications of sexuality, are able to enact themselves in an expression of open and various hybridities. Thus, it is a site of community *inter*gration for those whose identifications exceed the norm, where "a relation to the other as other . . . does not demand that the other become the same or disappear" (Kawash 200). It is a site of psychological *inter*gration as well, as Mala begins to recover from the psychic splitting induced by a life of repeated traumas. Emilia Nielsen observes that the Paradise Alms House "is a place where extreme mental, physical, and sexual violence are not overt threats" (5). Her comment underlines the importance of safe space, a quality whose importance is often overlooked by those who usually feel safe. Garvey, too, notes the importance of safety (103), and I argue that it is a necessary attribute of Mootoo's literary thirdspace.

In part, safety is necessary so that characters have sufficient agency, which is paramount in initiating productive change from the nebulous web I am calling literary thirdspace. Bhabha discusses postcolonial agency as the product of a kind of temporal thirdspace that he calls "time-lag" (264-65) and *Cereus* adds a spatial component: it is not really possible to act without both time and space. Bhabha also links hybridity to agency through performativity, arguing that "[t]he iterative 'time' of the future as *a becoming 'once again open'*, makes available to marginalized or minority identities a mode of performative agency that Judith Butler has elaborated for the representation of lesbian sexuality" (314). In *Cereus*, marginalized transidentification and performative agency are most clearly enacted in Otoh's repetitions of his father's aborted youthful relationship with Mala.

Otoh consciously takes on his father's early role as Mala's suitor. Readers are informed that Otoh, in his father's courting clothes, "might have passed for a pallbearer if it weren't for his colourful necktie and elegant posture. In his father's get up, Otoh looked more like a dancer" (152). As the novel's queer man of action, Otoh fulfills this narrative vision. Language returns to Mala first through Otoh, the dancer, who is Mala's "first human visitor in over a decade" (162). Mala then leads him to the still-rotting corpse of her father and, just like his father, Ambrose, Otoh runs away. His subsequent actions have a widening circle of effects that result in his also becoming a pallbearer of sorts. When he sets fire to the Ramchandin house to destroy any possible evidence against Mala, Otoh figuratively carries Mala's father to rest by cremating his body. The same night, he also takes "clippings from a cereus plant" (203). Both Mala and the cereus are *trans*ported to the Paradise

Alms House, which underlines their reciprocal identification and the significance of the alms house location in the novel.

In the protective space of the alms house, empowering performance is also crucial to the recognition of the "shared queerness" between Mala and Tyler that underwrites the narrative itself (52). However, neither Mala nor Tyler is initially welcomed by the Paradise Alms House—Mootoo's literary thirdspace is created through her characters' actions; it is not a result of passive, solitary hybridity. In particular, thirdspace in *Cereus* is created by the performance of many acts of witnessing, openness, and kindness that are exchanged between Tyler, Mala, Otoh, and Mr. Hector, which I illustrate with several examples from the text. At the beginning of Tyler's tenure, gender concepts are so fixed at the Paradise Alms House that they take precedence over professional nursing status and the home's need for trained nurses. Tyler is given cleaning and repair jobs rather than nursing assignments and is assigned to help the handy*man*, Toby, fix the roof. Tyler's effeminate manner of performing these tasks leads to a direct expression of homophobia by Toby, who vows "to leave the job if he was ever put to work with this pansy again" (11). The *trans*formation of this hostile location into a literary thirdspace of possibility is initiated by Hector, who, as a decent heterosexual man, is unique in the novel. Hector reveals to Tyler that his mother sent his brother away because "[h]e was kind of funny. He was like you" (78). In response, Tyler is impressed and relieved by the bravery of his openness, which "suddenly lifted a veil between [them]" and leads to Tyler's first "feeling of ordinariness." This incident is the start of a "bond forming between Mr. Hector and [Tyler]" (79), but the bond matures through their mutual desire to improve Mala's life at the Paradise Alms House.

Tyler feels "seen" by Hector and his second feeling of ordinariness comes when he is similarly "seen" by Mala, who has become his patient. Mala overhears the above conversation between Tyler and Mr. Hector and, subsequently, steals a (female) nurse's uniform for Tyler. This gift touches Tyler, who reflects, "But she had stolen a dress for me. No one had ever done anything like that before. She knows what I am. . . . She knows my nature" (82). But the dress is not Mala's only gift to Tyler. Once he dons the uniform, she does not exclaim over him—his gender performance was "not something to either congratulate or scorn—it simply was" (83). Once again, Tyler receives the gift of normalcy, this time from Mala. He exults, "I had never felt so extremely ordinary, and I quite loved it" (84). Mala's gift to Tyler signals an important *inter*gration for Tyler, but the act also marks a breakthrough

in her own mental health because it demonstrates her ability to understand, empathize, and witness in a reciprocal way. Her singularity is becoming relational and Tyler's is being accepted for the first time.

Kim argues that "Tyler's exploration of the ambiguities of gender is framed as an act of confidence that is made possible within the confines of Mala's room" (156); however, I suggest that it is significant that Mala's room is "only yards away" from the new residents' garden, which is begun by Hector using a cereus cutting from her own garden and "a full gerbera plant" that he offers her because she cannot bear cut flowers (77). Thus, the new garden represents Mala's *inter*gration and gifts—not least her gift for radical acceptance. As Tyler observes, "She was not one to manacle nature, and I sensed that she was permitting mine its freedom" (83). Nielsen notes that "the [residents'] garden functions in marked contrast to Paradise, or anywhere else on Lantanacamara, where queerness is repressed" (6). It is significant that Tyler will transition the expression of her "nature" from the private space of Mala's room to the public space of the grounds of the Paradise Alms House.

In *Cereus*, there is a constant play between private and public performance and witnessing that culminates when Tyler and Otoh, through their mutual involvement with Mala's *inter*gration, are poised to become lovers. Garvey argues that, in order to heal, Mala "needs the assistance of Otoh and Tyler, the former as catalyst and the latter as witness and scribe" (103). However, the text positions Otoh as both catalyst and witness. Tyler's reconstruction of Mala's story echoes Otoh's earlier witnessing role whereby Otoh wins Mala's trust by dancing with her, as his father had, while he himself is "awed that he should be privy to [her voice's] sound, and a witness to her past" (173). Both witnesses embrace a public performance of their transidentifications that is witnessed publicly by Hector, who along with Mala, has already been a private witness to Tyler. In the last scene of *Cereus*, Hector demonstrates respectful attention and kindness despite being shocked at seeing the couple promenading—Tyler in make-up and her new uniform and Otoh in masculine whites. Hector stares in wonder and offers a welcoming response: "I wish my brother could meet you two" (268).

Following Hector's comments, Otoh drops to the ground in front of the cereus "with no regard for his white trousers and proceeded to pack the soil around its base. . . . not because it needed work but rather to show it some attention and, I imagine, to honour its place in Miss Ramchandin's life" (268). Otoh's action (important enough to be recorded by Tyler) underlines

the importance of a kind attention to life, in all its forms, as a necessary part of literary thirdspace in *Cereus*. Otoh's lack of concern for his colonial whites may also be read as a postcolonial gesture. Although he wears the clothes he likes, unlike Chandin, Otoh is a transman, not a mimic man. He does not allow his trousers, his "whites," to interfere with his caring for the individuals, human and otherwise, that surround him. The trio exemplifies what it means to stay and break new soil, as Hector has with his new friendly relations as much as with the new residents' garden at the Paradise Alms House. The "grounded" kindness and respectful attention each demonstrates are characteristic of the literary thirdspace that develops at the Paradise Alms House.

Garvey suggests that "perhaps it is the cereus cactus itself that finds a safe space and a home, rooted in the garden of the alms house, tended to by a queer quartet . . . antidote as well as witness to multiple traumas" (106). In particular, the transplanting of Mala's cereus is shown to be dependent on relationship and goodwill. It is the outcome of actions by Otoh, who *trans*ports the cereus cutting; by Hector, who offers part of "his yard" for a residents' garden (73); and by Tyler, who tends both Mala and the cereus cutting. Garvey observes that there is a "chain of those nurturing the cereus plant" in its travels from Mrs. Thoroughly's garden, first to the Ramchandin garden, and then to the Paradise Alms House (96). Inexplicably, in naming those who care for and carry it, she cites Lavinia, Mala, and Otoh, but neglects Asha, to whom Lavinia also gives a cutting; Sarah, whose garden the cereus joins; Tyler, who tends the cutting at The Paradise Alms House; and Mr. Hector, who plants Otoh's cutting for Mala. The travels of the cereus invoke gift culture and its generous challenge to colonialism and capitalism.

Garvey's queer quartet not only tends the cereus, but it is also within this queer quartet that Mala "uttered her first public words," a call to the rejected parts of herself represented by the Pohpoh identity (Mootoo, *Cereus* 269). This is a personal *inter*gration that mirrors Tyler's self-acceptance and the *inter*gration of the variously identified characters in a supportive community. Garvey's "queer quartet" of Tyler and Otoh, and Mala and Ambrose comments directly on the queering of heterosexuality that *Cereus* effects; however, it overlooks the significance of the cereus being in the "residents' garden" and the importance of Mr. Hector, who is not included in the "queer quartet" (268). The trio that does include him, and his affection for his "funny" brother, as well as Tyler and Otoh, is united in caring for the cereus plant and for Mala—by extension, for Lantanacamara itself.

I would argue that this queer quartet plus one "find their agency in a form of the 'future' where the past is not originary, where the present is not simply transitory. It is . . . an interstitial future, that emerges *in-between* the claims of the past and the needs of the present" (Bhabha 313). Through performing, witnessing, and accepting themselves and others the effects of the past on each are recognized and cared for in the present while webs of interconnection are formed that will serve in the future. *Inter*gration, both within and between this group of individuals, is the basis for a radical *interconnection* that makes hybrid community not only possible, but productive: the cereus has rooted and will bloom.

Finally, I hasten to join Nielsen in arguing that this is not a "utopic community," contrary to Heather Smyth's claim (147). Instead, literary thirdspace simply explores how to live with and through difference in community. The radical *inter*gration that *Cereus* presents requires characters to recognize and accept, in themselves and in each other, what Bhabha calls "the incommensurable elements—the stubborn chunks—as the basis of cultural identifications" (Bhabha 313). Not only does Mootoo's literary thirdspace avoid homogenizing as the price of community, but *Cereus* may also be read to address Chow's critique of uncritical and overly optimistic uses of hybridity. On the one hand, in the figure of Chandin, Mootoo shows the possible destructiveness that can attend individualistic hybridity. On the other, the *inter*grated relational community arising from the literary thirdspace that evolves, not in the wilderness garden, but at the Paradise Alms House, demonstrates that self-and-social actualization in combination with positive social reception allows hybridity to attain its radical promise of initiating cultural change.

NOTES

1 I find Kim's contention that "[t]he novel pairs these sets of relations, the coupling of Sarah and Lavinia and that of Mala and Chandin, to illustrate the danger of unregulated desire" similarly troubling (157).

2 Rita Wong, in an unpublished essay, suggests that "*Cereus* operate[s] within an unsettled and unsettling thirdspace" (18). I am indebted to her for this observation, which encouraged me to consider Bhabha's "Third Space" in relation to *Cereus*.

3 Other texts besides Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* discuss hybridity extensively and also relate it to the concept of Third Space. Most notable are Robert Young's *Colonial Desire*; Kawash's *Dislocating*; Nikos Papastergiadis' "Tracing Hybridity in Theory"; and the collection, *Hybridity and Its Discontents* edited by Avtar Brah and Annie Coombes. Fred Wah's *Faking It* provides a Canadian literary perspective.

4 Mootoo is careful to shield her protagonist from the charge of manslaughter. Very early in the narrative, readers learn that "Judge Walter Bissey had dismissed the case [against her] in minutes" (7). The story that unfolds layer by layer continues to exonerate Mala. For instance, it is Ambrose who, albeit unwittingly, initially strikes Chandin's head with the door. Following this, Chandin's body shows signs of death and, even before Mala repeats the act, Chandin "lay still on the floor, his eyes open and glazed, his legs limp, spread apart, his hands curled" (247). Although it is impossible to determine when Chandin dies, several characters and critics too easily assume Mala's agency (Mootoo, *Cereus* 199; Howells 155; Kim 162).

5 Mootoo's wilderness garden is a meta-example of productive hybridity in the novel, in that gardens are a common postcolonial trope and to be "full of wilderness" (as Northrop Frye put it [222]), remains common in Canadian literature. Mootoo claims that *Cereus* is typically Canadian in another way: "Recent immigration has brought people like me who write about elsewhere from here. I think this is very Canadian" (Christiansen). Tellingly, "Canada" is the novel's only geographic location given a non-fictionalized name.

6 The escape of Sarah, Lavinia, and, later, Asha may be read as positive transformations, but they are accompanied by great loss: the loss of kinship, home, and country. Interestingly, Mootoo connects the intra-subjective personal journeys undertaken by Tyler and Mala to the journeys taken by those who physically travel to different countries. In an interview in *Herizons*, she comments that "[t]hey have not left their countries but are migrants of sorts" (Mootoo, "Interview Khankoje" 30).

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Cyril Dabydeen

Pulsing, This Being

I will not fall to pieces/I will bolster every ounce
of energy in me/moving sideways/not backwards/
moving forward also/hurling myself at you/in
places known/or unknown/ indeed being who
I am/on familiar ground as it seems/all I want
you to know/really know/without disdain

Or what I don't want you to know/coming
to grips with you/taking note of what lingers
longest/in the imagination only/the past yet
with us/memory always I assure you/what
we keep aiming for/destiny indeed/if just
a manner of speaking/hearkening to you

Meeting you face to face once more/standing
tall/and I will not back off /will say nothing
new/but will only speak of who I am/from
deep inside/the self pulsing/on firm ground/
becoming stronger/beginnings/not endings/
what's yet to come/I will say again/to you only

Linda Morra

"Vexed by the Crassness of Commerce"

Jane Rule's Struggle for Literary Integrity and Freedom of Expression

Novelist, short story writer, activist, and contributor to the gay liberation periodical, *The Body Politic* (1971-1987), Jane Rule was unambiguous about what she believed her role as writer entailed and about the challenges of the profession. Even years later, when she withdrew from her public life as a professional writer,[1] she wrote to Margaret Hollingsworth about the "horrible vulnerability" of sending out work to an "indifferent" or judgmental audience. She concluded, however, that the "world's judgment is not really the point; the making is" (Rule, Letter). Indeed, Rule strove to make an impact on socio-cultural conventions through her writing and worked hard to move beyond the limits imposed by the publishing industry to do so. She could make such a declaration to Hollingsworth because, by that point, she had considerable experience negotiating with both national and international publishers, agents, literary figures, and governmental institutions.

Her interactions with those involved in the publishing industry, the focus of this paper, especially underscore how she consistently struggled to safeguard her freedom of expression and her literary integrity over the span of her career. As Clarence Karr notes in *Authors and Audiences*, legends of such struggles have "a special appeal for Canadians, who take delight in seeing themselves as David confronting Goliath" (58). Yet the archival record shows that Rule undeniably and relentlessly laboured not only to publish her work but also to resist censorship in daily practice. Her negotiations with various publishing figures and institutions, such as those with Robert Weaver of CBC radio, Carol J. Meyer of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, and

Chatelaine magazine, and with her literary agents over matters related to socio-cultural censorship partly suggest what they conceived their roles to be in the publication process. These negotiations also showcase Rule's part in redefining expectations and protocols that determined the value of her work, the degree to which her work was edited, and the venues in which her work appeared. In other words, she understood that how she told her stories was as important as where they were published. The disagreements with two of her agents, those with Willis Kingsley Wing and Kurt Hellmer, would become especially significant in catalyzing their business terms and in making plain what Rule demanded of her literary agents. These disagreements also reveal what she saw as integral to the professionalization of an author and to literary integrity.

Rule's negotiations with the publishing industry must be understood both in the context of where she worked and also the period in which she actively published, especially after 1956 when she moved to Canada from the United States, until 1990 when she announced her retirement from writing. As Janet B. Friskney and Carole Gerson note in their assessment of twentieth-century conditions for publishing in Canada, the country did not have a sufficient readership to sustain its writers financially. Writers were therefore compelled to resign "themselves to writing part-time" or to seek "to advance their work in the major English- and French-language markets of the United States and Europe" (131):

> [T]hey not only had to negotiate different ideas of the social and cultural role of the writer generally, and of the Canadian author specifically, but also had to navigate the expectations of foreign as well as domestic publishers. (132)

Yet Rule would have experienced less difficulty in working with publishers abroad, since her first attempts at publishing were made while she was living in the United States; she would have therefore neither approached other US publishers as foreign nor regarded their expectations as unfamiliar. Instead, compared to her writing colleagues in Canada, she would have had a greater degree of awareness of publishing practices abroad.

Still, like other authors, she would have been obliged to negotiate with and distinguish between literary and popular markets, the latter being dominated by magazines. Mass-circulation magazines, which accepted both popular and literary forms of writing, were more lucrative than book publication; however, they also depended upon "advertising income, which was calculated on the basis of circulation" (132). Editors, who were reliant on "advertising revenue of brand-name products" to absorb their

costs, could not "afford to misinterpret their readers' interests" and risk circulation numbers (Karr 59; Friskney and Gerson 132). Yet, as Karr shows, magazine fiction was disparaged by academics for being "formulistic and unworthy of the status of great literature": it was accused "of being episodic, unsophisticated in plot and structure, often written to order, and eschewing the intellectual, the controversial, and the political while catering to a bland market of mass readers" (59). After moving to Canada, Rule would have discovered that the domestic magazine trade, which "came into being at the start of the Second World War," was increasingly rendered more complex by the influx of imported magazines, mostly from the United States; these imported magazines paid writers considerably more than Canadian publications (Smith 261).[2] Even so, writers in Canada were expected to respond to the call for a high literary standard in both domestic and foreign magazines.[3] Many writers thus turned to publishing venues outside the country, especially the United States where the literary market was considerably larger; even if the expectations remained the same, the remuneration was better.[4]

The novel in Canada had an entirely different set of expectations and problems, which Rule for the most part adroitly side-stepped by employing agents who usually found publishers outside of Canada first. Indeed, by mid twentieth-century, most writers in Canada submitted manuscripts to publishing companies abroad because of the limitations of the domestic publishing industry.[5] Book publishers sometimes expected writers to adapt their work to "public taste" and, as such, were not so far removed in their practices from magazines (59). Writers were also more likely to be published by the likes of McClelland and Stewart if a British or American publisher first agreed to "share costs" (Friskney and Gerson 134). The situation in Canada began to change by the 1960s, at least in terms of support for the publication of work by domestic authors; at that time, "new infrastructure support, such as Canada Council programs" enabled writers to "create a fresh wave of literary excitement" (Friskney and Gerson 138). The effect showed itself in the emergence and thriving of smaller presses. By 1970, there were thirty-two small presses that were printing fifty or more English-language, Canadian-authored books; by 1980, the number of presses had leaped to eighty-nine (MacSkimming 247).

That "wave of literary excitement" was well past due for queer literature, which was trying to find its own way in the 1950s.[6] Peter Dickinson's *Here is Queer: Nationalisms, Sexualities, and the Literatures of Canada* is mindful of

how national literatures have their own "closets" and how received national orthodoxies assume a heteronormative literary canon: "the identificatory *lack* upon which Canadian literary nationalism has historically been constructed . . . is in large part facilitated by, if not wholly dependent upon, a critical refusal to come to grips with textual *superabundance* of a destabilizing and counter-normative sexuality" (4). Yet, as Donald W. McLeod notes in "Publishing Against the Grain," by the 1950s in Canada, "explicitly gay male (and some lesbian) material" had not yet made a full literary appearance; instead, it surfaced in "regular gossip or tidbit columns," which provided the foundation for "the beginnings of Canada's gay and lesbian press" (326). Jim Egan, Canada's pioneer gay activist, also wrote articles in the 1950s that explored serious issues related to homosexuality for the venue, *Justice Weekly*. By the 1970s, *Long Time Coming* had emerged from Montreal and *The Body Politic* from Toronto; Rule was a regular and significant contributor to the latter magazine. McLeod observes that its appearance confirmed the "strength and visibility" of the gay and lesbian community in Canada (326).

In the United States, at least, the flourishing of paperbacks in the 1950s allowed for "an underground literature of lesbianism" (Showalter 419). The freedom of choice for women in terms of their subject matter, however, remained limited. As Elaine Showalter notes about American fiction, "[i]f the kitchen was the only room of her own for the American Eve . . . [I]t was a prison, and women writers were due for a break" (421). Her assessment of American fiction might provide some parallels for what was happening in Canada. As John Morgan Gray of Macmillan Canada, for example, noted about the domestic industry in the 1950s, the "big decisions, editorial and commercial, [were] made in New York and London and in the interest of his author a Canadian editor dare not forget it" (qtd. in Friskney and Gerson 135). By the 1960s, the various liberation movements in both countries related to race, sex, and gender began to affect the production of literature as a whole (Showalter 422). If poetry remained the most "effective medium for social, political, and cultural transformation," the novel was "generally slower than poetry to react to historical change" (423). Longer fiction was just beginning to register the "inchoate frustrations of women in the years leading up to the second wave of feminism" (424).[7]

In both her magazine fiction and her novels, Rule explored such "inchoate frustrations"—and met with the same in terms of publishing her work. She had initially tried to publish without literary agents but quickly turned to

them for assistance. Writers working in Canada in the period rarely had agents. As Douglas Gibson notes:

> When I started out [in March 1968], there was one literary agent at The Canadian Speakers' and Writers' Service in Canada, and some Canadian authors had New-York based agents but most people we dealt with didn't have agents. And then, through the 1970s, and more specifically through the 1980s, a number of literary agencies sprang up. (Evain 80)[8]

Well before the 1970s, Rule was one of the few authors in Canada to have an agent in New York. Indeed, in 1954, just before she moved to Canada from the United States, she made her first unsuccessful attempt to secure one. As the archival record shows, Russell & Volkening of New York refused to represent Rule because "we cannot . . . work well with material in which we don't have a very considerable confidence."[9]

Her first long-term business relationship with an agent began shortly thereafter and set the conditions for virtually all subsequent publishing-related interactions. She began to work with Willis Kingsley Wing, who sent out her stories to both popular and literary magazines. Wing was associated with A.P. Watt and Son of London, Britain's top agency (Karr 77).[10] His professional relationship with Rule commenced around early 1957, when Rule began to pursue the professionalization of her career more actively; that relationship dwindled by August of 1962. Under his purview, she published her short stories in several magazines, including *Redbook* and *Chatelaine*, which were oriented towards working women and mothers. He was followed by Hope Leresche, of Hope Leresche & Steele, in October 1962,[11] and by Kurt Hellmer, who represented Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt, among others.[12] These two agents attended to the publication of her first novel, *Permanent Resident* (later titled *Desert of the Heart* [1964]). In May 1966, Hellmer was replaced by her last and most successful American agent, Georges Borchardt, whom Leresche had recommended to her. Co-founded with his wife, Anne Borchardt, Borchardt's agency was established in New York in 1967 and also dealt with French writers like Roland Barthes and Pierre Bourdieu.[13] Her success with the last agency is registered by how some (although not all) of Rule's manuscripts found publication with greater ease than *Desert of the Heart*, although such ease might also be attributed to her improved reputation as a writer and changes in the politics of the international literary market.[14]

At the same time as Rule increasingly and cooperatively worked with agents, she also worked independently of them.[15] She often dealt directly with publishers or publication venues; three telling exchanges, which

occurred decades apart, might be seen to characterize the range of her editorial and publishing relationships. The first of these was with Robert Weaver, the renowned CBC Radio broadcaster, literary editor, and anthologist. Her association with Weaver commenced virtually at the same time as she began working with Wing, who eventually mediated some of the interactions with Weaver for the payment for her stories.[16] Rule had sent Weaver a tape-recording of one of her stories, "A Walk By Himself," [17] which initiated an awkward exchange related to his mistaking her for a man. His error was engendered by the pitch of her voice in the recording and exacerbated by how she signed her letters at the time, as "Jinx Rule."

In the same letter in which he addressed her as "Mr. Rule," he answered a question that for Rule was almost consistently at the forefront of her concerns—that related to censorship. In answer to a question she raised, he wrote on March 28, 1957, to say that CBC Radio had "very few taboos." In fact, he noted that they had broadcast "a number of stories which magazines would not consider because of their themes":

> However, a few years ago, there was a good deal of protest from listeners about the use of certain four-letter words in CBC drama and short story readings and we agreed at that time to cut out this kind of language instead of running the risk of possible censorship of the themes themselves. In other words, I think we would have to cut a few of the expressions you have used in your short story.

In response, Rule corrected his mistaken impression about her gender; she then commented upon how pleased she was by CBC's handling of the matter of censorship, even though her story was not broadcast with *Anthology*: "Yours seems to me a very sane policy. . . . If you can manage large audiences, offering them good stuff with only occasional cutting of four letter words, you're doing a wonderful job."[18] It was largely an amicable relationship because they shared similar views about censorship and editing. That relationship remained consistent even after Weaver rejected her next three stories, "The Chosen Two," "My Father's House," and "Her Own Funeral." The archival record shows that it was approximately two years later, on January 19, 1959, when Weaver would accept one of her stories, "On the Way."[19]

The second of these exchanges was a revealing one with *Chatelaine*, which took place in the late 1960s. As Valerie J. Korinek argues in *Roughing It in the Suburbs: Reading* Chatelaine *Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties*, the magazine had become more intensely focused on feminist and political issues during the 1950s and had thus shifted from its earlier espousal of apparently more traditional feminine roles. In spite of claims of greater political liberation,

which was credited to the editorial interventions of Doris Anderson, its conservative legacy was to continue to show itself.[20] *Chatelaine* hosted a contest in 1968, the rules of which foreclosed any opportunity for Rule to submit her short story. In a letter dated September 15th of that year, Rule wrote to the "Mrs. Chatelaine Contest" to explain that, although she had "read the directions" to the contest, she had deliberately and flagrantly defied their prescriptive questionnaire. She noted that the questionnaire had disqualified her because "I'm not single. I'm not married."[21] Rule was referring to the contest form, which asked for the name of the submitter's "mate" and for the occupation and income of the said "mate." Rule's partner was Helen Sonthoff.

To their request for such information, she made the rejoinder: "This magazine does a much better job with articles and with stories than lots of its kind. It could put some imaginative effort into questionaires [sic] as well." She added that she was therefore voicing her protest by "disrespectfully submitting my entry."[22] After supplying the requisite information for the contest, Rule proceeded to object "disrespectfully" by offering an additional five pages of information, including the following: her occupation and annual income; her favourite company menus (many of which, as she claimed, were pilfered from the *Ten Minute Gourmet Cookbook*); and her "Special Projects." The latter, she explained, involved working against such questionnaires:

> Late at night I sometimes answer form questions, to test my own sense of identity against the identity I'm supposed to have, to test my own life against the life I'm supposed to lead. It's more of a hobby than a research project, but it keeps me in touch with how hard I have to work in order to write clear, hopeful little love songs to Mrs. Chatelaine because she's the one who sends the checks for the kids and I like to participate in the larger community.

As Rule wrote in her covering letter, "You don't have to imagine me. I've done it for you." Her "Conclusions" also explored the implications of the contest's stipulations. Contestants, it would seem, were obliged to model themselves upon prevalent notions of marriage, heterosexuality, and family life: the contest was not, as it proclaimed, "open to all home makers in Canada," but only those "with husbands and 'real' children." In so doing, *Chatelaine* had predetermined who might publish with them well before considering the literary merit of the work. On this occasion, it became primarily the *Chatelaine* contest form to which she was reacting, although it became clear later that her literary material was not always consonant with their publishing agenda either. A letter from Winthrop Watson, a representative for Georges Borchardt, indicates that even a decade later her material was

Are you Mrs. Chatelaine?

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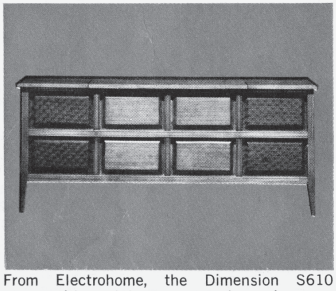
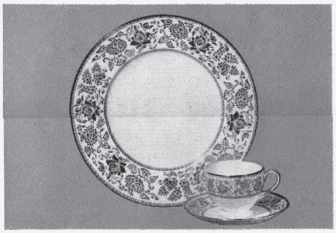
PLUS THESE PRIZES



From Electrohome, the Dimension S610 stereo with push-button control panel.



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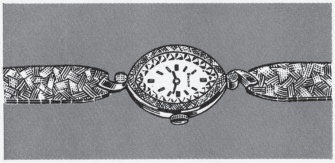

A lady's beautiful 17-jewel wristwatch from Bulova Watch Company Limited.

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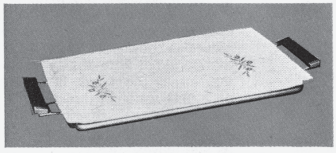


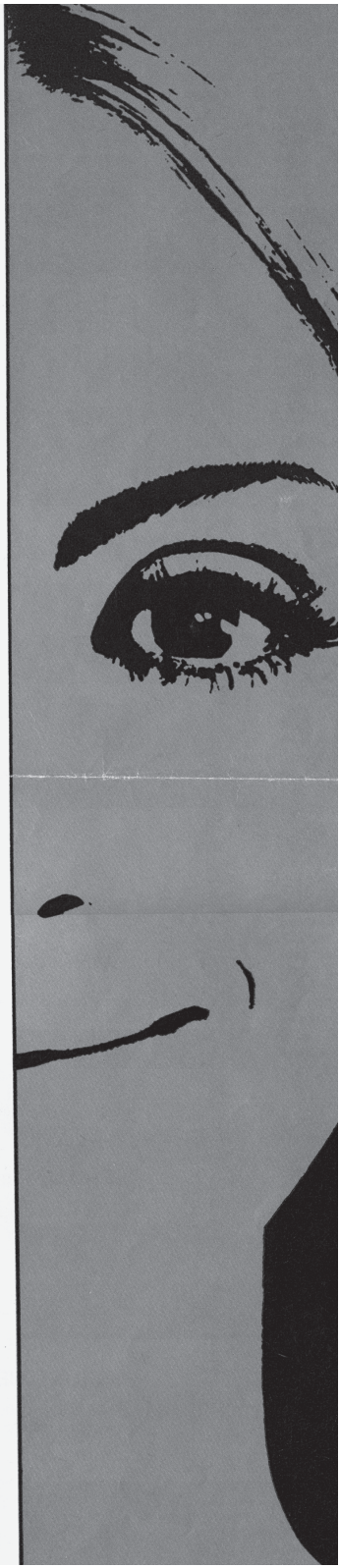
Nine runners-up across Canada will each receive an attractive Corning Ware Broil-Bake tray and chrome-plated serving cradle, Corning Glass Works of Canada Limited.

How to enter

1. Check the rules and be sure to follow them exactly.
2. Give these facts on the top sheet of 8½-by-11-inch paper:
a. Your full name, address.
b. Your height, weight, age. (Attach a black-and-white or color snapshot of yourself, taken within the last six months.)
c. Your husband's name, occupation, annual income (we're not being nosy—this helps to show us how well you manage).
d. List your children's names and ages.
e. If you don't do all your own housework, say what paid help you employ.
3. Tell how often you entertain. Give a favorite company menu and the recipe for one particular dish you like serving to company.
4. Give a typical menu for a day's meals for your family (if someone packs a lunch, include that with your menu, too).
5. Say what type of home you have (apartment, bungalow, two-story) in the city, suburbs or country, and tell either why it suits your family to a T just as it is, or outline the changes and improvements that you feel are important to undertake.
6. Tell what special projects you enjoy (gourmet cooking, sewing, sports, study, music, crafts, hobbies, etc.), and give a brief example of one such project completed recently.
7. List your community activities (church, school, service, civic), with your positions in them, past and present.
8. Write a one-page description of your hopes for your children, and how you are laying the groundwork for their future.
9. Explain in a few paragraphs what you believe a wife should contribute to marriage and family life.

Rules

1. The contest is open to all homemakers living in Canada, except Maclean-Hunter personnel and their families.
2. Entries must be postmarked not later than October 31, 1968.
3. Clip out this page and enclose it with your entry.
4. Use 8½-by-11-inch paper, and write on one side only. Start each section of the contest (2 to 9 above) on a fresh sheet.
5. When you have answered the questions, attach snapshots, this page, separate sheets, etc., and mail to Mrs. Chatelaine Contest, Chatelaine Magazine, 481 University Avenue, Toronto 2.
6. All entries and pictures become the property of Chatelaine and CANNOT BE RETURNED.
7. If you are the winner, you must be able to arrange for a week early in 1969 for interviews and photographs, either in Toronto or at home.
8. Results of the contest and the story of the winner will be published in our May 1969 issue.



being refused on conventional grounds. Barbara West at *Chatelaine* had written to him to say that "we have a very conservative readership that would not readily accept a story with a theme of this kind. Many of our readers would not understand it, and those [who] did would probably be offended." [23] If she had offended *Chatelaine* during these exchanges, she was not prevented from publishing several other stories with them over the span of close to fifteen years,[24] nor from being asked to judge one of their fiction contests in March 1978.[25]

The last of these exemplary exchanges independent of her agents occurred in the 1970s. Rule was publishing more easily with *Chatelaine*; however, she still on occasion found it difficult to locate publishers for her longer manuscripts. Showalter's sense of the conservative cultural politics that affected the publication of novels rather than magazine fiction shows itself here. Employed at Harcourt Brace Jovanovich as an editor, Carol J. Meyer was an ardent admirer of Rule. She herself declared as much in a letter dated December 21, 1979: "Your books have been an absolute staple in my life."[26] In 1979, Rule submitted the manuscript for *Outlander* (1981) to Meyer, who believed that it was a "book I am not going to be able to take on." In part, her refusal to do so was related to the genre of the book—"collections [of stories and essays] don't sell." She also observed that

> I don't think HBJ is quite ready for it. They are advanced enough to publish a novel with homosexual themes, but I think this might be a bit much. . . . *Outlander* is certainly *not erotica,* but so much of the book has to do with lesbian sexuality that I doubt that the more "straight" publishers (and here I am using the word to mean conventional) will know what to do with it.

Although Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, founded in 1919, worked to become more politically open, Meyer admitted that it remained politically conservative and that it would require a champion of Rule's work *within* the organization to push forward the book's publication (Tebbel 1981, 179). She was initially unprepared to take on that role: "I don't think I have the courage to make so direct a political statement, and I don't think the other people on the staff would be comfortable enough with the material to do a good job of publishing the book without an editor who is willing to be ferocious and insistent."[27] Only a few days later, on April 22, 1980, Meyer inexplicably changed her mind again. She declared that, with respect to the "risks involved in sponsoring this book, I have no problem with that now. . . . I had problems with the collection, because I felt guilty and insecure, but I definitely do not feel that way about this one."

These exchanges became more crucial in relation to her agents because Rule regarded them as champions and protectors of her work when other publishing figures or institutions did not deal with it as she wished. Generally, agents are seen as important to "various facets of publishing—from publishing contracts to advertising campaigns for books to public relations for authors" (Gillies 7). As Mary Ann Gillies notes in *The Professional Literary Agent in Britain, 1880-1920*, the emergent figure of the agent responded to authors' financial considerations and needs. George Fetherling characterizes agents as "professional bargainers": "they allow the relationship between author and publisher to remain positive and creative, unvexed by the crassness of commerce" (668). Rule was irked, however, by the prioritizing of financial considerations over what she perceived as unnecessary or detrimental editing of her work. She herself came to attribute at least four responsibilities to the literary agent: first, act as audience of, witness to, and critic of the literary text; second, understand the various kinds of markets to which a writer may appeal and then locate the most appropriate publishing venue for the work at hand; third, negotiate the economic terms for the literary work; and fourth, but perhaps most crucially, protect the moral imperatives of the literary text by guarding the latter from textual editing, expurgation, or any other form of censorship. It was this latter point that was to be most contentious.

Rule began to work with her first agent, Willis Kingsley Wing, around early 1957. Her relationship with Wing was initially characterized by the fundamentals of agent-writer relationships: the working out of economic details related to appropriate markets and venues for the publication of her short stories. It was also distinguished by the frank and open remarks that Wing made about the literary merit and quality of the work she submitted for the purposes of finding suitable publishers. He managed negotiations for publication in magazines that included *Atlantic Monthly*, *The New Yorker, Mademoiselle*, and *Playboy*; book publishers that included Faber & Faber, Doubleday, Random House, and McGraw-Hill; and radio programs that included *Anthology*, the CBC program directed by Weaver. Wing also anticipated the challenges Rule would encounter, as a letter dated December 16, 1957, suggests: the "kind of short fiction that interests you as you discovered in your relations with editors before showing your work to us is hard to market. Even with the most successful story the market is desperately narrow." He thus suggested she shift her attention to longer fiction.[28]

With respect to literary quality, he commented freely in several letters, as in a letter dated April 11, 1957.[29] Therein he noted that one story, "My

Father's House," was "uneven," "wordy," and "lack[ing in] direction," and that the dialogue of the characters was at times "irritating and pretentious." He suggested that another story, "The Coward," conveyed "dark emotional depths" without "explain[ing] them clearly": "Unless the story is meaningful and is clear in its meanings the reader is going to feel cheated." In making such remarks, however, Wing also made another intriguing observation related to the two markets *between* which Rule seemed to have landed. He considered these same stories "too literary for the popular markets and not quite authoritative enough for the other markets such as the *New Yorker*, *Atlantic*, *Mademoiselle* and so on. It seems to me your principal need is to work out motivation and the end results of your interesting characterization." The novel, it seemed, was the direction in which he was gently encouraging Rule to move.

His insistence that Rule appeal to one market or the other, however, raised alarms, for he found himself placating her in his subsequent letter, dated April 30, 1957: "I'm not urging plot and motivation on you for the sake of adherence to existing forms or patterns. We have trouble in this business with semantics." Even at this early juncture, his remarks reveal that Rule refused to adhere to "existing forms and patterns" and that she wanted to develop new ones. He eventually shifted from offering criticism to placating her or showing support for her work. By way of encouragement, he noted that "I think you are in the process now of finding out exactly what you can do best and if the target isn't hit every time, you can reassure yourself that this is not an uncommon experience."[30] When he himself was not available to give such direct support for or attention to her work, his colleagues strove "to do the best for [their] authors in the British market without detailed instructions from [him]."[31]

He was especially careful to assert his authority in financial matters. On April 8, 1957, he came to understand that she had been working with Weaver to have "A Walk By Himself" read over the radio. He advised her that, even if she retained publication rights, "major magazines would not want to publish after a radio program had used the story." In all such instances, Wing remarked that he ought to be referred to "for contract negotiations."[32] In other words, however Rule may have conceived of his role, Wing emphasized that he had the final say over her financial contract. In another letter, dated July 8, 1957, he reminded her that, even if she submitted stories independently to magazines in the Canadian market, the agency was still entitled to commissions from her publications:

> As to the Canadian market and the question of submitting your stories there yourself, you might like to know that the editors of *Chatelaine* and *Maclean*'s are clients of this office and that we have quite wide contacts in Canada, but, of course, if you prefer marketing your manuscripts there we have no especial objection on the understanding that it does not affect our commission position.

Clearly, Rule was still learning the protocols related to financial agreements and markets when publishing through an agency. Later, within the course of their developing business association, she came to define such protocols by elevating her concerns about censorship above any financial reward that might involve compromising the integrity of her work.

Tensions showed themselves on November 25, 1958, when Wing wrote that "we could do a lot better if you could enjoy the give and take of a personal conversation." There is even an element of defensiveness in his letter: "[w]e've invested quite a bit of time and money in your affairs and I should like to continue but don't feel any obligation." Clearly, Rule was sufficiently appeased by his remarks because her ire was not roused again until about two years later when the editor of *Housewife* magazine,[33] Alan Wykes, was granted permission by a London-based representative of the Wing agency to condense her story, "Your Father and I."[34] Wing quoted a letter from his London associates sent on January 16, 1961, wherein he stated that, as it was "Wykes who [was] doing the work, [he saw] no cause for objection." Apparently,Wykes had an established reputation with the magazine and within the industry. Wing himself therefore had believed "this to be sufficient assurance."[35] He claimed that "all our dealings through our agent in London with British magazines have, on the whole, been satisfactory up to now. British editors have always had the right to anglicize stories of North American origin up to a reasonable point."

In a letter dated September 9, 1961, Rule angrily observed that those apparently "satisfactory" dealings extended well beyond anglicizing her story to making excisions of "over a thousand words. In a six thousand word short story such cutting can hardly be considered minor." She proceeded to list the changes made, which were the result of "poor judgment and poor taste." He had, for example, changed the setting of the story from Reno to Exeter, altered idiomatic expressions, and made egregious stylistic changes. The change in the setting, she observes, "posed such difficult problems, Mr. Wykes solved most of them by simply dropping out the central section of the story, the trip across the country which develops the tensions between the husband and wife and reveals something important of the daughter's trouble." Rule also observed that he had altered the speaking passages of the

main character, Richard, who no longer simply said "something" but "murmured" or said "gently."[36]

Rule then insisted that, since the damage to her published story was irrevocable, she receive greater assurances that "no contract of mine is made for me that allows any alteration of my work without my specific permission." She scarcely waited for his response before she wrote a follow-up letter (of the same date),[37] in which she addressed Wing's belief that she had "jumped to the conclusion that it was [his] contract arrangements that made this handling of the story possible." As she noted, the "contract was vague enough to allow Mr. Wykes to make the radical changes he did" presumably because, as Rule noted ironically, "Mr. Wykes has a good reputation as a responsible editor":

> It seems to me that you take a pretty fantastic risk in setting up a contract that gives an editor these liberties without permission of an author. I don't see how it could protect an author from gross misrepresentation. Or do you think this handling of a story not a gross representation?. . . I cannot feel easy about other contract arrangements unless you can assure me that . . . *no* alteration, no matter how small, will be made without my permission.

Wing explained that magazine proofs were conventionally not given the same attention as those for novels. He also assured her "we will be especially insistent to see that such a problem doesn't arise again."

Even so, he noted that her "faith" in their work was "very easily shaken": "I treasure my reputation greatly but if you and I can't agree on it, I haven't the slightest desire to continue with your work."[38] In the course of one year, Rule indeed would no longer treasure his reputation as much as Wing did: this editorial fiasco was a sticking point with her and their working relationship was over by August 16, 1962. Wing's surviving letter indicates that Rule felt that his agency neither adequately represented her nor protected her interests: "In view of your doubts about the Watt office in the British field and ourselves in North America," he coldly remarked, "I think there is no value whatever in continuing." He argued that the flourishing of an "agency relationship" required "mutual trust, good faith, and an agreement to work happily together." Since Rule had lost faith in Wing's ability to market and protect her work properly, she decided to give another agency the opportunity to fare better.

By early October 1962, Rule began working with the next agency, Hope Leresche & Steele, formerly the Sayle Literary Agency.[39] The relationship was almost an instantly successful one, especially if one considers that by November 1962 Leresche had secured Secker & Warburg as the publisher

for her first novel—*Permanent Resident* (later titled *Desert of the Heart* [1964]). Leresche also negotiated the rights for her book with the Canadian publisher, Macmillan. Leresche's American counterpart did not do so well. In the first few months, Kurt Hellmer and Rule had a seemingly happy working relationship. Like Wing, he and his assistant, Sally Nicklas, offered critical insights into her work. Both were enthusiastic about her novel, *Permanent Resident.* In discussing its publication, Hellmer made remarks that reflect the publishing conditions of the period: Macmillan "might be interested in a book, but it is doubtful they would go to the expense of producing it themselves. Canada is just too small a territory to make publishing pay."[40] Yet Macmillan agreed to publish the novel the same year as Secker & Warburg.

Some of their interactions showcase how satisfactorily Hellmer operated as the protector that Rule desired for her work. She was apprehensive regarding the delayed publication of the American version of *Desert of the Heart* given some of her previous experiences with *Housewife*. She admitted that she must "sound more like a patient nervous about an operation than a writer about to have a book published."[41] Some of these heightened anxieties and preoccupations revolved around minutiae: "the use of commas in separating adjectives."[42] But she understandably also wanted reassurance that no editing would be done to *Desert of the Heart* without her prior knowledge and approval. Hellmer wrote on November 18, 1962 to suggest that she need not worry "since you will receive the copy-edited manuscript before it is [sent] to the printers, thus assuring you that no changes [will be] made with which you might not agree." Even so, she was worried because Aaron Asher of World Publishing Company, which had agreed to publish *Desert of the Heart* in the United States, was refusing to alter a contract that accommodated Rule's concerns. So again she wrote directly to Hellmer on November 21, 1962: "I would like you to do what you can to persuade him to accept my second suggestion, either the repeating of the sentence already written into the contract or a sentence like 'All copy editing is subject to the final approval of the author' to be placed at the end of the copy editing clause." Happily, he could write by November 26 that her first suggested change—the omission of two words related to unauthorized editing—stood "the way you have changed it."

Even Leresche impressed Rule in terms of operating as a protector of the literary text. Indeed, in terms of her first novel, the editing was virtually non-existent. Aside from concerns Secker & Warburg articulated about libel laws because of some correlatives between her fictional characters and place

names, and real persons and place names in Las Vegas, there was only one inquiry. As Rule recalls:

> [O]ne of the characters, Evelyn, says "my husband and I" quite self consciously, and then says "feeling like the Queen of England in her Christmas message." The printer had underlined this, and had written in the margin: "Is this offensive to the Queen?" I wrote underneath, "No." And that is the only critical exchange I had about that book.[43]

She felt, however, the concerns about libel laws were still "not the ordinary exercises of an author preparing a book for publication. In the early 1960s, novels were not being published about erotic relationships between women."[44] Rule's sense of the market was far from incorrect, as Showalter has shown; yet the conservatism that persisted in the period did not substantively affect her novel.

After the initial period of harmony with Hellmer, problems emerged. The first real conflict with him surfaced approximately one year into their professional relationship, on August 15, 1963. She had received the September 1963 issue of *Redbook*, a literary magazine that had redefined itself in 1951 to appeal to post-Second World War women and mothers (Tebbel 1991). Her story, "No More Bargains" which had appeared in that issue, had suffered from significant grammatical changes and egregious omissions for which she had not given approval.[45] In profound agitation, she wrote to Hellmer to castigate him for allowing such modifications to have been made without giving her any warning:

> A copy of the September issue of REDBOOK arrived this morning, forwarded from your office. As I read through the story NO MORE BARGAINS, I discovered that it had not only been cut but also revised since I last saw it, and it is . . . a butcher's job. The cutting in the first scene, for instance, makes the whole scene meaningless, a waste of space. As for the revisions, there are some real corkers, sentences turned into blatant nonsense, straight statement turned into appalling cliché. Additions like "For suddenly she knew" belong to a category (sic) of errors that I should think even true confession magazines would be ashamed to admit. There is no point in my making a list of the numerous changes in which the editor achieves such brilliant grammatical clarity as having the juice and coffee stand up instead of the man drinking them.[46]

In part, Rule's indignation was rooted in her sense that, as an instructor at the University of British Columbia, she had a standard related to good writing to uphold: "I teach at a university. I teach English. I teach writing . . . [E]xplaining to my colleagues and students that I didn't make [these errors], that they were made for me, doesn't help. Any responsible writer does not allow himself to be so used." Although these reasons were enough to support

her case against unapproved revisions or omissions, a number of other issues surfaced as she and Hellmer brandished fiery words over the incident.

The disputes with Hellmer escalated because he insisted upon showing fidelity to the existing markets rather than to Rule herself. So, on October 16, 1963, in a searing letter to Hope Leresche, Rule wrote about her resentment of editorial interventions, especially about how Hellmer had failed to protect her from them: "He has done everything he could to avoid making a statement which would require him to arrange contracts that limited editorial rights. Apparently . . . he feels he would be too limited by such restrictions because he keeps using vague phrases designed to placate me without binding him to any real agreement."[47] Such a response derived from her deep conviction in literary integrity. The changes to "No More Bargains" were disconcerting because they affected the story's content, what Rule saw as embodying the "moral vision" of a work. These changes, moreover, were made to accommodate material interests—an advertisement for vacuum cleaners. As Rule went on to note, "[o]ne has to keep bad editing, and vacuum cleaners, in their place."[48]

So she became increasingly tenacious and rigorous, insisting that Hellmer acquiesce to her conception of the role he ought to play, even enlisting the aid of a lawyer to "make it impossible for my New York agent to sell any of my work without adequate protection from irresponsible editing."[49] Over the *Redbook* incident, she thereafter vehemently insisted on allegiance to her interests: "if cutting and rewriting are done without my permission . . . both you and I have legal recourse. Is it that you don't think you can get magazine editors to agree to these restrictions? If you can't, if such restrictions tie your hands in the markets you are primarily interested in, then you have a real problem, one you can't solve with me, and we should stop trying to do business." Here Rule identifies one of the key issues of their disagreement—his limited knowledge of or engagement with markets, which she supposed had superseded her own.[50] In frustration, she wrote directly to the editor of *Redbook*, Barbara Blakemore, who eventually agreed to allow Rule to "have the final word" on her forthcoming work and, in announcing such a triumph to Hellmer, she argued that "I must maintain final responsibility for my own work. . . . I want legal control in your hands and mine, not in theirs." Declaring that "[y]ou are useless to me as an agent unless you can give me protection against this butchering," she drew a line. Evidently, he crossed it again, for she replaced him on Laresche's recommendation with her last and most successful agent, Georges Borchardt, on May 29, 1966.

When she did negotiate her contract with Borchardt, she was careful to note that she would only settle with an agent "who is not only interested in my work but [who] also accepts the limitations I want for contracts and places of publication":

> I cannot accept any agreement [that] takes final responsibility of my work out of my hands. . . . Some agents I have talked to found this restriction unrealistic, and from the point of view of number of sales I am sure it is, but I am not willing to have my work published in any other way."[51]

Borchardt accepted Rule on these terms, notwithstanding the "limitations" that suggest that she was more interested in an agent who protected her rights rather than one who secured the most lucrative contract.[52]

She consistently put freedom of expression ahead of financial reward in her interactions with publishing figures and especially with her agents. The subsequent breakdown of her relationship first with Wing and then with Hellmer was thus related to their inability to conform to her expectations of the agent's role: to protect her work from unauthorized editing. In Hellmer's case, it was also related to his apparent unwillingness to locate new spaces for her sometimes "ill-fitting" fiction and his subsequent failure to negotiate an appropriate venue for Rule's longer fiction. When he argued that popular magazines conventionally had the last say in publishing material, Rule disproved his theory by eliciting a completely different response from Blakemore. Even when she tried more conventional routes or popular markets, Rule was adamant about pushing the boundaries of what might have been deemed acceptable.[53] As she herself discovered in her subsequent publishing negotiations, her literary freedom was circumscribed by both overt and implicit expectations about who could make claims to being an author, what interests would govern the shaping of that material (economic and otherwise), what public spaces sanctioned her literary material, and what an author might be authorized to write about. Ultimately, these competing expectations and interests affected knowledge and literary production in the period, expectations and interests that Rule consistently challenged throughout the span of her literary career.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank SSHRC, the FQRSC and Bishop's University for their support; the executors of the Rule estate, for their permission to print this article; and the peer reviewers of this article, for their extremely insightful advice and comments. I am also grateful for the support and assistance of Dr. Gary Kuchar; Leslie Field and Candice Bjur (University Archives Assistants, UBC); and Andrea Szilyagi, my research assistant.

NOTES

1 Rule decided to stop writing after 1990, although some of her work was published posthumously: see, for example, *Loving the Difficult* (Sidney, BC: Hedgerow, 2008). The reasons for her retirement seem to be related to her debilitating arthritis (see Schuster 6).

2 See the letter by Rosemary Macomber (of the Borchardt agency) to Jane Rule on July 6, 1972, in which she praises the Canada Council and deplores how *Canadian Forum* does not pay its writers: "I consider this a very poor indication of the regard Canada has for its writer" (Box 21, File titled *Copies of Other Stories*, Jane Rule Fonds, UBC Archives).

3 See Smith, who notes that "Canadian pulp magazines existed within a cultural hierarchy that proved itself to be trans-national, and the lack of difference between the production of pulp fiction in Canada and its production in the United States suggested that the two nations shared many social and cultural characteristics that prompted political anxiety in Canada on a national scale" (262).

4 Mass-market magazine fiction flourished in post-war Canada.

5 Since "neither Canadian literary fiction nor poetry had much international appeal," publishers in Canada were more wary about engaging the material submitted by Canadian authors and only did so at great risk on their part (Friskney and Gerson 134).

6 Even in 1952, when George H. Doran wrote *Chronicles of Barabbas*, *1884-1934*, his chapter on "The Exotics" is revealing of how he and others in the publishing industry might have approached queer culture: he remarked on the "exotics [who] profit[ed] by the decadence of an overstimulated and blasé social order" (267).

7 Her book, *Lesbian Images*, for example, was commissioned by Doubleday in the 1970s.

8 See also George Fetherling's entry "Literary Agents" in *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada* (668).

9 25 June 1954, Box 19, File 7. Jane Rule Fonds, UBC Archives.

10 A.P. Watt claimed he had "invented the business when he established A.P Watt & Co" (130). He represented writers such as Rudyard Kipling and Conan Doyle (Tebbel 1981, 131).

11 In a letter from Rule to Ellen Kay, dated October 23, 1963, Rule discusses how she reached an agreement with Leresche "only about three weeks ago to have her handle my work in England and on the continent while Kurt Hellmer dealt with the States and Canada." Box 19, File 4. Jane Rule Fonds, UBC Archives.

12 Hellmer had fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s and came to settle in New York where by the 1940s he became a literary agent (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurt_Hellmer). 04 April 2010. Web.

13 http://www.gbagency.com/about.html. 04 April 2010. Web. His agency continues to represent her work.

14 Publishing in Canada had also improved by the early 1970s as a result of some government support, both federally and provincially. See Robin Farr's "Government Looks All Around."

15 See Willis Kingsley Wing's letter to Jane Rule. 30 April 1957. Box 19, File 7. Jane Rule Fonds, UBC Archives.

16 See Robert Weaver's letter to Jane Rule. 21 January 1959. Vol 4. File 27 (1957-1982). MG31 D162. National Archives of Canada.

17 The letters exchanged between Rule and Weaver do not clearly indicate which story was taped for consideration for *Anthology*; but, in a letter in August 1957, Weaver makes reference to "A Walk By Himself," that "earlier" story she had submitted for his consideration.

18 Rule to Weaver. 1 April 1957. Vol 4. File 27 (1957-1982). Robert Weaver Fonds.

19 In an undated letter that follows, Rule speaks of how two-thirds of the story was read over the air before it was "censored by a lord high someone or other. . . . The CBC accepted the story, asked for a rewrite, which was also accepted, broadcast it over two thirds of Canada, then cut it off. I want to know why." There is no letter of response in the archives. Vol 4. File 27 (1957-1982). MG31 D162. National Archives of Canada. The story was subsequently published in *Klanak Islands* (see Jane Rule Fonds Catalogue, Box 13, File 4. Jane Rule Fonds).

20 See Korinek. Also see "Chatelaine: We're Celebrating 80 Years."

21 Rule to "Mrs. Chatelaine Contest." 15 September 1968. Box 23, File 1. Jane Rule Fonds.

22 Rule to "Mrs. Chatelaine Contest." 15 September 1968. Box 23, File 1. Jane Rule Fonds. It is unclear whether or not Rule actually also submitted a story with her entry form; the Fonds hold her five-page response, but there is no indication of a story having been submitted.

23 Winthrop Watson to Rule. 30 April 1979. Box 21. File titled "Georges Borchardt." Jane Rule Fonds.

24 Rule's stories appeared in April 1969 ("The List"), August 1972 ("The Secretary Bird"), December 1976 ("The Delicate Balance"), August 1977 ("Joy"), December 1979 ("A Migrant Christmas"), and May 1981 ("Seaweed and Song"). Box 37, File 7. Jane Rule Fonds.

25 "Jane Rule, Winner Fiction Competition." *Miss Chatelaine* 15.2 (March 1978). Box 37, File 10. Jane Rule Fonds.

26 Meyer to Rule. 21 December 1979. Box 21. File titled "Harcourt Brace." Jane Rule Fonds.

27 Meyer to Rule. 26 February 1980. Box 21, File titled "Harcourt Brace." Jane Rule Fonds.

28 Willis Kingsley Wing to Rule. 22 July 1958, Box 19, File 7. Jane Rule Fonds.

29 Wing to Rule. 11 April 1957. Box 19, File 7. Jane Rule Fonds.

30 As for the apparent lack of speed in dealing with her manuscripts, he noted: "If you take your responsibilities to your authors seriously, careful reading and evaluation of manuscripts added to all the business activities that involve us, the time factor becomes a somewhat different thing." Wing to Rule. 6 January 1958. Box 19, File 7. Jane Rule Fonds.

31 Wing to Rule. 28 February 1958, Box 19, File 7. Jane Rule Fonds.

32 Wing to Rule. 8 April 1957, Box 19, File 7. Jane Rule Fonds.

33 *Housewife* was a monthly glossy magazine produced by Hulton Press in the 1950s.

34 A copy of the typed manuscript is housed in the Jane Rule Fonds, Box 13, File Five. I have not yet been able to locate a copy of the story as it was printed in *Housewife* magazine.

35 Wing to Rule. 1 September 1961, Jane Rule Fonds.

36 Rule to Wing. 9 September 1961. Box 19, File 7. Jane Rule Fonds.

37 It is not clear whether or not Rule sent both of these letters to Wing.

38 Wing to Rule. 30 August 1961. Box 19, File 7. Jane Rule Fonds.

39 Hope Leresche and Richard Steele took over the Sayle Literary Agency (founded by JB Pinker) in the 1970s and renamed it after themselves. (It is now back to Sayle Literary Agency. *British Books Today: Literary Agents*. Web.10 April 2010.)

40 31 October 1962. Box 19, File 7. Jane Rule Fonds.

41 Rule to Hellmer. 21 November 1963. Box 19, File 7. Jane Rule Fonds.

42 Benjamin La Farge, Associate Editor, to Rule. 18 February 1965. Box 19, File 7. Jane Rule Fonds.

43 "Jane Rule: The Woman Behind *Lesbian Images*." *Body Politic* (December 1975): 14. See also unpublished interview with Jane Rule, by Linda Morra. December 2006.

44 "Censorship." Box 25, File 6. Jane Rule Fonds.

45 As one example, in the opening line of the story, the protagonist, Kate, is described as wakening from a "damp, guilty dream"; the final printed story removed the words "damp, guilty." See typed ms. of "No More Bargains" in "Short Stories & Essays - Published and Unpublished." Box 12, File 14. Jane Rule Fonds.

46 Rule to Hellmer. Box 19, File 7. Jane Rule Fonds.
47 Rule to Hope Leresche. 16 October 1963. Box 22, File 1. Jane Rule Fonds.
48 This quotation and an account of the censoring process of the story that appeared in *Redbook* has been taken from an essay by Hofsess, titled "Jane Rule's Wisdom of the Heart." Box 21, File 32. Jane Rule Fonds.
49 Rule to Ellen Kay. November 8, 1963. Box 19, File 5. Jane Rule Fonds, UBC Archives.
50 In fact, in the December 2007 interview, she claimed to know nothing of markets, but to write for herself—markets, she asserted, belong to the agent's field of knowledge.
51 Rule to Georges Borchardt. 29 May 1966. Box 21, File 6. Jane Rule Fonds.
52 Rule to Borchardt. 29 May 1966. Box 21, File 6. Jane Rule Fonds. In the same letter, she stipulated that the newly-acquired agent was to look into the World Publishing Company with which she had placed her first novel, *Desert of the Heart*, and advise her about what do with her novel, *This is Not for You:* "World's handling of the book . . . doesn't give me a great deal of confidence in their efficiency. What I need is the advice of someone who does know what would be wisest to do with this new book."
53 As Marilyn Schuster notes, her struggles "nonetheless enable[d] her to devise strategies of resistance and subversion" (2).

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Troy Tymofichuk

Flesh & Continuance

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Marilyn R. Schuster

Jane Rule & Rick Bébout, Private Letters / Public Lives

A Queer Love Story

Letters were vital to Jane Rule. She answered every fan letter she received, she appreciated friends and family members who shared her love of letters, and she rewarded everyone who wrote to her with a prompt and thoughtful response. Her correspondence with Rick Bébout holds a special place among all her letters and, I believe, in her work. I am editing fifteen years of their correspondence (1981-1995). The letters tell the story of a movement, of how the work of social change gets done, and of a friendship. They also challenge the way we think about gay and lesbian narratives of the last decades of the twentieth century even as they suggest new ways of thinking about queer narratives today.

The story of the letters

Jane Rule and Rick Bébout wrote each other from the mid-1970s until Jane died in November 2007. The letters began as a professional correspondence. Rick was Jane's editor at *The Body Politic* and they wrote to each other about the pieces she contributed to the paper, many of which were published as a column called "So's Your Grandmother."

From 1975 to 1987 when *The Body Politic* ceased publication, Jane wrote well over thirty essays, reviews, and columns for the paper. Rule and Bébout began a more regular, monthly exchange of letters in 1981 and even before they met in person, the letters provided an important conversation for both of them, independent of Jane's writing for the paper.

At first glance, Rick and Jane seem unlikely correspondents. Their histories resemble each other in some details, but the lives they chose were markedly

different: they were both born in the US and emigrated to Canada in part for political reasons.

Rule was born in New Jersey in 1931 and moved to Vancouver in 1956; from the mid-1970s she and Helen Sonthoff (also born in the US) lived on rural Galiano Island. Skeptical of the "gay and lesbian community," Jane and Helen were for decades the centre of an active, diverse, culturally rich, largely private, social life. It was important to Rule to have old people and children, people of all sexual persuasions and political views as part of her daily world, her lived community.

Bébout was born in Massachusetts in 1950, and lived an intense, urban life in Toronto from 1969 when he emigrated during the Vietnam War until he died in June 2009. He always lived in and around the "gay ghetto" that he helped to shape. He chronicled Toronto gay life and politics in his memoirs *Promiscuous Affections: A Life in the Bar 1969-2000* and in his history of *The Body Politic* and the community it served; both are found on a web site he launched on his fiftieth birthday in January 2000.

Reading the early letters, it seems that Rick has the most to learn from Jane. She is a wise, famous, older figure and he writes her in a deferential tone; but as the correspondence progresses, she learns from him about the dailiness of gay male urban life in Toronto; he gives her access to a community she feels related to but which is very distant from her daily life on Galiano Island.

At first they talked about the paper and coverage of issues and debates that were important to the gay and lesbian community: pornography, censorship, and youth sexuality, for example. They often disagreed, but they prodded each other to think more deeply and to explore questions from their very different viewpoints. They developed an intellectual and political bond as they grew to respect and trust each other. Eventually the letters became a personal journal for Rick and Jane became his closest confidant. His letters were often written in several dated entries, spanning a week or more. He would begin each "entry" with the date and time of writing. In periods of stress and uncertainty (instability at work, messy romances, and the reality of HIV/AIDS for the community after 1982 and for himself after 1988) words were Rick's way to contain chaos, to give shape to the blurred intensity of the moment; his descriptions grew longer, more detailed. On medical problems he took, as he said, a "sociological" approach, first watching a close friend die in 1987, then observing the procedures he had to undergo himself, describing such scenes with an air of objective detachment and sometimes unexpected humour.

It was in 1981 that their letters took a more personal turn, ironically enough, after Jane exploded at *The Body Politic* (and more particularly at Rick) because a key paragraph was dropped from a review she wrote of Andrea Dworkin's book *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* for the June 1981 issue of the paper. In March 1981, Jane asks if *The Body Politic* would be interested in her review and she sympathizes with recent raids involving members of the collective:

March 8, 1981

Dear Rick:
Andrea Dworkin has sent me a manuscript copy of her book, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, asking me to do a review, even if critical. I have written a review and sent it to her, saying I'll send it to *The Body Politic* if she wants me to. It is negative enough in places that she may not want it printed. I'm offering her the choice because I don't usually agree to review books I have real reservations about. Anyway, if she does want it printed, I hope you can make room for it in June or July.

I haven't yet read the coverage on the raids. You fellows may get some high energy out of confrontation, but I sit out here and motherly wring my hands worrying about all of you and wishing men could get the romance out of danger and damage.

Affectionately, Jane

Next, on May 27, 1981, Jane reads the review as published in the June *Body Politic* and writes a stern letter to Rick and the collective.

Dear Friends:
The understanding I have had with you is that any changes you want to make in my work will not be done without my approval. I cannot agree to publish in *The Body Politic* without that understanding.

In my review of Andrea Dworkin's book, one whole paragraph has been deleted. It is the paragraph most specifically positive about the work she has done and most controversial in its analysis of Kinsey and male sexual motivation. In a comment otherwise strongly critical, the leaving out of this paragraph, tips the whole balance of the review. Whether or not the paragraph was cut simply in concern for space (the photograph could have been smaller), it looks very much like political censoring. Whatever the motive, the exclusion of the paragraph is a serious mistake which must be corrected because I cannot publish in a paper where there is any question of such censorship.

I need the omitted paragraph printed with an apology for its deletion before anything else of mine is published in the paper.

Yours,

Jane Rule
c.c. Andrea Dworkin

By return mail, Rick writes a deeply apologetic letter, saying that he investigated the matter:

> My only conclusion is that the typesetter skipped over it in keying, and that this error was not caught in the proofreading. First proofing of all our copy is supposed to be done in comparison with the original manuscript; in this case, that must not have happened. I must bear final responsibility for this error, since I train proofreaders and apparently have not been insistent enough about the importance of a comparison to the original on the first proof.

He ends the letter saying:

> You also have from me my personal apologies. I'm embarrassed and truly sorry to have effectively misrepresented your opinion through such a stupid error. I will also send a letter to Andrea Dworkin to reassure her that we had no intention of slanting your review in any way not intended by you. I hope that meets with your approval.
>
> Again, my apologies—and my hopes that this has not weakened your trust in our editorial *intentions* (as opposed to our execution, which I promise you will have less reason to question in the future).
>
> Beat wishes.
>
> Sincerely,
> Rick Bébout
> for the collective

Andrea Dworkin wrote back to Rick on June 3:

> Thank you for yr letter and the other material you sent me. I hadnt seen the review but you spared me at least the pain of encountering it without preparation. You have made it impossible, by yr conscientious explanation, to have "suspicions of politically motivated censorship," but if Freud had not invented the Freudian slip I would have to . . .
>
> Sincerely,
> Andrea Dworkin

Rick handled Jane's rage with tact and candor, and the incident—with high feelings on both sides—was resolved swiftly and cleanly. Jane forgave the paper and Rick. Their quick and honest exchange may have established the trust that permitted a closer relationship in subsequent letters.

The story of the letters—how they began with Jane's collaboration with *The Body Politic* and became the expression of a deepening friendship—blends into the stories that the letters tell.

The stories the letters tell

What first drew me to the correspondence was the rich social history the letters provide: two articulate, engaged eyewitnesses to an important social

movement share in private their thoughts about public issues. The letters also tell the compelling narrative of a deepening friendship, an epistolary intimacy that is, simply, a love story.

The letters often begin and end with a conversational gesture; here's an example from Rick from January 1990:

> Dear Jane,
> Home for a scotch with you, and needing it after one too many funerals.

Rick often writes late into the night, one scotch after another, though he says one can write drunk but should edit sober. Jane more often writes during the day, between the departure and arrival of the many guests she and Helen welcomed on Galiano or as she watched the children who came to swim at their pool every day in the summer. As I was reading through the letters, I was thinking about the extraordinary relationship that was unfolding page after page when I found "Dear Rick, I do love you. Jane" at the end of a letter from Jane to Rick in 1986.

The letters tell deeply intertwined stories about public events and private life, social history, and personal narratives. The correspondence is of special historical interest because they illuminate the twentieth-century discovery that the personal is political. The letters complicate our sense of the ways that selves and communities constitute each other even as the g/l/b/t movement coalesced around sexual identities. The letters are written in the moment, without benefit of hindsight; they tell the story of the gay and lesbian movement in North America as it unfolds, from the point of view of two deeply political people whose ages, genders, backgrounds, and daily lives give them very different perspectives on the communities they share. Jane and Rick are reflective people for whom language matters, who need to explore themselves and the worlds they inhabit through language. They count on each other to be both loving and critical, to be good and attentive readers. The letters offer us a means of capturing and complicating memory, a way to witness the intellectual and emotional complexities of daily life.

An exchange between Rule and Bébout early on—after the Dworkin debacle and just before they met for the first time in 1982—illustrates a mingling of public and private voices, public debates and private reflections. In these letters we can see how differently they view issues that tended to dominate gay and lesbian debates in the early 1980s—but also, interwoven with their arguments are reflections on their own feelings about morality and about the erotic of the everyday. In February 1982, Jane writes to say that she'd like to write longer, reflective pieces for *The Body Politic*:

February 24, 1982. I would like to do a longer article or two in the next couple of years. I think a package review of several books, not as a way to economize on book reviews but as a purposeful consideration of what's going on . . . I'd also like to ponder the emphasis on the outrageous in some of the lead articles of *The Body Politic* as opposed to some of the more important moral dilemmas of our lives. Compromise seems to me a deeper issue than nipple clips in the baths, swinging drag nuns, or the cynical article on how to be a rejected lover. I know [you are] terrified that the paper might somehow become respectable and dull, and morality never does seem a fun topic, but I may try my hand at it one of these days just the same.

A week later, Rick answers:

March 3, 1982. I'm glad you want to take on larger things—even our own "outrageousness." I winced a little at that, I must admit—mostly because I know what we have before us for the coming issue: a piece on "outrageous" filmmaker Kenneth Anger, Gayle Rubin on "The Leather Menace," . . . and something which its author calls "a cautionary tale," but which is, after all, about fist-fucking. If all this seems a calculated and extreme case of flaunting it, well, it is.

[he then goes on to explain an effort to give sense of direction to the features section of the magazine by focusing on themes] The first four themes we decided to gather material for were "the big four"—pornography, youth sexuality, public sex, and S/M.

[He adds] I think part of the mythology of the gay community (however that may be defined—and I suppose I mean the most public and visible manifestations of the gay male community) is that it has no morality, that it is amoral or antimoral, I know from my life that that's crap, but I also know that what I mean by morality is very different . . . from what my mother might mean. I think most of the gay people I know are highly moral people . . . but I don't think we yet have a language to talk about that kind of morality in a positive way.

Jane responds—again by return mail:

March 10, 1982. Yes, it is precisely getting at the problem of defining our own kinds of morality that I'm interested in, developing a vocabulary that makes it clearer, that places issues in a context people can understand even if they don't agree . . . I have no objection to continued discussion of what you call "the big four", even if they aren't the big four for me or I suspect some of your readers and more of your potential readers. Of them the sexuality of the young seems to me a universal topic about which we say and think far too little for its importance.

A week later, Rick answers:

March 19, 1982. You may be right about the "big four" not really being the big four for most of our readers, present and potential. I guess my interest has been to get . . . "dialogue rather than diatribe" going . . . What I was tired of was the "discussion" of these issues in simple pro-con, black-white, yes-no terms. We take a single word to name a hugely varied phenomenon, encompassing a vast range of potential good and bad, and say: Pornography—vote yes or no; Pedophilia—vote yes or no . . . Can you imagine us saying: Sex—vote yes or no?

> Part of the problem has been the fixation on all these things as *acts*, not as forms of interaction, as things people do with each other that *mean* something to them. Take any sexual act out of context and describe it technically or mechanically and it becomes completely ridiculous.

Rick returns to the discussion of morality and desire a couple of letters later, in a seemingly unrelated anecdote. He talks about the rewards of working at the paper, particularly watching young people grow up, mature in their sense of self and competence. Rick describes a young volunteer named "Victor" as quiet, intense, having wandered in a year earlier. Victor liked to be called "Squirrel" because squirrels don't like to be touched. As he learned to typeset and became very adept, the collective gave him more and more responsibility. Rick writes to Jane:

> April 28, 1982. If Eddie [another older co-worker] or I put a hand on his shoulder now he doesn't wince anymore, but he'd still fall into unmoving embarrassment if either of us told him how we feel about him; love isn't enough of a word, isn't specific enough; I'd never want to be his lover, but I feel warm, protective—and lustful sometimes, but in a way that doesn't involve any frustration at the fact that sex . . . is never likely to happen. (I want to take him home and lick him all over like a mother cat, but I can't imagine that that image made real would be anything but embarrassing for both of us.) . . . I think of it as somewhat parental, but in a way that is clearly erotic, too—an emotion that I'm sure is common enough, but for which we don't have accepted models, and no name that I can think of . . . I think it could be all us aging activists discovering our children. Maybe we're discovering—defining—our own brand of erotic parenthood.

Answering that letter, Jane says:

> May 3, 1982. I think maybe I should write [a piece] on taboos which seem to me good. Your description of your relationship with the beautiful Victor is very like the relationships I've had with some of my students. I've always been troubled by the casual (for them) sex so many men at the university have with the women students, not on narrowly moral grounds but for the blurring and confusing of the particular relationship there is between a student and a teacher, at its best with an erotic component, held in abeyance in order that the mind stays free, trustful, acknowledged for itself. For years I was only able to acknowledge that eroticism with my male students and taught them better as a result. Both Helen and I needed the women's movement to understand that we needed to communicate our love for women students, too.

A pattern emerges here that recurs in other letters as well: beginning with an attempt to comment on "the issues of the day" they discover their differences, which come out of their very different locations in the world. But gradually, freed from the constraints of having to make these arguments in public, of having to express "acceptable" or "correct" feelings, they reach

toward a more candid morality that acknowledges rather than represses the erotic without exploiting the young and less powerful. In the process, they grow closer to each other.

Theoretical work on sexuality and gender has tended to sanitize emotional complexity and minimize the contradictions of the unconscious. Biddy Martin noted this phenomenon as early as 1996 in *Femininity Played Straight* when she wrote: "I have become frustrated by the excesses of what has been called postmodern or discourse theory, especially with the thin language of subject positions and critiques of 'the subject' that evacuate interiority altogether . . ." (15). The letters restore the interiority of the "queer subject," and deepen our understanding of the work of sexual politics. One example comes out of an exchange about work.

Rule and Bébout often used each other as sounding boards for their work—she wrote several novels, he moved from *The Body Politic* to other centres of community activism between 1981 and 1995. A conversation in 1984 sheds particular light on how they each understand the meaning of their work. Rick's work had become even more urgent with the advent of HIV. By 1984, HIV and AIDS were a constant in gay life and had taken a toll among Rick's friends. He had not yet been diagnosed as HIV positive; that would come four years later, in 1988. Because AIDS was a major issue by 1984 in the mainstream press, Rick's parents asked him about it and he decided to send them an article he'd written for the December 1983 issue of *The Body Politic* called "Is There Safe Sex?" He writes to Jane about the letter that he wrote to his parents when he sent the article:

> In the end, it was a coming out letter—not coming out as gay, which they knew about already, but coming out as committed to what I do and to the people I do it for, including myself. I've always suspected that when you tell your parents you're gay, huge parts of your life disappear from their view, from their imagination: they know what you *don't* have, but they rarely have a grasp of what you *do* have, since it's something they've never known and probably can't imagine . . . It was the first time I'd ever told them what this all means to me, and that's perhaps because it's been coming clearer to me myself. It's partly a continued . . . amazement at the way this place [*The Body Politic*] works: right now . . . there are ten people here working away, most of them unpaid (and the paid ones working overtime) . . . I told [my parents] it was often insane, but that it's an insanity put together by people working for each other, not for anybody else, taking what they earn and using it to do a better job, not to pad anybody else's pocket, and deciding together how they want the whole thing to work instead of taking orders from anyone. All that is nothing short of astonishment to me—except as my vision of the future, of how people should, and maybe someday will, all work together.
>
> . . . hard-headed me finds himself sitting at a typesetter at three in the morning

> with tears coming to his eyes over a sappy sentiment that—what can I say?—I know is true. Not uncomplicated by all the messes of life, not lacking in ambiguities, but, fundamentally, true. Which is why I could tell my parents that "I guess it's time I told you that the way I live my life makes me happier than anything else I could imagine." I still have no idea what they'll make of it.

Jane wrote back the following:

> I'm so glad you felt free to write to your parents about what your world means to you. It is true that parts of our lives are simply out of the range of our parents' imagining. Mine visit often enough to have some sense of the domestic richness of my living, and they are very good at making friends with my friends, gay and straight, but they have no idea of the time I spend writing for the alternate press, and they find it very difficult to accept the fact that I am outspoken about things they have been raised never to discuss even, I suspect, between themselves.

In *Passionate Communities* I argued that Jane Rule's fictions provided a site for resisting the erasure and distortions of lesbian lives that shaped public (and much private) discourse until the feminist and gay and lesbian movements of the 1970s and 1980s. I also argued that her work provided a site for resisting the regulatory demands of gay and lesbian communities as they emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. As a writer of fiction, Rule was always more interested in ambiguities, contradictions, and the unexpected than in politically expedient, community definitions of what sexuality means and how sexuality and the erotic should be represented. The letters exchanged between Jane and Rick give us another site for resisting reductive narratives of queer life and work. Returning to the archive returns us to ambiguities, contradictions and the unexpected. The form of letters as well as the content provides a way to rethink identity, community, the public and the private, how we write our histories. Which leads me to the third and last story: how letters change queer narratives.

How letters change queer narratives—letters as life writing

Letters—especially private letters between people who live public lives—are a hybrid genre. In a 1995 essay, Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner explored what queer theory has to teach us. They characterize queer theory as "the labor of [articulating] sexual practices and desires" and complicating categories of identity. They further write that the work of queer theory "has animated a rethinking of both the perverse and the normal: the romantic couple, sex for money, reproduction, the genres of life narrative." In the Rule-Bébout correspondence, each letter writer seeks in different ways to put sexual practices and desires into language, and at the same time seeks

to complicate "categories of identity"—both received categories and newly emerging ones. The letters become a new "genre of life narrative," queering life-writing while incorporating elements of memoir, diary, and essay.

These letters are hybrid in that they are written for multiple readers: they write for each other, of course, but they also write for themselves, to give shape to the chaos of daily living. For example, in a June 1990 letter, muddled because of new medication for HIV, numbed by the death from AIDS of a former lover, Rick wrote: "My letters to you . . . are my chief means of memory, tying things down in words I can find again later." A third audience in the letters is the eventual reader of archives, an anonymous future reader to whom the letter writer seems, at times, to appeal. Will you be interested in our lives? Will this story make sense in a way that I hope it will? Will it matter?

Letters like these are hybrid in that they bring together the private and the public, they expose "private" lives to public view, and at the same time these letters in particular question where the lines are drawn between private and public—by whom and in whose interest.

Thinking about eventual publication of these letters, Jane wrote in February 1994:

> I don't think much about the public these letters may eventually have. Years and years ago I figured out that the only real privacy I had was in my head. That was when Helen found our first landlady in Vancouver going through our waste baskets and reading anything she could find. Helen was outraged. I found myself feeling sorry for the woman that her life was so narrow she was looking for it in our waste baskets.

The gay and lesbian movement (like feminism, which both Rule and Bébout claim and critique) calls into question the seemingly clear lines of "public and private" that map our social worlds. As the raid on *The Body Politic* in 1977 (or the Stonewall Inn in 1969) illustrates, the state has a keen interest in regulating desire, using public force to invade private lives. Phillip Brian Harper and others have argued that the line between "public" and "private" shifts according to one's race, class, and sexuality. Certainly the Rule-Bébout letters show that to be the case.

Jeffrey Weeks in his analysis of the emergence of "sexual communities" in the late twentieth-century characterizes those communities as "sites of conflict. . . . 'Community' provides the language through which the resistance to domination is expressed" (92). These letters bear out Weeks' argument; the "community" that read *The Body Politic* and Jane Rule's fictions did develop a language of resistance. Between 1981 and 1995, this

"community" faced the new threat of HIV and AIDS and Rick, especially, looks for ways to keep that threat from tearing the community apart, diminishing its vitality. We can get a glimpse of the toll of AIDS on the community in a letter Rick wrote to Jane in September 1990 after she told him she'd just finished writing an essay. He wrote: "Is your essay something I can see? I ask because I see so little these days that reminds me there was once something we called gay thought—intelligent reflections on life shaped by the ways we've lived, possible only because of the ways we've lived, and yet valuable beyond us. AIDS has not stopped that so much as pushed it aside, submerged it, made it timid." The letters offer resistance to the numbing omnipresence of illness and loss.

Private documents like these letters show us a site within the community that allows for a different kind of resistance—a resistance to facile, expedient opposition to domination and its effects, as illustrated in the passage I quoted earlier where Rick urges a more thoughtful debate than "simple pro-con, black-white, yes-no terms" that framed much discussion of pornography, youth sexuality, and public sex. We can discern at least four kinds of resistance in the letters: to domination from outside the community, to the regulatory demands of the community, to the numbing effects of illness and loss, and to fear that risks undermining the community itself.

The letters give both writers a chance to be critical of the communities that they value, that they have worked for and been nurtured by. Rule was always skeptical of the notion of community based on sexual identity and said repeatedly that if Galiano became Lesbos she'd move. And yet when more lesbians moved to the island she welcomed their real and varied presence. And in a 1991 letter in which she thinks about the virtual community that she and Rick shared she wrote:

> In my few opportunities to experience that sense of community in the flesh, it has been for me a nearly overwhelming affirmation. The night I got the Human Dignity Award in New York. The night we went to Fruit Cocktail in Toronto. Though it's an unusual experience for me, I have a nearly daily sense of community that the building of our history and our present has given me over the years.
>
> And you've been a good teacher over all these years, sorting ideas through, not taking anything for granted. What very good company you are.

To value the gay and lesbian community, they write, one needs to be critical, to reject glibness and complacency. In 1994 when Lynne Fernie asked Rick to think of ways of including the letters in *Fiction and Other Truths,* the documentary film that she, Aerlyn Weissman and Rina Fraticelli were

making about Jane Rule's life and work, he started to reread them and got quite caught up in what he found. Rick and Lynne were at odds about what to take from the letters. Lynne wanted material that would emphasize the struggle against oppression. Rick wanted to include conversations that would show debates within the community. He wrote the following to Jane:

> I got to look more carefully than usual today at how we talk in letters, or rather what we talk about. Lynne called this morning to say she wants me to be writing something that can be used to "wipe" to a demo—so I should be on about right-wing homophobia, violence, oppression, some such; surely we've talked about such things often. I do recall talking about the bath raid demos in '81, worrying to you because [my young lover] was out on one while I was stuck putting the news together at the office. Lots of morality and power, lots of love and death—but where there's anger it's not aimed at easy targets.
>
> This is no surprise: we'd have been very smug company for each other indeed if we'd simply been rehearsing brickbats meant to be tossed over the barricades. (If we'd wanted to do that we'd have published tracts, not written letters!). All the us-against-the-world stuff has been our subtext, taken for granted and finally not very interesting except when it casts light on why people might be the way they are. (When I did toss brickbats they were aimed at liberal straights—or liberal homosexuals!—not the right wing.) I see I was always more interested in why *we*, and not our opponents, are the way we are.

Shielded from the eyes of the mainstream, straight reader who always seems to hover around even the most "outrageous" publications, the letter writers are free to be vulnerable in their internal contradictions and changing views. As a result, the archive that these letters offer us complicates our sense of what resisting communities were all about. A rhetoric of political debate and opposition (shaped by a hostile and often brutal environment) is offset by a rhetoric of confession and exploration (made possible by the protected environment of the correspondence). The archive becomes more richly layered and yields more complex readings and understandings. The letters change queer narratives.

As early as 1989, Jane and Rick first started to think that their letters might one day be interesting to others. Their hope was that the letters would add depth and a real sense of dailiness to the history they were a part of, that they wanted to keep alive.

Jane wrote in August 1989:

> Sometimes when I read a letter of yours, I think you really should try your hand at fiction . . . because it's a form that reaches out to a larger audience. And I do use what you teach me in my fiction, not in very recognizable ways, but your way of seeing is often with me when I'm thinking about characters. What you ponder becomes part of my pondering . . .

> [a few paragraphs later] I expect our letters to be some day public property, and, though I write with little self-consciousness about being overheard at some future date, talking intermittently to you and to myself, it seems to me what has concerned us is richly human and significantly focused on the concerns of our time and our tribe, to use a Margaret Laurence term.

Rick responded by sending Jane a recent article from *Harper's* about writers' letters. He commented:

> I don't know the author, though like so many American writers these days he gives the impression that I'm supposed to—or rather, that I'm supposed to know his *work* and only as much of his life as he's willing to go on about in magazine articles (usually quite a lot, ego outpacing oeuvre).
>
> [later in the same letter he says of *this* correspondence] The use of these words in the world (if they ever have any beyond you and me!) will not, I think, have much to do with anybody's reputation, will not expose anything normal life hasn't already. What they will expose is just that: normal life—ours, now—as you said using Margaret Laurence's term, 'the concerns of our time and tribe.' And *that* I very much want people in the future to be able to know, should they want to, and I hope they do. Not to know me, or even to know you (a more likely desire) but to know our tribe.

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Jacob Wren

Untitled 2

This isn't the work we had meant to do
but it's work nonetheless. Muscle. Struggle.
you land in the place and just start digging
vaguely remembering other, previous plans
or you dig to forget. Or to turn the head
of past regrets, so they once again face some
present sense of semi-fulfillment

This isn't the work we had meant to do
but it has its pleasures and its surprises
its drawbacks and its pains
other roads might have been just as hard
or harder
and what does any of that matter now
this is the road you're on
you can of course turn back
back towards indecision
towards that lost in aimless thought
and constant undecided self-recrimination
or you can forge ahead
and between these two options
as you continue to forcefully dig
there is no real choice
this isn't what we had meant to do

Quand la petite histoire insuffle la vie

Marguerite Andersen
Doucement le bonheur. Prise de parole n.p.

Françoise Enguehard
L'Archipel du docteur Thomas. Prise de parole n.p.

Compte rendu par Lucie Lequin

Deux romans historiques, deux leçons de vie où le récit d'histoires réelles romancées insuffle la vie, où les auteures réservent la belle part à l'action, que celle-ci soit la prise en charge de sa propre vie, en dépit du malheur, ou l'œuvre de la création. Auteure de plusieurs œuvres de fiction, Marguerite Andersen dans *Doucement le bonheur* se demande comment réapprivoiser le bonheur après un drame. C'est le seul livre d'Andersen qui met en scène des Franco-Ontariens.

Le roman est basé sur une histoire réelle qui s'est déroulée en 1929, à Ottawa. Louis-Mathias Auger, un jeune député fédéral, est accusé d'avoir violé Laurence Martel, une jeune femme de 17 ans venue lui demander son aide pour l'obtention d'un poste. À la fin des procédures judiciaires, le député est condamné à la prison pour séduction. La première partie relate ces événements, mettant en lumière les mœurs de l'époque, les attitudes méprisantes des hommes envers les femmes, la composition du jury qui ne comprend que des anglophones, le courage de la jeune fille prolétaire qui accuse un homme de pouvoir alors que pour le public, elle est coupable, peu importe le tort subi.

La deuxième partie est pure fiction. Andersen invente un avenir aux deux personnages. Les chapitres intitulés « Elle » ou « Lui » alternent, montrant comment, par la suite, chacun se fait, peu à peu, l'artisan de son propre bonheur, avec courage et un véritable souci de se dépasser et d'apprendre de leur épreuve respective. *Elle* refera sa vie à Toronto en anglais, *lui* en Nouvelle-Angleterre. Lentement, de part et d'autre, le travail apportera une certaine consolation et un équilibre serein ; plus tard, à nouveau, ils arriveront à aimer.

Dans *L'Archipel du docteur Thomas*, Françoise Enguehard amène les lecteurs aux îles Saint-Pierre et Miquelon. Native des îles, Enguehard, cette Française américaine devenue canadienne et terre-neuvienne, fait voir les paysages des îles, ses habitants, son ambiance. Le roman inspiré des faits réels raconte l'histoire du docteur Thomas qui a laissé une émouvante collection de photos sur la vie dans les îles au tournant du XXe siècle. Les photos, retrouvées au début des années 1960, disent en alternance la grandeur des petites gens et celle des paysages. Elles fascinent et envoûtent par cet entrelacement de rudesse et de beauté. François, un architecte saint-pierrais, établi à Paris et Émilie, une étudiante âgée de 16 ans, la fille d'amis, entreprennent de les faire connaître, car en elles, malgré le temps, ils s'y retrouvent. Le regard de Thomas, c'est peu à peu aussi leur regard. Naît alors une grande connivence entre François et Émilie qui partagent une même sensibilité. La préparation d'une exposition, de même qu'une

certaine enquête quant à la vie de Thomas les amèneront à réévaluer leur vie : pour François, il s'agira de réorienter sa carrière florissante pour passer plus de temps dans les îles; pour Émilie, c'est le consentement à des études à Paris et à l'écriture.

Le roman d'Enguehard intéresse par le bruit de la mer et les paysages qu'il met en mots. En filigrane, la question d'identité de ces Français perdus en Amérique et qui n'ont jamais été européens captive aussi. Le roman Marguerite Andersen, malgré un côté fleur bleue, est de lecture agréable pour l'atmosphère historique rendue avec justesse et le portrait d'une femme hautement courageuse, une battante. Ici aussi, une certaine question identitaire, celle des Franco Ontariens, est abordée. Ces deux romans ne sont pas de grands romans, mais les fresques humanistes peintes en demi-teintes ou contre les forces de la nature rendent bien l'ambiance de leur époque et de leur milieu respectifs.

Génération désillusion

Mathieu Arsenault
Vu d'ici. Triptyque 17,00 $

Alain Roy
L'Impudeur. Boréal 22,50 $

François Désalliers
Un monde de papier. Triptyque 16,95 $

Compte rendu par Virginie Doucet

Dans *Vu d'ici*, Mathieu Arsenault nous livre avec une remarquable justesse les pensées désillusionnées d'un jeune banlieusard captif de sa télévision, laquelle lui renvoie, par le biais du journal télévisé, le triste état de l'humanité. Les longs paragraphes sans ponctuation décrivent bien le sentiment d'impuissance du jeune narrateur devant les actualités qui le laissent pantois car « il y a des gens qui meurent pour rien vraiment vraiment rien là je veux dire quelqu'un tire une petite corde ou appuie sur un bouton et boum c'est plein de morts et tout de suite après c'est la météo et pendant ce temps je trouve qu'il fait trop froid je trouve qu'il fait trop chaud je trouve qu'il pleut mais je ne trouve rien d'autre à ressentir je ne sais pas comment trouver le chemin vers la tristesse ou la colère ou la désolation entre l'épicerie et la maison . . . »

Le livre est divisé en cinq sections—nouvelles internationales, nouvelles continentales, nouvelles nationales, nouvelles régionales et nouvelles locales—écrites avec autant de brio les unes que les autres. Mathieu Arsenault manie la plume comme un maître et nous fait plonger dans l'absence de sens de la vie du narrateur désabusé qui n'arrive pas à être heureux « car [il est] toujours à deux minutes des commodités à dix secondes de rallumer la télé mais à toute une vie de parler de ce [qu'il est] ».

Cette désillusion se trouve aussi dans le roman d'Alain Roy, *L'Impudeur*, satire sociale qui trace un portrait désolant du milieu universitaire et de la vie amoureuse. Dépressif, Antoine est un chargé de cours en littérature qui n'attend pas grand-chose de la vie jusqu'à ce que Vanessa—la sublimissime Vanessa—l'élise comme son petit copain officiel, non par amour mais dans l'espoir de mettre un frein à la meute d'hommes qui la dévore des yeux à chaque instant. Antoine retrouvera vite goût à la vie, mais pour peu de temps, puisque sa belle lui sera ravie, non par un homme mais par l'appel de l'écriture. Vanessa se lance corps et âme dans ce projet d'écriture, qu'elle réalisera de nuit, seule dans un studio loué en ne dévoilant à personne le sujet de son roman et en mettant une croix sur sa vie sexuelle avec Antoine pour « sublimer », dira-t-elle. Antoine se languira d'elle en passant pas toutes les phases de la jalousie, se demandant si Vanessa écrit réellement ou si elle n'est pas en train de le tromper. Il aura enfin la preuve de la « chaste » occupation de sa chérie lorsque qu'un éditeur français réputé acceptera son roman, intitulé *Danseuse nue* et relatant la vie réelle

de danseuse que s'est infligée Vanessa pour avoir un sujet sur lequel écrire. Ce qui n'est pas sans rappeler le parcours de Nelly Arcan et de son premier roman, *Putain*, allusion évidente qui reviendra à plusieurs reprises dans le roman, comme dans ce passage où « Vanessa avait raconté que son métier de danseuse avait servi à financer ses études (ainsi que sa psychanalyse, car son boulot de danseuse avait failli la rendre folle) » ou dans celui-ci, qui reprend les propos d'Arcan à propos de *Putain* :

> Oui, le message profond de son livre était moral en même temps qu'esthétique ; et, contrairement à ce que pouvaient penser les esprits mesquins ou de courte vue, Danseuse nue était une œuvre qui condamnait la licence sexuelle et le relativisme des valeurs ; c'était une œuvre à laquelle aurait pu adhérer une papauté un tant soit peu progressiste.

Le milieu littéraire n'est pas épargné par le regard moqueur d'Alain Roy qui condamne l'impudeur dans laquelle baigne la société.

François Désalliers fait lui aussi dans la satire dans *Un monde de papier*, qui s'attaque surtout à la superficialité, mais d'une façon plus légère. François, le personnage principal, tombe littéralement dans une revue féminine dont il deviendra prisonnier. Il y fait la rencontre de plusieurs personnages dont Hugo Boss, Vichy et Uma, de magnifiques modèles qui ont prêté leur image à différents produits dont ils ont intériorisé les lignes publicitaires : « Uma me dit : "Quand vos cheveux ont une apparence saine, votre blond paraît plus éclatant plus longtemps." . . . Puis elle entra sous la douche. . . . . De temps à autre, elle poussait des cris de joie, genre orgasmes . . . »

Uma et les autres apprendront, grâce à François, qu'il existe un autre monde, hors de la revue, et qu'ils ne sont plus obligés de garder la pose dans leur page publicitaire respective s'ils en ont marre de cette vie. Malheureusement, il n'est pas si facile de se sortir de ce monde de papier, régi par l'Ogre mangeur de fœtus, ainsi que par l'éditrice qui rappelle au nouveau venu qu'il est un imposteur dans ces pages : « Vous ne comprenez rien ! . . . N'empêchez pas nos filles et nos gars de faire rêver ! N'empêchez pas le rêve ! Autrement vous allez y laisser votre peau. Vous n'êtes pas le premier contestataire que nous avons maté ! » François se lancera alors dans une course folle, accompagné de ses amis, pour sauver sa peau et résoudre l'énigme qui leur permettra à tous de sortir de cet enfer.

Fragments at Large: Three Poetry Books

Elizabeth Bachinsky
Curio: Grotesques & Satires from the Electronic Age. BookThug $20.00

Jeremy Stewart
(flood basement. Caitlin P $16.95

Michael Boughn
22 Skidoo / SubTractions. BookThug $18.00

Reviewed by rob mclennan

It's not that often a Canadian poet gets a second edition of any title, let alone her first collection, bare months after the appearance of her third, but for Vancouver poet Elizabeth Bachinsky it happened; the second edition of her *Curio* was published by Toronto's BookThug. Far livelier than her subsequent, more formally conservative titles with Nightwood Editions, *Curio* wrestles a number of pieces, including her anagram of "The Waste Land" written out as "Leads the Wants," twisting and turning a poem that seems to beg for response. (John Newlove's "The Green Plain," he often said, was also a response to Eliot's piece). Through anagram, pillage, plunder, and other structural plays, *Curio* enacts a wonderful revenge on expectation, and writes overtly a subversion of form her two succeeding volumes have worked to do far

more subtly (and sometimes, to far lesser effect). Still, the main difference between the first edition and this is the inclusion of an essay by K. Silem Mohammad on Bachinsky's project, explaining how radical Eliot's piece was when originally published, and comparing it to this new work. He writes, "Readers who are unfriendly to poetic innovation now more often than not have no such deep-seated moral convictions about syntactical decorum, but are merely suspicious of what appears to them a confidence game of empty mannerisms and pretentious affectations intended to be intellectually intimidating. In some cases they have good cause for these suspicions." Focusing on Bachinsky's anagram of *The Waste Land*, Mohammad argues for both original and new versions of the piece. His essay makes this edition of *Curio* worth the price of admission alone, even for those who own the first edition.

Prince George poet Jeremy Stewart's first trade collection, *(flood basement*, comprises a pair of long poems that write out an expansion of lyric fragment from a north previously occupied by such as Barry McKinnon, Gillian Wigmore, Rob Budde, and Ken Belford. Throughout the 1970s and 80s, Prince George argued itself a literary centre, and, precipitated by the arrival of Budde from Winnipeg circa 2000, it's convincing yet again. "Fort George Park is half graveyard," Stewart writes, "half love letter." Stewart's poetry contains structural echoes of Budde and McKinnon, as well as this five-fingered heart, yet somehow feels unfocused; intriguing and compelling, but all over the place. This is a poetry that wants so very much to contradict itself, writing stories through poetry about some of the last episodes you would expect from it, from punk music, racism, drinking, small-town anger and prejudice, making his concerns as a Prince George writer closer to, say, those of fiction writer John Harris than to anything by poets McKinnon or Budde. Moving biographically outward, his is a poetry of personal alternating voices working through various elements of the north, as an exploration of roughneck small-town northern British Columbia, in all the trouble small-town kids can get themselves into. But at what point does such an exercise require more critique and less documentary? Stewart, I want more.

Mike Boughn's *22 Skidoo / SubTractions*, as its double title suggests, is one book with two front covers, so when one finishes reading one piece, one has only to flip the book over to begin the other one. *22 Skidoo* is a carved-down structure of complex couplets, a la Victor Coleman, or even shades of Robert Creeley, to whom a poem or two inside is dedicated. Each poem is similarly shaped, and skates off quotes by Milton, Deleuze, Dickens, Tennyson, Lyotard, and Carolyn Keene, among others. His is a system of poems expounding and extending thought, these small quotes that begin merely a trigger, with Boughn's poems taking that ball and running, all directions at once. *SubTractions* writes just short of writing, each poem "minus one," whether "soccer minus one," "frank minus one" (as in Sinatra) or "nuptials minus one," writing "A kind of betrayal / all the more rare for its loyalty / to this thread we dangle from over." Boughn writes in concise twists, carrying a poetry that seems brilliantly out of place amid everything else that appears in print. Where does meaning lie? This is the question posed even by one of his opening quotes, by Archibald MacLeish, "A poem should not mean, but be." These poems are far more expansive yet no less elastic, writing out to write the mark just before the actual mark.

Belonging and Mourning

Natasha Bakht, ed.
Belonging and Banishment: Being Muslim in Canada. TSAR $25.95

John Belshaw and Diane Purvey
Private Grief, Public Mourning: The Rise of the Roadside Shrine in B.C. Anvil $20.00

Reviewed by Moberley Luger

These are two very different books: *Belonging and Banishment* is an edited collection with diverse contributors; *Private Grief, Public Mourning* is a monograph with two academic authors. The former's theme is life—the vitality of the Muslim population in Canada—while the latter's is death: it is a study of roadside shrines. What the books share is an interest in telling particular stories of Canadian lives, communities, and histories.

Belonging and Banishment aims to represent, as its editor explains, "the diversity of Muslims in Canada." Its authors come from a range of disciplines (academic, journalistic, and creative) and the variety of their backgrounds, methodologies, styles, and topics are both the book's strength and its weakness.

This edited collection aims to counter limiting assumptions about Muslim lives by exploring specific, differing versions of them. Its authors actively argue against the way that, as contributor Anar Ali writes, "Islam is often treated as a monolithic entity. . . ." Importantly, the plural identities the book represents are also *Canadian* identities. The lives arrayed in *Belonging and Banishment* are lived in Canada, under Canadian law, within Canadian culture. For example, Ali, explains how she negotiates living as an Ismaili Muslim born in Nairobi raised in Alberta, and media portrayals of Muslims that conflict with her lived experience. Arif Babul, a professor of Physics and Astronomy, describes how he reconciles his devout Muslim beliefs with beliefs more typical of an academic conception of the natural world. Indeed, these are two of the collection's best essays; their authors *enact* the book's theme of plurality through the nuances of their individual voices and perspectives.

While the approach from pluralism is appealing, it also, at the same time, poses problems. Who is the intended audience for a book so expansive as to include a didactic essay on child rearing (which explains, "saying-no moments can be teaching moments") alongside a philosophical explanation of Islamic theology (which takes up the "relation between meaning and agency")? Academic readers may wonder where the editors drew their lines of inclusion—and why they drew them there. What, for example, might a queer Muslim voice have sounded like? Is there a place for a non-Muslim contributor? How does the political and cultural climate in 2008 differ from the climate (that the book responds to) in 2001? On the other hand, if the intended audience is a general one, then a more difficult problem arises: those readers who stand to learn the most from this book may also be the least likely to read it, having told themselves they already know what "being Muslim" means.

Private Grief, Public Mourning, also a slice of Canada's cultural life, is a study of Roadside Death Memorials (RDMs) in British Columbia. Usually made of crosses, and adorned with flowers, these makeshift memorials dot our highways and intersections—and they deserve attention. Critical studies of memorials are increasing; they respond to what art historian Erika Doss has called "memorial mania," and Canadian contributions are needed. However, while the authors do make an entry into the field, their limited scope exposes how much more work could still be done. The book begins an important inquiry, but it only begins it.

In the first chapter, the authors trace a brief history of death practices in British

Columbia. They suggest that RDMs respond to the segregation of the dead—a consequence of cemeteries increasingly being built outside of city centres. In Chapter Two, they place RDMs within an international context of public mourning, referring, for example, to Princess Diana and 9/11. In Chapter Three, the book's heart, the authors discuss a selection of RDMs in rural BC; they attempt to explain who gets a shrine and why and where. Finally, they sketch the historical roots of RDMs and their cultural implications in contemporary life.

While the authors are clear that RDMs in BC are part of a larger story of grief practices internationally and historically, their inquiry is too brief to detail these implications. Indeed, most of the scholarly context is relegated to footnotes. In its design, and with its glossy photographs, the book resembles an exhibition catalogue—and it *is* one, in part, since it follows a 2005 gallery display of the authors' RDM photographs. Perhaps this format is what limits the book's scope. Belshaw and Purvey write that the "most critical" question about RDMs is whether they are "good or bad things"—yet, more pressing questions could be asked. What do they mean when they suggest that RDMs, mainly consisting of crosses, represent the secularization of mourning in BC? How do class differences not only produce different roadside shrines, but also different relationships to grief and public mourning? What can a study of BC tell us about Canadian mourning practices more generally?

Though its subject is death, this book—like *Belonging and Banishment*—is very much about how Canadians live and find meaning in their lives.

Factored Dramaturgies

Catherine Banks
Bone Cage. Playwrights Canada P $18.95

Leanna Brodie
Schoolhouse. Talonbooks $15.95

Drew Hayden Taylor
The Berlin Blues. Talonbooks $15.95

Uma Parameswaran
Rootless but Green Are the Boulevard Trees. TSAR $16.95

Reviewed by Alan Filewod

Of the four playtexts under review, three arrived in book publication via play development workshops, readings, and productions. The fourth is a reprint of a play originally published twenty years ago which has had a significant history as a pioneering dramatic testament of the Southeast Asian diaspora, but has had little theatrical life. The differences between it and the other three, all theatrically polished in the dramaturgical factories of play development that have come to be an integral element of Canadian theatre production, highlight the relation of canonicity and theatre economy that determines which plays get published.

Why play development workshops have become so necessary in the production of new playscripts can be seen in the theatrical obstacles to production in Uma Parameswaran's *Rootless but Green Are the Boulevard Trees*. When first published in 1987 (some years in fact after it was written), Parameswaran's play was a groundbreaking and effective dramatic slice of life about an immigrant family in Winnipeg struggling with the pressures of family, tradition, nostalgia, and assimilation. It was groundbreaking not because of its story or plot mechanics, which echo similar plays from other cultural experiences (fifty years earlier the family might have been Italian or Greek, and the play would be much the same). Rather it was the emergence of South Asian

voices in Canadian drama that was significant. The canon shifted.

But the canon of Canadian drama is not the repertoire of Canadian theatre. *Rootless but Green Are the Boulevard Trees* has not had a significant theatrical history, primarily, I suspect, because it is theatrically unwieldy. With a cast of fourteen characters, some of whom appear only briefly, a succession of carefully described scenes that would require major set changes, and a three-act structure, the play gestures to a theatrical practice that today can only be found in large metropolitan showcase theatres or community amateur playhouses. In short, *Rootless but Green Are the Boulevard Trees* is much like the early efforts of many playwrights. It adheres to a notion of dramatic form that derives from early twentieth-century theatrical realism, with leisurely dramatic arcs, unnaturally articulate characters, and surging dramatic crises. Put into the hands of a dramaturge and a director at a play development workshop, a script of this sort would be dismantled and rebuilt to suit the needs of the theatres that actually do produce new plays.

Those needs can be discerned in the other three plays under review. All are in two acts, the industry standard today because restive audiences want movie-length plays with one interval at most (unless they have paid premium prices for a megamusical outing or a day trip to Stratford). They are written for small casts (Leanna Brodie's *Schoolhouse* is the exception here) and can be rehearsed quickly. Of equal importance for a small theatre, they call for innovative but inexpensive design solutions in sets, lights, and props.

Bone Cage and *The Berlin Blues,* although markedly different in voice, theme, and tone, share the streamlined efficiency of the play development process, and both read as if they have been road-tested by actors and designers. Catherine Banks' *Bone Cage* is a compelling and engagingly eccentric study of rural dead-end lives in Nova Scotia that well deserved its 2008 Governor General's Literary Award. Banks stands at a remove from her characters and their somewhat grotesque aspirations (a teenager wants to get married to have a perfect wedding and impress her teachers at school; an end-of-the-road father seeks DNA to send in the mail to have his dead son cloned), but her ironic touch is balanced by respect and fondness for her characters. To say *Bone Cage* reminds me of Judith Thompson meeting The Trailer Park Boys may be an injustice to the play, but that comparison does convey something of Banks' unique voice. Of the plays reviewed here, this is the one that we might expect to see in theatre seasons.

The Berlin Blues is a less serious work, but perhaps even more polished. Drew Hayden Taylor has produced an accomplished series of comedies about reserve life that are consummate in their dramatic mechanics. In this latest play, two German entrepreneurs sell the idea of a First Nations theme park to an Ojibway community. Taylor has a great deal of fun with OjibwayWorld and the German fetishization of North American First Peoples, but at the same time seems to respect the sincere and respectful appreciation of traditional culture that (some) German hobbyists evince. *The Berlin Blues* may be breezy sitcom, but it has a point to make and is masterfully done.

The final play here, Leanna Brodie's *Schoolhouse*, is the most ambitious and complex. It is the product of two of the most unique rural theatres in Canada, the Blythe Festival and 4th Line Theatre (which is located on a farm near Peterborough and offers both indoor and outdoor performance possibilities). On the surface, Brodie gives us a story of a young woman's first year of teaching in a rural one-room school in 1938, taking us through the trepidations and antics of the situation, throwing in a flinty romance, and moving forward via a plot involving a hard-to-reach student

outsider. Under the (quite skilled) storytelling, the play is an exuberantly theatrical and moving tribute to the schoolhouse itself, filled with memories and local details distilled from Brodie's extensive interviews with former teachers and students who shared the experience of the one-room school.

The Berlin Blues and *Schoolhouse* both target specific theatrical niches. *The Berlin Blues* is ideal for cottage-country summer theatres. It's fast, funny, and cheap to produce, but smart enough to rise above the usual fare of romantic comedies, thrillers, and farces. *Schoolhouse* may have a theatrical life in summer theatres, but might deter producers because it would be expensive to produce, unless directors choose to cast the students with youth actors in a community production (not unlike 4th Line's hybrid professional/community projects). But it is also very well-suited to student production, and may have a good life in high school and university theatres.

Unlike *Rootless but Green Are the Boulevard Trees,* these three plays all carry the imprint of particular theatrical spaces, and carry those spaces into the published text. Their theatrical provenance becomes part of their textuality, reminding us that the plays that live in the theatre come from the theatre.

Understanding Our Worlds and Ourselves

Jane Barclay; Renné Benoit, illus.
Proud as a Peacock, Brave as a Lion. Tundra $20.99

C.J. Taylor
Spirits, Fairies, and Merpeople: Native Stories of Other Worlds. Tundra $21.99

Caroline Stellings
The Malagawatch Mice and the Cat Who Discovered America. Cape Breton UP $14.95

Debby Waldman; Cindy Revell, illus.
Clever Rachel. Orca $19.95

Reviewed by Sarika P. Bose

In these picture books, the non-human forces and inhabitants of the world become the medium for answering questions about the nature of human beings, their place in their community, and their relationship to the natural world. In each book, the focal characters, and sometimes the whole community, learn valuable lessons about people's capacity for adaptability, transformation, empathy, and courage. The desire and ability to communicate effectively resolve many of the challenges the characters face.

Jane Barclay's *Proud as a Peacock, Brave as a Lion* attempts to explain the meaning of Remembrance Day ceremonies by focusing on a grandson's questions to his grandfather about wartime experiences. Through the child's eagerness to understand his grandfather and the Remembrance Day ceremonies, lost experience is recovered, as is the significance of ceremonial acts. On a personal level, the past lives again: the grandfather is again the innocently arrogant young soldier who was "as proud as a peacock" to join the battle and is transformed as fear on the battlefield forces him to be "as brave as a lion." Though the traumas of war such as the loss of a dear friend or the fear of going into battle are acknowledged, and human experience and response given life through the animal similes, Renné Benoit's gentle watercolours and the communication

of the old man's life story through faded photographs and memories become distancing techniques that protect the child reader from feeling any trauma. After hearing the stories, the child is left with a sense of quiet melancholy about war, but a new sense of connection with his grandfather.

The "spirits, fairies and merpeople" in C.J. Taylor's retelling of seven First Nations myths teach the Mi'kmaq, Kahnawake, Dakota, Coos, Ojibwa, Ute, and Cree peoples how to communicate and live harmoniously with nature, sometimes wholly transforming human beings into mythical creatures or nature spirits ("Water Lily Finds Her Love"), and sometimes punishing humans for misusing or wasting Nature's gifts ("The Little People"). The Ute and Cree creation stories make the reader aware of the grand forces of nature which determine human existence. The dual face of Nature is shown in the malevolent presence in "The Lodge Eater," in which a foundling baby is frighteningly transformed into a devouring spirit beast, and in the self-sacrificing mermaid, Minnow, whose only concern is her human family's safety ("The Mermaid"). The straightforward, storyteller style is emphasized by the setting of the stage which prefaces "The Little People"; the preface might have framed the stories more effectively if the story had been the first in the collection, however. Taylor's own technicoloured acrylic paintings illustrate the book in a lively way. Despite the pathos of some stories, such as "The Mermaid," the illustrations are often joyous, showing human beings dancing and playing in the fields. The illustrations' perspectives are varied, however, with portraits of strong-featured women contrasting with stylized landscapes containing hunters, dancers, or animals.

Caroline Stellings attractively illustrates her story, *The Malagawatch Mice and the Cat Who Discovered America*, in watercolours. Here, anthropomorphized animals face a twofold problem: the intrusion of a historic enemy into their comfortable lives and the stubbornly rebellious determination of an individual to find a solution that may exacerbate rather than solve the crisis. The contented community of a large extended church-mouse family can only see a monster in "Henry the Horrible," a predatory ginger cat who has moved into the church, and reluctantly envisions only standard solutions to the threat, such as fooling the cat or leaving their home. Initially, the patriarch mouse, Grandpa, is isolated by his faith in the underlying good nature of the enemy, a belief not even shared by the cat himself. The solution that not only allows the mice to remain in their home but also integrates the cat into their community is, perhaps, unexpected. Textual documentation and oral history (from a friendly community of Mi'kmaq mice) convince both Henry and the mice of the cat's noble ancestry. Faith in moral inheritance leads to a complete change of attitude by both parties and a happy future of mutual cooperation.

Clever Rachel, a retelling of a Jewish folktale by Debby Waldman, is colourfully illustrated in acrylics by Cindy Revell. The lesson here is that while individual excellence should be encouraged, cooperation is the only path to wisdom. Rachel, a decidedly undomestic little girl, overcomes gender prejudice to prove her cleverness as she solves intellectual problems (in the form of riddles). Jacob, an arrogant little boy, acknowledges his own limitations as he accepts her help. During the course of the story, the readers are guided through the process of solving riddles; readers are then encouraged to solve the set of riddles at the end themselves.

The lessons taught in all these books suggest they would function particularly well as a means of engaging children in conversations about problem-solving, the conventions of myth, the past experiences of the adults they know, and the place of human beings in the natural world.

Aboriginal Storytelling

David Bouchard and Shelley Willier; Steve Wood, trans.; Jim Poitras, illus.
The Drum Calls Softly. Red Deer $24.95

Susan D. Dion
Braiding Histories: Learning from Aboriginal Peoples' Experiences and Perspectives. U of British Columbia P $32.95

Reviewed by Susan Gingell

For those interested in attempts to recreate Aboriginal storytelling in textualized forms, the multimedia and bilingual English-Cree format of *The Drum Calls Softly* is an engaging instance. David Boucher's and Shelley Willier's English stanzas precede Steve Wood's Cree translations on the most left-hand side of each two-page spread, and Jim Poitras's pictures of Aboriginal people in mostly natural environments overlap the left page as well as being accorded full right-hand sides and four two-page spreads. Thus graphic particulars insist on the importance of visual aspects of the story. The emotive reading of the narrative poetry on the accompanying CD, complete with drumming and singing by Northern Cree, flute music by Bouchard, and sounds of flowing water and crying raven, not only reproduce other aspects of embodied storytelling, but they foster Cree language learning by allowing students to hear the sounds of the Cree words, strangely printed without accents. Over the course of the storytelling, the magic of the round-dance to the heartbeat pulsing of the drum becomes one with the circle of a child's day from dawn to night and with natural and human life cycles.

The Aboriginal storytelling of Education professor Susan Dion and her brother Michael Dion's *Braiding Histories: Learning from the Life Stories of First Nations People* project has a more explicitly pedagogical context. The Dions (re)tell three stories: two of historical figures Plains Cree chief Mistahimaskwa/Big Bear and Shanawdithit (Beothuk), and that of their mother, Audrey Angela Dion (Lenape), the latter intended to honour her and help counter the impression given in so many schoolbooks that Aboriginal people "are a people of the past." The narratives were designed to reclaim the Aboriginal past from hegemonic historical accounts and to "contribute to a discourse that affirms the agency of Aboriginal people and recognizes [their] work as active agents resisting ongoing conditions of injustice." Again the stories are richly contextualized, this time by drawings, photographs, and maps, but the guiding questions and poetically textured statements that preface the stories could have more clearly addressed the issues Susan Dion wanted classroom teachers and students to consider.

Braiding Histories records Dion's learning from work with three intermediate level teachers of History and English and their students for whom the stories became instructional materials. By documenting the preparatory work she did with the teachers and as much of the classroom work and student assignments as tape recordings, student submissions, and teachers' records made possible, Dion shows how her counter-hegemonic purposes were subverted by curriculum expectations with regard to Aboriginal peoples that have not changed much since Basil Johnston wrote his salutary essay "Is That All There Is? Tribal Literature"; by a vision of history as principally a vehicle of self-knowledge; by the scripts of pastoral care of students, understandings of what it means to teach well (stay in control, teach facts and information, build vocabulary, help fashion students into good citizens proud of their personal and national histories) and multicultural and anti-racist pedagogies that teachers brought to their teaching; and by the partially acknowledged limitations of the instructional framework at the beginning of the Braiding Histories narratives.

Professors and students of Canadian literature are likely to find of most interest two features of Dion's book. The first is revelations of the limitations of multicultural and anti-racist approaches to teaching about Aboriginal people in Canada, approaches that may well help students learn to celebrate cultural difference and that stress common humanity, but leave intact students' sense of Canada as essentially a first-rate place to live despite some unhappy chapters in the past. Perhaps most tellingly Dion demonstrates the limitations of empathy-evoking teaching strategies that both leave uninvestigated the way contemporary Canadians have benefitted from the various violences to Aboriginal peoples in Canada and serve to reinscribe Aboriginal people as victims with little agency, while also reinforcing non-Aboriginal students' sense of themselves as kind, caring, and empowered subjects. The second is Dion's elaboration of a critical pedagogy of remembrance that she facilitates by having students create a "file of (Un)certainties." Students are required to collect and write about cultural artifacts that contributed to their (mis)knowledge of, and structured students' relationship to, Aboriginal peoples while also analyzing the cognitive dissonances produced by learning from exposure to Indigenous knowledge in the form of Aboriginal artists' and scholars' representations of their people and way of life.

Comparative History and Quebec

Gérard Bouchard; Michelle Weinroth and Paul Leduc Browne, trans.
The Making of the Nations and Cultures of the New World. McGill-Queen's UP $29.95

Reviewed by Kit Dobson

Gérard Bouchard was recently widely noted in Anglophone Canada for his role as co-Chair of the Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences, alongside philosopher Charles Taylor—the Commission that has widely been called the Bouchard-Taylor Commission and that has attracted a fair bit of attention from those studying issues of multiculturalism. The Commission found that collective life in Quebec is not in a state of crisis, despite intercultural tensions. Bouchard's book, *The Making of the Nations and Cultures of the New World*, can be read alongside the work of the Commission as an informative summation of its author's breadth of knowledge. This book won the Governor General's Award in 2000 in its French edition and, recently (and very ably) translated by Michelle Weinroth and Paul Leduc Browne, it provides good insights into intercultural debates.

At the heart of the book lies an investigation into how the collectivities of the New World—or its nations, though Bouchard treats the term with care—have imagined themselves. This is a work of comparative history, one that attempts to have a very broad reach, and that provides useful ideas for comparativists. Bouchard is well aware that writing in a broad vein poses many problems, and he apologizes many times for them. Yet the fact that he seeks to compare Quebec, Mexico, Central and South America, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States in one book provides this book's originality. At times, this scope can lead to seemingly benign comparisons:

for instance, Bouchard notes that the collective imaginaries of these collectivities have based themselves upon instances of both continuity and rupture with the European countries that were involved in their colonial foundation. However, the comparisons of how these ruptures and continuities have come to be create the work's interest.

The comparisons that Bouchard generates as a result are provocative, especially concerning Quebec. One issue that arises in translation is that this book is primarily concerned with Quebec, which might usefully be signalled in a minor shift in the title or subtitle. The comparative study of all of the collectivities involved in this book is used in order to contemplate the past and present of Quebec. Bouchard notes that Quebec is exceptional among the places studied here in that it has not achieved political independence, despite its robust understanding of itself as an imagined collectivity. However, the purpose of his study is, in large part, designed to challenge understandings of Quebec that would highlight its exceptionalism. Instead, in examining the imaginative processes that have contributed to the creation of collective imaginaries in the global West and South Pacific, Bouchard finds that there are great similarities in the ways in which social groups have come into being through their negotiations with original populations, their relationships with their colonial administrations and European forebears, and in their management of discourses of cultural continuity and rupture.

Useful for students of Quebec literatures, writing, and history, as well as for those interested in questions of multiculturalism as it pertains to Quebec, *The Making of the Nations and Cultures of the New World* is an insightful, ambitious work that travels much of the territory of postcolonial studies in the West without relying upon its methodologies. This is a highly original contribution, one that can be faulted for the speed with which it passes over a great deal of information, but that benefits from this same approach in the comparisons that it yields.

Imagining (in) Greece

Pan Bouyoucas; Sheila Fischman, trans.
Aegean Tales. Cormorant $21.00

Marianne Apostolides
Swim: A Novel. BookThug $18.00

Reviewed by Jodi Lundgren

It is difficult not to romanticize Greece as an intact culture with ancient roots when reading Pan Bouyoucas' *The Other,* one of two novels compiled in the volume *Aegean Tales* and originally published in French to considerable acclaim. Bouyoucas' villagers on the island of Leros frequently invoke mythological figures such as Charon and Morpheus and allegorize each other with nicknames. In the aftermath of World War II, the protagonist, Thomas, earns the name Tripodis: searching for parachute silk as a gift for his beloved, Olga, he picks up a "pine cone" that is actually a hand grenade. One of numerous explosives left behind by the Germans, the grenade blows off his leg, which forces him to use crutches. Thomas abandons his dreams of marrying Olga and sailing the seas and sinks, instead, into a melancholy life of mending fishing nets and drinking ouzo.

Bouyoucas' pellucid style and short chapters create a strong sense of forward momentum. When Tripodis cannot get over the past ("dreams in which he had two legs repeated with such regularity that he felt as if he were leading a second life"), a boat arrives carrying Olga and her husband—who is Thomas himself, the two-legged Thomas who avoided the hand grenade. This plot twist satisfies a deep human urge to know what would have happened if we had made another choice at a key moment in our lives, and, as a "tale," the narrative easily incorporates the uncanny presence of a double.

Anna Why?, the second novel in *Aegean Tales,* depicts a surprising ménage-à-trois among a nun, a novice, and a deacon who cohabitate temporarily in a desolate, mountaintop fortress on Leros. Maximos, an icon-painting deacon, has followed the novice to the island because he fell in love with her before she entered religious orders and changed her name from Anna to Veroniki. Rebuffed, he attempts suicide, after which the older nun—a professional physiotherapist—massages his injured flesh in a highly sensual manner: "Today, she rubbed the fingers on my right hand one by one, very gently, up and down. . . . She uses exactly the right pressure, sliding her fingers along my skin," Maximos tells Veroniki. Jealous and indignant, the novice takes action that brings the novel to its climax.

Both of Bouyoucas' novels are told with a fable-like omniscience that shows readers the big picture, if at the cost of deep intimacy with individual characters. The anguished query of the title, "Anna Why?" is indelibly painted on rocks which Anna (as Sister Veroniki) will overlook from the fortress for the rest of her life. Maximos' question means, in part, "Why did you reject my love and take religious vows?" It provides great satisfaction when the reader (though not the deacon) eventually learns the answer to this question. Bridging an eleven-year time lapse, the narrative ends with the kind of resolute closure that befits the "tale" genre.

At the opposite end of the spectrum in terms of psychic distance, Apostolides' brilliantly structured stream-of-consciousness novel, *Swim,* is also set in a Greek mountain village. After her father dies, Kat, a thirty-nine-year-old mother and graduate student, travels from Canada to her father's hometown of Loutra, which is famous for its healing mineral pools. Immersed therein, Kat sets the goal of deciding whether or not to leave her husband while she swims one lap for every year of her life: "if she can specify the moment when the marriage ended . . . then she'll know her decision." She swims for the duration of the novel, reflecting on not only her marriage but literary theory, her childhood relationship with her parents, her eating disorder, and the birth of her daughter.

Apostolides beautifully captures the fluid rhythm of swimming, often using dashes and slashes: "She swims—past him / he whose body displaces water through force—his stroke—onto her, who swims in challenge / engagement—he's gone." This fluidity gains significance when Kat recalls her professor's (and future adulterous lover's) definition of desire as "rotation, revolution, motion." By Lap 23, Kat's decision about her husband seems made: "She wanted to shout the problem: her betrayal, his depression, her hatred of this, her loss (complete) of belief and trust and faith in him / her / them—and love and honour and family / vows."

Kat believes that attending graduate school will enable her "to continue to write, bolstered by theory." Maybe so, but Apostolides' own direct quoting from the likes of Lacan and Kristeva limits her audience and makes *Swim* at times seem oddly dated, like a belated contribution to the postmodern metafiction of the 1980s. Language-centred writing lives on, of course, and fans of lyric prose will savour this intelligent, finely crafted text as much as those seeking an absorbing yarn will enjoy *Aegean Tales.*

Indigenous Critical Aesthetics

Joseph Boyden
From Mushkegowuk to New Orleans: A Mixed Blood Highway. Canadian Literature Centre and NeWest $9.95

Craig S. Womack
Art as Performance, Story as Criticism: Reflections on Native Literary Aesthetics. U of Oklahoma P $26.49

Reviewed by Allison Hargreaves

More than a figurative, itinerant travelling between Mushkegowuk and New Orleans—between the "far north of Ontario and the far south of Louisiana"—Métis novelist Joseph Boyden's inaugural Henry Kreisel Lecture, *A Mixed Blood Highway*, evokes relative to each of these seemingly disparate geographical settings a profound "sense of place." Alternately urging his audience along the Moose River rapids of the James Bay lowlands, or across the Lake Pontchartrain Causeway into "The City That Care Forgot," Boyden imaginatively engages these landscapes—or, "homescape[s]," as Craig Womack would put it—as part of a complicated "love story about place."

Notably, then, this is a story marked by concern for both the material spaces of which Boyden is a "product," as well as the social and political realities that irrevocably shape place. For, despite their geographical remove from one another, he seeks ultimately to link these sites (and their communities) along politicized lines. Citing the challenges faced by each community as similarly rooted in systemic forms of government neglect, exploitation, and theft, Boyden briskly sketches a scene of "mutual plight" from which the following appeal fervently emerges: that these "different, and yet similar, communities"—the first, an "admittedly generalize[d]" Aboriginal population in Canada, for which Boyden's more intimate familiarity with Northern Ontario reserves stands in; the second, an oppressed "mixed race population" of a post-Katrina New Orleans—must rise up, "band together," and cast off "the chains of . . . foreign governments." This call he couches within a language of "separation" and "self-government" that on the surface seems resonant with the efforts among Indigenous literary nationalists (including Womack) to theorize sovereignty as both a material process and an imaginative practice. And yet, however provocative this call for joint secession may be, these communities' mutual stakes in "independence" remain, here, somewhat tenuously drawn—arguably functioning less as a means of articulating in critical earnest sovereignty's tenability, than of rhetorically compelling us toward the culminating declaration of this ardent address. In his cheekily titled "manifesto"—*If At First You Don't Secede, Try, Try Again*—Boyden renders by way of conclusion an irreverent rewrite of the US Declaration of Independence that, though loosely conceived in terms of its material applications for social justice, nevertheless projects an imaginative landscape in which strategic models for political affinity emerge from a deeply felt "sense of place."

In *Art as Performance, Story as Criticism*, Creek-Cherokee critic Craig Womack likewise reflects upon the "mutual destinies" that condition the terms on which diversely constituted communities might enact—whether through juridical or imagined means—the ties of confederacy and kinship. Significantly, he looks to the literary, and to literary critique, as work that might most profoundly occasion this kind of reflection. Writing, for instance, of such urgent contemporary debates as those surrounding the rights of "Creek freedmen" to Creek *citizenship* (subsequent to their disenfranchisement in 1979), or the rights of same-sex partners to marriage (following the Cherokee tribal council's ban on same-sex marriage in 2004), Womack draws

eclectically from the short fiction of nineteenth-century Creek author, Alexander Posey, and from the work of contemporary Mohawk writer, Beth Brant, respectively, in order to illustrate the prospective contributions of "artistic approach" to matters of "political debate." A meditation on how one might "write or paint or film things that matter," *Art as Performance* is then also, and crucially, a lively musing on the civic responsibilities of the critic.

In modelling a critical praxis that, more than contemplative, is also performative, Womack theorizes from one chapter, or "Mus(e)ing," to the next, the interpenetrability of aesthetic, critical, and political concerns. Within many of these Mus(e)ings, Womack reflexively integrates his own literary criticism, short stories, and even a two-act play, with the creative and critical work of others—articulating "Native literary aesthetics" across the boundaries of both generic distinction and tribal jurisdiction. Although this title enacts a "seeming departure" from the "tribally specific subject matter" that characterized much of Womack's earlier work on Indigenous nationalism, *Art as Performance* is in fact woven throughout with a subtly wrought concept of *critical sovereignty*—that is, of a self-reflexive "tribal sovereignty [that] is subject to critique" and takes responsibility, too, for enacting that critique. It is here, I think, that Womack's notion of performative criticism finds correlative expression in his project of "taking sovereignty seriously." For, if it is difficult to envision how creative labour (and its critique) might relate to the "real world . . . hopes of seeing social change," then Womack has modelled such a criticism throughout: he both calls for, and imaginatively calls forth, "dreams of nationhood that move toward inclusion and compassion, and a vision of community that involves an expansion of human rights rather than defining and limiting them."

The Art of Work

Kate Braid
A Well-Mannered Storm: The Glenn Gould Poems. Caitlin $16.95

Linda Frank
Kahlo: The World Split Open. BuschekBooks $17.50

Arleen Paré
Paper Trail. NeWest $19.95

Alice Major
The Office Tower Tales. U of Alberta P $24.95

Reviewed by Crystal Hurdle

The late great Carol Shields, in promoting her novel *Larry's Party*, commented how much she disliked the then hugely popular film, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, not because of its schmaltz, but because none of the characters worked.

These four highly original books of poetry explore the question of work. Is it relentless dailiness? "We just do / the same things over and over every day / until we retire," says Sherry, the storyteller in *The Office Tower Tales*. In *Paper Trail*, Arleen Paré's narrator "spend[s] 60% [of her] working hours in an office . . . many stories up. They say the windows never open. This high up someone might jump." Work as avocation, as passion, has a better reputation in *A Well-Mannered Storm* and *Kahlo: The World Split Open*, exploring Glenn Gould's piano virtuosity and Frida Kahlo's painting, respectively.

The Glenn Gould Foundation issued press releases about Braid's book, and she did a reading tour with bassist Clyde Reed. Carefully researched and almost overly documented, the book concludes with five pages of Biographical Notes and two pages each of notes on the poems and of selected sources. The rich poems about Gould and his music are interrupted by fan letters, from hearing-impaired k, revealed ultimately as Braid herself in the Museum of Civilisation, reverent over Gould's "realia" (and also "the hooked rugs of Emily Carr,"

recalling her earlier equally fascinating *Inward to the Bones*). Gould's love of and interpretation of Bach echoes k's of Gould. His eccentricities are well balanced with his brilliance. On audience noise, "Here's impossible: reaching for ecstasy while someone . . . tears wrappers off his JuicyFruit." The poems contain disarming metaphors, "music a pearl that waits to form / around the ten dark seeds of my fingers." One wonders what Gould would think of k, whose letters (never sent?) are only obliquely answered. His audience he says "suck[s] me dry": "I am bound and tied by their adoring, / sappy eyes—their own genius, abandoned."

Gould wants silence to better hear his Bachian muse; Frida Kahlo, in Linda Frank's kaleidoscopic envisioning, wants love, she her own best subject. Both Braid and Frank use versions of found poems, increasing verisimilitude. While Braid's are carefully documented in the notes (including a grade 13 essay by Gould, his text on radio documentaries), Frank's are pleasingly casual, identified as from diary entries or a letter in wee notes after poems. A glossary of flavourful Spanish, the only scaffolding, appears at the end of the book.

Frank's book, winner of a 2008 Bliss Carman award for poetry and shortlisted for the 2009 Pat Lowther Award, focuses on the turbulent emotional life that fed Kahlo's art. In a seamless mix of first- and second-person poems, Frank creates a larger-than-life picture of Kahlo. They lurch with synesthesia, sensuality (as Braid's move with fierce rhythms). Frank works inductively, with names of Kahlo's friends and family in the titles prompting attentive reading.

Several works address husband and fellow painter Diego Rivera, one particularly heartbreaking, about his dalliance with her sister. "Morning After" sees Kahlo watching a falcon "[tear] the fresh meat from the small bones of a helpless tanager." Another stunner features a mock tribunal for Leon Trotsky, her lover. Several about paintings seem almost four-dimensional, and the images are vivid in the mind's eye. In "I Paint My Reality," Kahlo says, "my broken body / is politic, history, country / love, pain, the whole world. . . ." It, like every poem in the collection, teems with life, and this reviewer was distraught when the collection was finished. The final poem, "The Blue House," headed by Kahlo's death date, asserts, buried like a commonplace, "[S] he lived her art."

Arleen Paré's *Paper Trail*, in NeWest's Nunatak First Fiction series, won the 2007 Victoria Butler Book Prize. However, the office-trapped administrator narrator tells her colleagues she is writing "experimental lyric prose," and Paré's book itself was also nominated for the Dorothy Livesay 2008 Poetry Prize.

The appealing narrator, with frequent direct addresses to confidant Franz Kafka, desires and fears retirement. Her image-dense stories alternate with those of her parents, the dad a salesperson, the mom a housewife, establishing a wide, rich, clear narrative arc. Her father "said my mother never worked // for money": the line break reveals much. Is work outside the home more "serious" than in it? Kafka offers to ghostwrite her story, which is true but for the details: her aged parents do not live with her, are in fact dead; she is not married to Gregor (droll allusion), an itinerant entomologist, but is living with a female lover. Kafka's not-so-far-off metaphors about caimans in a moat around her office tower and her body parts falling off bit by bit (so original!) reveal the frantic reality of her "fassster" life in "a small unstable state run by a mad dictator."

"Dolor," by Theodore Roethke, one of three epigraphs, is echoed in images of silt and silica, which Paré makes her own. "Another meeting ticks the fingers of my minute hand." Her office goes through a

series of mergers, details noted at www.mustchangenow@improve.com, no chance of a respite but through, ironically, "enter[ing] the kingdom of heaven or some kind of pension plan." Though the dichotomies seem simple—"briefcase versus girlfriend" and "e-mail versus poem"—they are not. Literally trying to "write [her]self out," she is able to make the choice to leave only when it is thrust upon her. One is hopeful for her happier future.

The Office Tower Tales by Alice Major, winner of Trade Book of the Year (Fiction) and the 2009 Pat Lowther Prize for best book of poetry by a Canadian woman, is accomplished, whatever its amorphous genre. Its gender, though, is very much in the distaff camp. Three urban office workers, Pandora from Accounting, Aphrodite from Reception, and Sheherazad from Public Relations, in a modern-day *Canterbury Tales*, tell stories, many specifically about such workers as cabbies, secretaries, and waitresses. The cycle begins in April and ends in the early days of January 2000 when the Y2K apocalypse has not come to pass, but patriarchy is still a stronghold.

Over coffee in the food court, with the twittering of magpies (a pleasant *leitmotif*), the trio reveals their lives, a too-young pregnant daughter about to relive her mother's life, a less-than-happy marriage, dissatisfaction with work dreams deferred. An office Romeo gets his comeuppance by inexplicable immersion in a Kahlo-esque surrealistic world, courtesy of his Mexican prey. The tales also focus on females' inability to push through the glass ceiling and "women's issues": disfiguring electrolysis, abortion, mammograms, menopause, even rape. Men do not come off well. Pandora, near the end, wishes, "what if men could make it out / of the Stone Age?" Sherry counters with a tale about male emperor penguins that raise their young. Hmm.

The cycle ends with the old in a new guise. Pandora's granddaughter has been born; one of the presents she receives is a stuffed penguin (!). The son-out-law, Duke, member of the newest order of man, does carry a diaper bag, but the women soon wrestle it from him. Who prevents change? Pandora picks up her granddaughter: "*there you are darling,* she says to hope / and lifts her out."

Despite the conclusion's sentimentality, the tales, vast in scope and execution, offer much. Post-menopausal biological mothers, for example, receive welcome barbs. A story about young mothers in 1733 and 1996, each commiting "this great and complicated sin" of killing a baby at birth, wrenches the heart. Also sad is a tale about Siamese daughters, not a monstrosity, who die, one at a time, soon after birth. The father, too (thankfully), feels grief.

Woman's lot is depicted as a hard one. Personal Secretary to the malevolent CEO's daughter (not even identified except in relation to her father) turns tail and runs home to her small town. Even the bitch-boss is literally unable to rise in the towers because of an ear disorder. The female police candidate, unable to complete the requisite chin-up, "Went bike-riding / for fun. Got an MBA. Gave up on the chin-ups." (Shouldn't cops, regardless of gender, be able to pull their own weight?) The auditors' comments vary, and Sherry "thinks of how her friends can hear / stories so differently," which is part of the delight of the collection, a literary *coffee-klatch*, with its fun anachronistic details of "eccentric livery of the bicycle courier" and "the cuirasse / of pension plans . . ."

Sherry, by the book's end, like Paré's narrator, hopes to write herself out of the office tedium by enrolling in a course on documentary film writing. It seems a hopeful avocation, if not Kahlo's art or Gould's music, one that is both creative and true. And it would have made Shields, a spiritual feminist mentor, happy.

Good Reading—Bad Editing

Susan Butlin
The Practice of Her Profession: Florence Carlyle, Canadian Painter in the Age of Impressionism.
McGill-Queen's UP $49.95

Reviewed by Susan Hart

As McGill-Queen's University Press promises, Susan Butlin's *The Practice of Her Profession* is indeed "important reading for all those interested in Canadian art and cultural history, and the history of women artists in Canada." Stemming from her master's thesis on Florence Carlyle and related doctoral research, Butlin's major concern in this volume is "to reveal how [Carlyle] shaped a professional identity while negotiating traditional social conventions, how [Carlyle] overcame barriers that discouraged women's participation in professional life and became a role model for the generation of aspiring Canadian women artists." The book is well researched and engagingly written. The first pages set an academic tone: illustrations are listed, acknowledgements are made, the topic is introduced and twenty-four Carlyle works are reproduced in colour. Prior to beginning her academic narrative, Butlin offers the reader a preamble in which she presents an imagined encounter between Carlyle and fellow artist Laura Muntz at the opening night of the Ontario Society of Artists thirtieth annual exhibition in February 1902. This shift from the academic to the everyday is an unexpected yet effective way into the narrative and serves to remind the reader just how fluid the borders between history and fiction really are. The body of the text unfolds chronologically over eight chapters grouped into four parts that represent four periods of the artist's life. An appendix of short biographies of the women artists mentioned in the text, a bibliography, and an index complete the volume.

Overall, Butlin is successful in placing Carlyle's life and work within the broader social and historical context of her time. However, there is a tendency at times to be repetitive. A sense of déjà vu in chapter six was confirmed as the exact same quotation is located seventy pages earlier in a very similar discussion in chapter four. This happens again in chapter seven's discussion of the difficulty women artists faced in balancing professional lives and marriage, a discussion echoed by examples and quotations already given in chapter two. Additionally, Butlin's observations about specific works, although thoughtful and insightful, could be more fully developed. For example, in her discussion of Carlyle's *An Interesting Chapter* (1897), "a study of light grays, with touches of pink," Butlin mentions that the work was "[s]ingled out for its tonal qualities of colour" yet her discussion never mentions the popularity of Tonalism at this time. Nor does Butlin observe the similarity in pose between Carlyle's subject and that of James McNeill Whistler's 1871 tonalist-inspired *Arrangement in Black and Grey*, although later in the text she does observe that Carlyle's *Portrait of My Father* (1911) "shares certain formal characteristics with work by Whistler." Butlin's only mention (but not explanation) of Tonalism occurs in the final pages of her text. The author's discussion of Carlyle's *The Flower's Revenge* (c. 1888) and issues of women's sexuality is equally underdeveloped and unsatisfying. Despite these shortcomings, Butlin's text is an enjoyable and informative read.

It is unfortunate that appalling copy-editing easily distracts the reader. Simple typos (Carlyle's mother, introduced as Emily in chapter one, becomes Emile at the end of chapter three and the RCA (Royal Canadian Academy) becomes the RSA at one point in chapter four), inconsistent use of accents in French (Académie Delecluse versus Académie Delécluse), incorrect information

(Cecilia Beaux is variously born in 1855 and 1863), unpredictable style format (parenthetic information such as birth dates and acronym explanations are usually given only once) and missing articles such as "a" and "an" disrupt the narrative flow and undermine the reader's confidence in the reliability of the text. Author Elizabeth Mulley's name is misspelled in the very first footnote and Nancy Mowll Matthews (mentioned in chapter three) becomes Elizabeth Mowll Matthews in the bibliography. The index does not refer the reader to all instances where the name is mentioned in the text (Cecilia Beaux and Emily Coonan being two examples) and on one occasion the text incorrectly refers the reader to the wrong illustration. The list continues.

The author, the topic, and the reader deserve better.

Wolf, Star, and Ash

Alison Calder
Wolf Tree. Coteau $14.95

Gil McElroy
Last Scattering Surfaces. Talonbooks $16.95

Lorri Neilsen Glenn
Combustion. Brick $18.00

Joshua Auerbach
Radius of Light. DC $16.95

Dymphny Dronyk
Contrary Infatuations. Frontenac $15.95

Reviewed by Joel Deshaye

Alison Calder's *Wolf Tree* and Gil McElroy's *Last Scattering Surfaces* are my favourites in this selection of recent publications. They are both worth rereading. McElroy's book is marvellous, though highly abstract. Calder's *Wolf Tree* is initially more accessible and is equally imaginative.

The wolf tree in Calder's title, and the book itself, can be understood as a family tree that traces an atavistic line from people to other animals. The people include circus freaks such as Zip "the What-is-it" and "the Ape-Girl" in addition to a woman who feigned giving birth to rabbits and another who simply stopped shaving her legs. There is also the hirsute and simian Julia Pastrana. In "Charles Eisenmann Looks at a Photograph of Julia Pastrana," Eisenmann says, in a line with an appropriately pompous iambic ending, "Put her with potted plants, decked out in paint and feathers: / from jungles hot and dark we bring the missing link." The misanthrope in me loves the varied and subtle criticism of anthropocentrism in *Wolf Tree*. Even sections that initially seem not to fit, such as the series of poems about inner-city Winnipeg and the Kroetsch-inspired "Sexing the Prairie," show that the human-animal division is much like other divisions that prevent us from establishing healthy relationships with others. Animals are in us; the book's first poem has a bird trying to escape from the eye of the speaker, who says: "Lately I've learned to see through wings." "The wild comes back," Calder later states in the title poem, and sometimes it comes out of us, sometimes as poetry.

Although Calder's book is thematically wild, the language and conceptual risks in McElroy's *Last Scattering Surfaces* are wilder. *Last Scattering Surfaces* is McElroy's latest experiment in applying astrophysical theories and nomenclature to the writing of poetry. McElroy's ideal reader would learn to calculate Julian dates and decipher lists of astronomical objects written in idiosyncratic shorthand. In describing the Crab Nebula, his text "Messier List (Dreyer Descriptions)" begins "*Crab* / !!, B, vL, gpmbM, rrr / !! eB, vL, vsmbM / Cl, rrr" and continues for three pages. Readers who would rather not feel compelled to consult secondary sources should avoid this book. Usually, however, McElroy writes in understandable and vivid language, as in "(The Work of Art) in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction": "There was / a sort of world

outside / my skin, so / I tried gathering / my hands, / suspicious like rebels." In that poem, a second column on the right side of the page offers an airily spaced, parallactic companion: "*Snowflakes // all / possess / a point, / a not very // long // fact, // outstretched, / official // & / military.*"

There is only one obvious death, in a conspicuous elegy, in *Last Scattering Surfaces*, but there are more in Lorri Neilsen Glenn's second book of poetry, *Combustion*. The title refers to cremation—of a brother, of a parent—and to the flame of inspiration. Although the first poem's allusion to "an old / [John] Prine tune about angels and living, / about one thing to hold on to" made me anticipate sentimentality, the emotions in *Combustion* are often monastic in their austerity and here have mantric assonance: "Grief is the forest you enter, confused / by the doxa of ritual around you, path radiant // with ruin" ("Lineage: On the Death of a Parent"). Often alternating between sentence fragments lengthened to Faulknerian dimensions and curt imperative statements, Neilsen Glenn sounds contemporary even when sounding wise. In "Prosody: Some Advice," she offers symbolic instructions for persistently getting motivation to write: "Sing the cave / in twenty-six notes / for twice that many years." At the end of the poem she advises, "Lay yourself on / a dry page, soak / under the sun // . . . Until." The cliffhanger evokes the seemingly inevitable immolation of the poet on the page. That's not advice about prosody except as advice about commitment to the craft, and Neilsen Glenn shows more than the usual attention to it in *Combustion*.

Posthumous ashes are also scattered throughout *Radius of Light*. Despite the gravity of these poems—several of them award winning—they are somewhat overrated in my opinion. Auerbach does not always display the "almost clinical precision" that one of the back-cover blurbs promises. "Strange-Blessings" is not precise but suggestive: "Again, light-filled shafts // Spirit-made blood returns // All to G-d, desire / Dreamt // Walking, breath-turn / A radius, a slant of light . . . " The scarcity of verbs here is neither atmospheric nor exacting enough to be imagistic. Nevertheless, I like many of his images, as in "Hive": "Scores of bees seek nectar / Hover, wings pull petals into sky." The imagistic synecdoche of "wings," or bees in unison, and the ascent of the "petals" are compelling. Auerbach's lyric poems tend to be the most exact, such as "Measure" and the poems about having a herniated disc.

A much deeper injury is the basis of Dymphny Dronyk's *Contrary Infatuations* which is dedicated to explaining the death of the narrator's husband (more ashes), her grief, and her efforts to become independent—and remain emotionally open—afterward. The feelings that inspired this book were undoubtedly profound and I hope, on the assumption that the book is autobiographical, that sharing them has been a healing experience.

My main complaint is that poetry might not have been the best choice of forms. Although every poem in *Contrary Infatuations* is divided into lines, the lineation usually breaks up prose rather than calling attention to the structural and sonic patterns that endow poetry with its compact energy. Dronyk also relies too much on adjectives for description, as in "Harvest Storm." On occasion, however, Dronyk surpasses cliché and reaches higher ground. In "Widow," she describes the death of her husband as "amputation, / after years of being / joined at [his] hip." The narrator recovers, mostly, but continues to wonder how to feel again: "it is the prosthesis / for the heart / I long for."

Ordinary Lives Examined

Licia Canton
Almond Wine and Fertility. Longbridge $18.00

Mary Lou Dickinson
One Day It Happens. INANNA $22.95

Bonnie Dunlop
Carnival Glass. Thistledown P $16.95

Darlene Madott
Making Olives and Other Family Secrets. Longbridge $18.00

Reviewed by Lee Baxter

Licia Canton's *Almond Wine and Fertility* is a moving and at times humorous collection of fifteen short stories that takes us to various locations in Italy and Montreal. In just a few short pages Canton creates characters that are well-rounded and stories that hold the reader's attention. Canton explores the emotions of human relationships and how choices made change the fabric of each individual's life. The stories describe people struggling to recognize themselves while attempting to accept life changes.

Many of her characters are caught between traditional and modern roles. In "From the Sixth Floor" the narrator questions her life and what has become of her dreams and, literally, her self. Not only is the narrator in an abusive marriage, but also she is terrified of disgracing her family if she chooses to divorce her husband. Canton's description of the woman's inner turmoil, to leave or not to leave, entrusts the reader with a sense of optimism at the end of the story. Told from a mother's perspective, "Espresso Cup" is about a son's decision to divorce his wife. Throughout the dialogue the mother's thoughts are at times reflected in her speech while at other times remain hidden from her son. The story reflects a clash of beliefs between the older and the younger generation. Canton, who is the editor of *Accenti Magazine* and a literary critic, has created moving and gripping stories.

Mary Lou Dickinson's *One Day It Happens* is an assorted collection of short stories that delve into the lives of characters and their abilities, or inabilities, to communicate with one another. It is through communication that Dickinson stresses we can connect, and when we fail to do so, the result is fear, loss, loneliness, violence, and sometimes death. Her characters are all ordinary people who try to cope through various crises whether through the memories of lost ones or incidents that cause destructive behaviours. Sometimes the characters have the ability to realize their own freedom such as Eva in "White Sails on Lake Ontario" who finds the courage to leave an abusive relationship. Joe in "The Train Ride" converses with strangers in order to feel connected to other people, but these connections are brief and only act as reminders of his loneliness.

Dickinson's straightforward and honest stories tackle difficult subjects, such as AIDS and child abduction. In "Hello, Angel," Tom writes a story imagining his next-door neighbour abducting and assaulting a young girl. The story's topic disturbs Tom, forcing him to question his own writing of the piece and wondering if he should stop before someone gets hurt. Dickinson's stories are full of compassion and sincerity. Although this is her first book, Dickinson has also had various publications in the *University of Windsor Review, Waves, Northern Journey*, and been broadcast on CBC Radio.

Carnival Glass is Bonnie Dunlop's follow-up to her award-winning *The Beauty Box*, also published by Thistledown. Indeed, *Carnival Glass* was nominated for the 2008 Saskatchewan Fiction Award. In her new collection of short stories, friendships and marriages are just some of the relationships examined. Most of the stories are set in Saskatchewan, although Dunlop does describe beautifully a car trip from Victoria to Tofino, in "Road to Tofino," and a Mexican setting in "Joe's Cantina." Dunlop's characters are in some way or another seeking to

change their lives or have had change forced upon them. For example, "In A Bright Red Chrysler," Carl and his wife, Starla, are forced to deal with the death of their son. Unfortunately Starla's reaction is to slip into a world of make believe, leaving Carl to deal with two losses instead of one.

Most of the characters are connected through the theme of loss and the general dissatisfaction with everyday life. Some of the characters, however, recognize that they are happy with their lives just as they are, while others seek something more adventurous and dangerous. In "Ordinary Lives," Joanie begins correspondence with a convict, causing her to fantasize about a life without her husband in an exotic warm country. Dunlop grounds her characters in realistic settings and "ordinary lives" which help the reader to identify with the various characters and the crises they are working through.

Darlene Madott's *Making Olives and Other Family Secrets* is a collection of eight short stories that examines relationships in both complex and subtle ways. It won the F.G. Bressani Literary Prize (2008). In the title story, Madott's first-person narrative uses the framework of making olives to describe the complexity of family relationships and craftily uses the analogy of how olive stones that settle at the bottom of one's stomach can be unhealthy not only to the person, but also to those who should be close.

Madott portrays the transition of the expectations of the dutiful wife and daughter, where everything and everyone else's needs come before their own. The women in these stories are expected to be devoted and give their love and lives unconditionally, but many of the characters realize that the unconditional obligation to family has the potential to swallow them. Madott's voice is proud and defiant as her characters resist the temptations of love that would be detrimental to their own well-being. Jean, in "Bottled Roses," feels trapped like the bottled roses she has chosen to give out at her wedding as she struggles to decide whether or not to marry Paul, a handsome, enigmatic, but troubled person. Unfortunately it is sometimes difficult to differentiate among characters in the story because many of the family names are similar or the same.

Love, Loss, and—the Arts?

David Carpenter
Niceman Cometh. Porcupine's Quill $16.95

Paul Headrick
That Tune Clutches My Heart. Gaspereau $24.95

David Helwig
Smuggling Donkeys. Porcupine's Quill $16.95

Reviewed by Brenna Clarke Gray

In an oft-repeated advertisement for CBC-Radio's morning arts program *Q*, host Jian Ghomeshi proudly proclaims of Canadians, "We love our hockey, we love our beer, and we love our arts." These three novels support such a claim, and thematically trace the value of arts and culture in the lives of ordinary Canadians. Though more obviously in some of these texts than others, theatre, music, and even the CBC itself become forces that connect and divide the characters in *Niceman Cometh*, *That Tune Catches My Heart*, and *Smuggling Donkeys*.

David Carpenter's *Niceman Cometh* is the most tangentially related to arts and culture of the three, but it is most certainly about love and loss. Set in Saskatoon, *Niceman* has an expansive cast of characters who all revolve around single mother Glory Sachar, an endearing woman unaware of her power over the men of the community. Glory has a knack for attracting unsuitable men, from the extroverted, philandering radio DJ Ricky to the unemployed, stalking, downstairs neighbour Jerry. The cast of characters includes Glory's elderly next-door neighbour, her realtor, her customers and co-workers at the cafe where she works,

and the nice man of the book's title. In many ways as much a collection of tightly linked short stories as a novel, Carpenter's work allows every character to focalize portions of the text, but rather than being distracting the effect is a sense of community and interconnection with Glory at the apex. This interconnection is best illustrated by the chapter titled "Love's Sweet Song," wherein all the novel's characters are listening to late night CBC, which is broadcasting a jazz festival from Switzerland. All the major characters are united in their interest in or willingness to try this unique musical experience; the unsuitable suitors Ricky and Jerry alone are symbolically isolated from the community by their inability to appreciate the "fat-ass government station" (Ricky's words) that "could mess with your head if you listened long enough" (Jerry's thoughts). A mutual appreciation for the strange late-night ramblings of the CBC also foreshadows the love that will bloom between Glory and her titular nice man.

In Paul Headrick's *That Tune Clutches My Heart*, the importance of the arts—and specifically music—is much more overt. *Tune* tells in journal form the story of May Sutherland, teenaged daughter of two University of British Columbia professors, as she embarks upon her first year of senior high school in Vancouver in 1948. May is stymied by the division that has swept her school as all the students pledge allegiance to either Frank Sinatra or Bing Crosby (and by extension, they pledge destruction to the other side). With one best friend a Frankian and one a Bingite, May determines to stay neutral and in the process loses both her best friends and becomes a social pariah, but she also discovers a passion for Bach, new friendships, and a particular boy.

In writing a novel set in 1948, Headrick's greatest strength is resisting the slide into nostalgia. There is post-war glee here, but it masks a certain darkness about Canadian society. *Tune* contains a subtle sub-plot about gender equality, as May's mother—trained as a chemist but teaching Home Economics—hopes for her daughter's failure in the domestic arts so that she does not get trapped by gendered expectations; likewise Douglas, May's beau, is unable to express his passion for literature because of his father's desire for an athletic son. Headrick handles these issues effectively and with sensitivity.

David Helwig's novella *Smuggling Donkeys* is perhaps the most arts-focused of the three, though in this case the theatre is the passion of protagonist Warren Thouless. A retired history teacher who once gave up a chance to tread the boards at Stratford, Warren is in his golden years rediscovering a passion for the stage. His wife Laura has just left him to practice yoga in India, leaving Warren susceptible to the wiles of former student Tessa Niles, who convinces him to buy an old deconsecrated church and open a theatre for her. It is fitting that as Laura embarks on a spiritual quest, Warren in living in this symbol of faithlessness; in truth, he has given his spiritual self over to drama and the words of his favourite playwrights. Warren's thoughts are often derived from his heroes like Thornton Wilder, William Shakespeare, and Anton Chekov, and it is a testament to Helwig's skill that this does not make Warren insufferable.

These novels are strong and well-written, with engaging plots and fascinating characters. They are not without their flaws, however. *Niceman Cometh* has some distracting continuity errors (Glory's son Bobby bounces from the second grade to the first in a matter of pages, for example), while May's voice in *That Tune Clutches My Heart* occasionally rings false whether because her observations are too old for her age or because her voice takes on a masculine tone. *Smuggling Donkeys* is certainly the most polished of the three texts, with an honest and truthful voice that makes Warren painfully real for the

reader and maintains interest even when the story gets mired in Warren's self-loathing. In spite of these overall minor concerns, all three novels are worthy of consideration, and all three do a beautiful job of connecting the everyday experiences of ordinary citizens to the world of arts and culture in Canada.

Human Ends and Animal Beginnings

Jodey Castricano, ed.
Animal Subjects: An Ethical Reader in a Posthuman World. Wilfrid Laurier UP $38.95

Reviewed by Gavan P.L. Watson

Animal Subjects marks an important addition to the scholarly field known as animal studies—an area of inquiry that is perhaps most succinctly described as the critical analysis of the boundaries between the human and the more-than-human. Animals studies is a field not easily located with traditional disciplines. As such, collecting works about the more-than-human is a challenge given the inherent multidisciplinary nature of inquiries. Previously edited books within this field have defined themselves as an intersection of animal studies and a disciplinary field: animal studies *and* geography, animal studies *and* history. On the one hand, *Animal Subjects* appears to be guilty of this narrowing, too: animal studies *and* cultural studies. Yet, the broad range of subjects (and editor Jodey Castricano must be acknowledged for including a wide variety of topics, and expanding what gets counted as cultural studies) allows for the disciplinary boundaries of chapters to retreat and foregrounds, rather, a focus on engaging ethically with animals in a so-called "posthuman world." *Animal Subjects* is important for the authors' meaningful engagement with this question of the animal and for its implicit and explicit Canadian context.

The broad subject matter of *Animal Subjects* cleverly echoes the boundary-questioning inherent to animal studies, and the variety of writing styles and topics ranges from a satiric parable on factory farming by keen cultural-studies observer Donna Haraway to lawyer Lesli Bisgould's review, through the well-known case of the dismemberment of a stray cat posthumously named Kensington, of the rights animals have within Canadian law. While this range certainly means that not all chapters are equally suited for all readers, it does mean exposure to ideas not necessarily encountered in other scholarly collections. In some cases, chapters offer echoes of themes already taken up by other authors and offer little that is new to the larger body of thought.

Castricano's introductory chapter, outlining the links between cultural studies and animal oppression, is one of the best introductions to the field I have read. In Castricano's words, *Animal Subjects* aims "to include the nonhuman animal question as part of the ethical purview of cultural studies." But what is this ethical purview? Castricano narrows the potential scope by suggesting that it is animal suffering and emotions that ought to be (primarily?) considered. While these two attributes are not to be ignored, I believe that engaging ethically with animals means not pre-selecting the scope within which an ethical encounter could occur. Thankfully, some of the chapters' authors expand the purview beyond suffering and emotions. For this reason, I can recommend two of the thirteen chapters as being particularly generative: Michael Fox and Lesley McLean's "Animals in Moral Space" and David Sztybel's "Animals as Persons." In Fox and McLean's case, the authors convincingly argue for a de-territorialization of physical spaces into moral places where animals are co-creators of moral concern. Sztybel argues in his chapter that the notion of "person" can

logically extend beyond the human and, as such, we ought to be extending the same rights of personhood beyond those known strictly as human.

I would be most comfortable using *Animal Subjects* as a text in an introductory, undergraduate animal-studies course as it is a book that is suited for those interested in how scholars, activists, and professionals (not that the three are ever mutually exclusive) working broadly across disciplines are critiquing and redefining both the boundaries of cultural studies and the more-than-human. Additionally, given the high proportion of Canadian authors and some explicitly Canadian settings, this geographic perspective makes it unique within the existing field of publications.

En un mot

Éric Charlebois
Lucarnes. David 17,95 $

Herménégilde Chiasson
Solstices. Prise de parole 16,95 $

Compte rendu par Eric Paul Parent

Lucarnes d'Éric Charlebois crée chez le lecteur l'impression de regarder par une mince ouverture qui ne révèle qu'une infime partie de ce qui se cache à l'intérieur du propos. Bien que la citation inscrite sur les premières pages du livre annonce que le savoir n'est pas nécessaire pour aborder le langage du poète, l'érudition de celui-ci exige parfois des efforts de la part du lecteur. Le propos de l'auteur est clair et direct, mais le lecteur doit puiser au plus profond de ses connaissances culturelles et linguistiques pour pouvoir en apprécier la totalité du sens.

Dans les poèmes de Charlebois, ce n'est pas l'émotivité qui prime, mais le savoir-faire et le savant maniement de la langue. Ses textes, où l'éloquence se mêle aux propos quotidiens, passent trop vite. On a l'impression d'avoir avalé tout un repas en une bouchée. Il s'agit d'une œuvre qu'on ne peut pas goûter du bout des lèvres, il faut y mordre à pleines dents si on veut la savourer.

Le style syncopé laisse parfois perplexe et fait qu'on détecte mal la musique du texte. D'ailleurs, il s'agit d'une œuvre qu'il faut lire pour percevoir les traits d'union et les majuscules qui, insérés en plein coeur d'un mot, en amplifient le sens et produisent des images très personnelles et touchantes.

Solstices se lit presque comme un essai sur la condition humaine où il est souvent question de souvenirs qui s'effacent et du temps qui fuit. En effet, au risque d'imputer une intention à l'auteur, on détecte entre les lignes une critique sociale provoquée par la lassitude et le désabusement. Les textes de Chiasson donnent l'impression d'être des moments croqués sur le vif qui rappellent à l'essentiel, c'est-à-dire le moment présent, vécu intensément et qui reste gravé dans notre mémoire.

Dans cette poésie du quotidien, les mots défilent comme un souvenir provoqué par une musique ou une odeur : on ne peut pas y résister, il faut se laisser pénétrer, porter par ses effluves. Parfois, une phrase occupe tout un paragraphe ce qui donne l'envie de suivre l'auteur dans sa lancée qui a quelque chose de l'exploit. Certains des textes ont été écrits aux solstices et aux équinoxes et composent une suite qui s'étend sur plusieurs années. Tout au long du défilement des saisons, on sent le débordement d'émotion comme un personnage de théâtre qui tout à coup parle en vers ou chante parce que la simple prose ne permet plus de contenir et de véhiculer ses pensées.

Saisir

Francine Chicoine et Robert Melançon
Sur la table vitrée. David 12,95 $

Francine Chicoine (dir.)
Toucher l'eau et le ciel. David 12,95 $

Compte rendu par Simon Auclair

La forme du renku est issue de l'une des plus vieilles traditions poétiques japonaises : ushin renga. Ces ressemblements poétiques voyaient les poètes s'adonner à une joute déclamatoire où devaient alterner des vers de dix-sept et de quatorze syllabes. L'événement n'était pas sans rappeler de belles scènes du grand-œuvre du cinéaste Patrice Leconte : *Ridicule*. Sauf qu'ici, nulle question de vaincre l'adversaire—le duel laisse place à la collaboration. Les vers doivent s'enchaîner naturellement, répondre au précédent et questionner le suivant. C'est la relation forgée entre les multiples offrandes des participants qui témoigne de leur talent.

Sur la table vitrée est une conversation. À travers un échange de haïkus les poètes Francine Chicoine et Robert Melançon tissent une toile poétique des plus complexes sans pour autant, précise Francine Chicoine, « nous assujettir à des règles où domine l'intellectualisme, nous avions choisi de laisser place au souffle ». C'est ainsi qu'abandonnant la métrique traditionnellement associée au haïku (5/7/5), les deux premiers poèmes rendent à merveille l'esprit du renku : « le vent et le chat / pourchassent / la même feuille » Haïku auquel répond : « le soleil bas / fait courir des flammes / dans l'herbe. »

La course du soleil imite celle du chat et du vent. Ce mouvement unit les deux haïkus : voilà leur écho, la question et la réponse. Mais encore, c'est la richesse des relations implicites naissant de leur union qui fait la force du renku. Le vent passe maintenant dans l'herbe. Les flammes menacent la feuille; le vent les attise. Le vent et le chat pourchassent peut-être les flammes, puisqu'après tout ce sont elles qui courent. Des métaphores neuves apparaissent.

Les exemples sont nombreux et soutenus : « escale / sous les aiguilles du sapin / des gouttelettes. » Celui-là suivi de : « la clarté se prend / à la toile d'araignée / première proie. » Des images élimées (La « clarté » dans les « aiguilles » et les « gouttelettes » sur la « toile ») sont ici triturées, puis reconstruites. À la fois implicitement présentes et pourtant évitées, elles érigent bel et bien un plus vaste poème croisé. Le renku est tissé d'enchevêtrements. Les deux poètes avancent sur un fil mince; il s'agira de s'entraider afin de ne jamais tomber dans les pièges de la facilité. Un poème plus faible est soutenu par une réponse plus forte. On suggère une image que l'autre déjoue, on rectifie le tir au besoin. Toujours, on invente.

Les liens tissés par le renku ne sont pas qu'immédiats. La toile est plus vaste et certains poèmes tardifs viendront préciser les premiers poèmes : « le vent effeuille / un journal / en faux oiseaux. » Le vent liminaire est de retour, ainsi que la feuille qu'il poursuivait. Et les oiseaux ne suggèrent-ils pas la course du chat? C'est que le rôle du haïku est de saisir la vie; et cette vie est une ritournelle. Des répétitions et de légères variations rythment le quotidien, les saisons : « près du fleuve / une flaque le soleil / frisonne aussi. » De flammes dans le second haïku, la lumière est devenue frissons. Ce poème fait écho au premier par la présence du soleil, et pourtant le charge du passage des saisons. Chaque mot posé a de larges implications.

Que dire de ceux-là, titre du recueil : « reflet du ciel / sur la table vitrée / j'écris sur la lune. » Le haïkiste écrivant « sur la lune » tâche d'atteindre les choses lointaines. Il saisit ce qui ne peut l'être autrement. Citons encore la préface de Francine Chicoine : le haïku réclame « une liberté de pensée. Et du temps. Surtout du temps. Je découvrais que,

lorsque le rythme de la vie va à l'encontre de nos aspirations ou que la pensée est encombrée, plus rien n'est possible. » Tâcher de saisir la lune, donc, de rêver, mais aussi, dans ce quotidien qui s'emballe, saisir le temps.

Le collectif *Toucher l'eau et le ciel* a un objectif similaire : croquer tout l'émerveillement qui saisit le voyageur sillonant la Côte-Nord québécoise.

La préface de France Cayouette aborde d'emblée la question du « saisissement », à la fois de l'étonnement et de la tentative de saisir l'instant qui le fait naître. Citant le *Novecento : pianiste* d'Alessandro Barrico, récit dans lequel un virtuose né sur un bateau n'ose descendre à terre, apeuré par l'immensité du monde et rassuré par la finitude de son piano, Cayouette nous rappelle le rôle du haïku. Ses limites et sa forme permettent au poète de circonscrire l'immensité d'un instant, d'un monde—de la Côte-Nord.

Le recueil suggère ainsi un « road trip » jalonné des petites étapes que nous suggèrent différents poètes (mentionnons au passage les contributions de Michel Pleau, prix du Gouverneur général 2008). Au fil de ces arrêts le lecteur découvre la Côte-Nord, remontant la route 138. L'avancée n'est pourtant pas linéaire. Les regards des poètes, toujours différents et neufs, font zigzaguer la lecture au travers des multiples facettes de la région.

Mentionnons l'inévitable présence de la mer, tantôt muette : « le bruit de la route/ de l'autre côté / le silence de la mer » Tantôt bavarde : « un grand souffle / au milieu des touristes / la baleine »

L'humain surgit parfois au cœur de cette nature, mais sa présence est souvent de contemplation : « deux fillettes / main dans la main / comparent leur ombre. » Or, tous les poèmes ne sont pas ainsi figés. Au-delà de l'humain, il s'agit de saisir la vie : « sur sa corde à linge / minuscule bikini / jolie voisine. » Et, sous la plume d'un autre haïkiste ayant peut-être entrevu la même inconnue : « elle se penche / sur le bord d'un sein / le bleu d'un tatouage. » Puis, le lecteur arrive enfin en pays innu : « cette nudité / autour des maisons / village innu. » C'est le bout de la route.

Mais qui dit route dit caprices des asphaltes : « écrit dans l'autobus / le plus beau de mes haïkus / illisible. » Ce méta-poème laisse deviner le caractère indompté de la région. Plus encore, on imagine une tentative ratée. Le poète a tenté de saisir le monde sur son clavier. Mais le clavier de Novecento a ses limites et le monde ne les connaît pas. C'est ce qui fait de la poésie une quête perpétuelle. Le monde bat toujours le poème. Et le haïkiste, c'est Sisyphe.

Gone Albertan

Donna Coates and George Melnyk, eds. *Wild Words: Essays on Alberta Literature.* AU P $34.95

Reviewed by Neil Querengesser

The high quality of literature from or about Alberta is a matter of fact. Names like W.O. Mitchell, Sheila Watson, Rudy Wiebe, Robert Kroetsch, and Aritha Van Herk dominate Alberta literary FAQs; readers of this journal are certainly familiar with other prominent names. Yet it is telling that the editors of *Wild Words: Essays on Alberta Literature* feel compelled to entitle their preface "The Struggle for an Alberta Literature" and that the title of Van Herk's introduction to the anthology, "Wrestling Impossibility," supplements the figure. Such fighting words echo George Melnyk's threefold ambition, articulated in his groundbreaking *The Literary History of Alberta*, to construct a history, tradition, and canon of Alberta literature, an enterprise that seems essential, if only to establish a greater sense of identity and legitimacy for what has evolved into a distinctive geopolitical region. Fred Stenson's enlightening afterword about the

development of Alberta literature and its concomitant institutions, particularly the Writers Guild of Alberta, founded in 1980, and the passion with which he defends it, befits the general editorial purpose of this anthology.

Whether the ten essays included between the anthology's introduction and conclusion fully support that purpose, however, is open to question. The editors note that the anthology was inspired by the 2005 Wild Words conference but that it is not a collection of the proceedings. However, just what relationship these essays bear to the conference is not clarified. They are an eclectic assortment, organized generically, each worthwhile in its own way, but often tending in different directions—perhaps, however, a beneficial object lesson on the meaning of the collection's title. All of the essays are at least competent, a few of them brilliant, but despite many moments of excellence and insight, the total collection does not always cohere. Douglas Barbour, in "The 'Wild Body' of Alberta Poetry," casts a wide net over the last half-century of Alberta poetry, landing Robert Kroetsch as a seminal figure in its development, as well as Eli Mandel, Wilfred Watson, and a number of others, with some interesting analyses of lesser known poems. Anne Nothof also provides an enlightening survey of some of Alberta's most important playwrights: Marty Chan, Pat Darbasie, Mieko Ouchi, and Vern Thiessen.

The other essays generally focus on the works of a single writer. Jar Balan offers an interesting, albeit somewhat uneven bio-bibliographical account of Michael Gowda, the "First Ukrainian Citizen in Edmonton," while Lisa Grekul covers a more famous writer of Ukrainian heritage, Myrna Kostash, whose own life and works reflect a struggle with the labels and boundaries of "non-fiction" and "creative non-fiction." Other specific studies include Christian Riegel's "Pastoral Elegy, Memorial Writing: Robert Kroetsch's 'Stone Hammer Poem,'" an insightful post-structural analysis of the introductory poem to *Completed Field Notes,* and Malin Sigvardson's "Wandering Home in Rudy Wiebe's *Sweeter than All the World* and *Of This Earth*," an earnest exploration of the necessity of movement, in both its physical and spiritual senses, characteristic of these and Wiebe's other narratives. However, Sigvardson sometimes seems to overlook Wiebe's arch wit, as in her (justifiably) serious analysis of Adam Wiebe's pronouncement of himself as "a semi-demi-secular Lowgerman Mennonite in a massively Nothing society." Frances W. Kay's essay on the life and works of Richard Wagamese is a moving and compassionate look at this important, largely self-taught First Nations writer. Pamela Banting in "From *Grizzly Country to Grizzly Heart*: The Grammar of Bear-Human Interactions in the Work of Andy Russell and Charlie Russell" provides a fascinating but disappointingly brief introduction to what could become a new Alberta genre: humano-ursine discourse.

Two essays stand out for special mention. Sherrill Grace's "Playing Alberta with Sharon Pollock" is an insightful study of this quintessential Albertan writer, an exemplary essay for anthologies with canon-forming ambitions. And to say that Helen Hoy's up-close-and-personal "'No Woman Is Natural': The (Re)production of Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Suzette Mayr's *Moon Honey*" is a brilliant and engaging study of the deconstruction of racial and sexual categories in Mayr's little-known provocative novel is only to hint at this essay's riches.

This brief summary of the anthology's contents should provide a sense of its range and depth, but also illustrate that while *Wild Words* clearly constitutes Alberta literature as its subject matter, it in some ways falls short of explicating that same subject matter, to paraphrase the Wolfgang

Iser-inspired editorial aims. Nevertheless, the subsequent anthologies promised by Coates and Melnyk will no doubt eventually provide a sufficient corpus for informed critical judgment.

The Shaping of Taste

Nathalie Cooke
What's to Eat? Entrées in Canadian Food History. McGill-Queen's UP $29.95

Davide Panagia
The Political Life of Sensation. Duke UP $21.95

Reviewed by Parie Leung

In *The Political Life of Sensation*, Davide Panagia quotes Kant: "Thus although critics, as Hume says, are able to reason more plausibly than cooks, they must still share the same fate. For the determining ground of their judgment they are not able to look to the force of demonstrations, but only to the reflection of the subject upon his own state (of pleasure or displeasure), to the exclusion of precepts and rules." Both books under review attend to cooking and critiquing. Both also engage in reflection, although it is here that they diverge. While Panagia is concerned with political reflection and the disruption to precepts and rules, Nathalie Cooke's edited collection is an introspective study on Canadian culinary history and specifically, Canadian domestic foodways. The critique of cooking in both books further leads the authors to construct varied ways of understanding taste.

On the one hand, Cooke and the contributors to *What's to Eat? Entrées in Canadian Food History* approach taste as a sociological category in the shaping of culinary taste in Canada. Panagia's formulation, on the other hand, is part of his larger argument on the power of "sensation as a radical democratic moment of aesthetic judgment, contending that sensory experience interrupts our perceptual givens, creating occasions to suspend authority and reconfigure the arrangement of a political order." Since for Panagia, the mouth "which is used to speak and communicate one's ideas" cannot at one and the same time "count as the organ that guarantees gastronomic pleasure and bodily sustenance" according to our common political sense, he posits that the sensory experience of taste during moments of gustatory impact are sites of political and ethical change.

Emerging out of conversations surrounding Canadian food culture and culinary history, Cooke's book is a collection of scholarly writing from contributors working in various disciplines: English, Women's Studies, nutrition, gastronomy, media journalism, and in museums. The book is an important addition to the field as the study of domestic foodways in Canada has so far lacked sustained scrutiny. The twelve contributors, including Cooke herself, build an argument for a national cuisine of Canada characterised by diversity. Most of the studies centre on the daily meal in the private sphere, and as "peepholes" into Canada's social and cultural history through the explicit lens of a particular food item, text, or practice, they offer intimate insights into Canada's gastronomic development.

The book is divided into two parts: six chapters respond to the question, "what do and did we eat?" and the others address "what do our food stories tell us about who we are or were?" This introspective approach is intentional and foregrounds the importance of forging lines of continuity and identification with the past as well as understanding the ways individuals and groups differentiate themselves through time and space. Additionally, by way of providing a context for the book and a focus for the chapters, Cooke has arranged the articles such that they reflect Canadian culinary history as perceived through the lens of Canadian cookbooks. Loosely chronological, the chapters line up with five main stages. Victoria Dickenson's study of French

explorers' contact with New France and Margery Fee's enlightening work on colonialism and the consequences of its "civilising" mission on Aboriginal health, food traditions, and the ecosystem head the book, reflecting contact and settlement. This is followed by consolidation, affiliation, articulation, and differentiation, through the study of foods—chocolate, the tourtière, turkey, Red Fife wheat—and what we can glean from cookbooks, such as the myths surrounding the institution of the family meal.

As an entrée into Canadian social and cultural history, the book definitely delivers, with research conducted from archival materials such as maps, photos, letters, advertisements, postcards, cookbooks, recipes, and surveys. The articles are fairly jargon-free, and given their narrative tone, read like a collection of stories accessible by a wide readership.

The book's single limitation is a reflection of the field's infancy. Ironically, the one inclusion of Sneja Gunew's fascinating work on the Chinese-Canadian experience and the "transmission of affect" in several literary texts, glaringly indexes the scarcity of scholarly contributions on Asian-Canadian and immigrant perspectives. Further research contributions in this area will bring a welcome balance.

Following up his first book *The Poetics of Political Thinking* with *The Political Life of Sensation*, Davide Panagia develops a provocative contribution to democratic political theory. Drawing mainly from the writings of Immanuel Kant, Gilles Deleuze, and Jacques Rancière, and from other key philosophical thinkers, he posits that sensation, by which he means "the heterology of impulses that register on our bodies without determining a body's nature or residing in any one organ of perception," can interrupt a regime of perception already in place during moments of durational impact such that our senses become disarticulated, forcing us to reconfigure our ways of attending to the world.

Countering the precepts and rules of narratocracy, in which reading and writing are established modes of political deliberation, he reveals how viewing, aurality, and taste can "interrupt our common modes of sensing and afford us an awareness of what had previously been insensible." The work begins with what Panagia admits to be an exegetical laying out of his theoretical framework, triangulating aspects of the three theorists' insights about the nature of perception and the composition of common sense. He then analyzes various sites of cultural engagement such as paintings, film, photographs, the piazza and edicola, as well as the Slow Food movement, illustrating the political possibilities of sensation in each instance.

His arguments are persuasive and refreshing, especially when describing how when Michael Pollan prepared and tasted the Narragansett American turkey—protected by Slow Food's Ark of Taste *presidium*—for the first time, the interruption of the image of a plump industrialized turkey by a flavourful, heritage one, disfigured his idea of comfort through an encounter with taste.

While there were moments when I questioned the extent of his focus on Kantian immediacy to the exclusion of our capacity to create analogy or comparison because these lines of connection are interrupted, the work on the whole is rich and innovative.

Daze and Nights

Guy Delisle
Burma Chronicles. Drawn & Quarterly $19.95

Reviewed by Janice Morris

As it did with *Shenzhen: A Travelogue from China* (2000) and *Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea* (2006), Quebec-born cartoonist Guy Delisle's keen eye fixes itself again in this book on the oft-absurd minutiae that dominate the everyday existences of some of the world's most oppressed peoples. This time, it's modern-day Myanmar (Burma to those nations that refuse to recognize the military junta that seized power in 1989). Equal parts autobiography, travelogue, investigative journalism, and documentary, *Burma Chronicles* (2008) charts ex-pat Delisle's year-long (mis)adventures in Rangoon as he accompanies his wife Nadège, an administrator with Médecins sans Frontières (MSF), to what is only the latest in a long line of field postings.

By now, Delisle is almost immune to the broader culture shocks that accompany living inside a totalitarian regime—military states, censorship, political imprisonment, routine human rights violations—but the constant struggle of daily life proves more impermeable and presents no less of a totalizing experience. Local cultural peculiarities and anxieties at times overwhelm Delisle as he navigates his way through the typically mundane, and yet all-consuming, ins and outs of Burmese life. The unrelenting tedium of procuring food, water, electricity, and air conditioning; of renting houses, shopping, and organizing play dates (for the Delisles' toddler, Louis); and of managing the threats of disease, heroin trade, organized crime, and government corruption is matched here by the equally unforgiving and tyrannical weather ("Burma has a hot season, a very hot season and a rainy season").

As a stay-at-home dad and house-husband, Delisle occupies his days both close to home and far afield. In so doing, he artfully mixes the domestic with the political, training his gaze less on the public history and movements of a military dictatorship and more on the politicized private lives of those forced to live under such despotic rule. His daily neighbourhood strolls are filled with baby-infatuated locals ("a white-skinned baby is a big draw here"), friendly sidewalk chats, and animated street vendors, but marred by the omnipresence of walled compounds, barbed wire, armed guards, and surveillance cameras. His curiosity is piqued by the proximity of Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi but disheartened to find she's been under house arrest for the past fifteen years. The creative rejuvenation he feels while teaching animation at a local school abruptly ends when one of his students is incarcerated, simply for being in possession of one of Delisle's MSF newspapers ("just being associated with you is dangerous"). And otherwise enlightening trips to visit the Burmese countryside, MSF outposts, and Buddhist meditation centres are undermined by the constant and tiresome negotiation of travel permits, petty bureaucracies, and checkpoints.

Delisle's graphic style is necessarily just as unwavering. Interestingly, it's also remarkably dualistic, much like Myanmar's/Burma's own split personality. On the surface, his drawings are simple—minimalist lines, flat surfaces, and consistent patterns—and his pages generally follow suit with ordered panels, clean gutters, and inconspicuous conversation. And yet, within these "simple" boundaries, like those that enclose Rangoon, are some fully realized, droll, even elegant, moments of passion and movement just waiting to be discovered. Despite his reliance on explanatory blocks over dialogue balloons (as well as a propensity for diagramming, labelling, and arrowing), Delisle's raw, vignette-like, documentary pace paradoxically seeks *not*

to narrativize a people so clearly outside of typical linearity. Instead, the storytelling is at times jarring, with overlapping plots, abrupt stops, and confusing historical contexts. There is no "sense making" to be found here in artificial beginnings, middles, and ends. While some readers might resist the seemingly unending banality of Delisle's chronicles, these artifacts nevertheless cleverly record the constrained repression that characterizes so much of Burmese life.

Seeing Through Our Eyes

Michael Dolzani, ed.
Words with Power: Being a Second Study of "The Bible and Literature." Collected Works of Northrop Frye. Vol. 26. U of Toronto P $95.00

Jean O'Grady and Eva Kuschner, eds.
"The Critical Path" and Other Writings on Critical Theory 1963-1975.Collected Works of Northrop Frye. Vol. 27. U of Toronto P $95.00

Alberto Manguel
The Blind Bookkeeper (or Why Homer Must Be Blind) / Le comptable aveugle (l'incontournable cécité d'Homère). The Antoinine Maillet-Northrop Frye Lecture. Goose Lane / Frye Festival and University of Moncton. $14.95

Reviewed by Graham Forst

The three books under review here are about the difference between eyesight and vision—about how, so to speak, what an oculist is to one, the poet is to the other.

We are, says Frye in *Words With Power* (1991: republished here as volume 26 of *CWNF*), "blind" to the truth of the Bible because we read it *with* rather than *through* our eyes; as a result, its "visionary" spirit turns into the dead letter of history and dogma, and what should enlarge, instead terrorizes and enslaves.

Similarly, in *The Critical Path* and in most of the essays he wrote during the 1960s and 70s, collected here as volume 27 of the *CWNF*, Frye holds that literary criticism must, in the end, "be able to see that in literature man is a spectator of his own life, or . . . the larger vision in which his life is contained."

Similar views are presented, most warmly and gently, by the distinguished Alberto Manguel in his 2008 Antonine Maillet—Northrop Frye Lecture, "The Blind Bookkeeper, or Why Homer Must Be Blind." Although only nominally and very obliquely tied to Frye's thought, Manguel's essay (which makes up only thirteen pages of this very padded little bilingual edition from the University of Moncton) raises the very Frygian issue of why the poet *must* be thought of as blind—and that is, because we feel the need to regard the poet as "someone . . . indifferent to all deluding worldly sights, capable, because of his blindness of seeing beyond them into the truth." Manguel also reminds us that the reader, too, must ultimately become "blind," that is, blind to our egos, and to the "glitter and glamour" which hide the invisible truth of art.

Words with Power was Frye's last book but one. He called it "a summing up and restatement of [his] critical views" (that is, the "structure" and integrity of literary criticism, the "total schematic order" of literature, the "mistakenness" of value judgments, the power of metaphor, the "similarity of underlying mythical shapes" etc.)—specifically as they relate to the Bible. Such an approach, Frye felt, would "liberate" the Bible from literalism and fanaticism, thus opening the eyes of the blind.

The present edition of *WWP* shrinks the physical size of the 1991 HBJ edition by about a third; it does, however, expand helpfully on Frye's cursory notes, while adding a thoughtful introduction by Michael Dolzani. Many casual errors in the first edition of *WWP* are corrected, although Frye is still permitted to cite a non-existent Wordsworth poem, "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality [sic]."

In the 90s, Frye's critics saw *WWP* as having been written in a sort of critical vacuum, which, because of its emphasis on

the verbal, appeared to put this volume on shakier critical grounds than its more purely structuralist predecessor, *The Great Code*. Even the title, for example, *Words with Power*, invited questions. Take the last word first: whose power? Power achieved how and emanating from where, and used how? And most important, as Foucault has asked, is *power* separable from *authority*, as ability is from right? The question is especially critical since the word Luke uses in the verse which provided Frye with his title ("And they were astonished at his [Jesus'] doctrine for his word was with power" [4:32]) literally *means* "authority" and privilege in Greek. (Many editions of the Bible in fact use "authority" rather than "power" in Luke 4:32.) Can (or ought) we really assume with Frye, as with Arnold and Wilde, and Kant before them, that literary "power" is unique in its transparency, its distancing from ideology, its playfulness or disinterestedness? In other words, doesn't power *always* have a nexus, a dedicated target, a political, or religious, or gendered axe to grind?

Blind power, yes. Frye anticipated this reaction. For Christ, as Frye notes, turns down *power* in his colloquy with Satan, but not, as he said post-Easter to his disciples, authority ("all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me"). Frye's point is that raw power *must be conditioned by creativity*. Otherwise, it is "demonic," leading to the "hell on earth" of concentration camps and genocide. True "authority" comes not from the barrel of a gun, or the lungs of a dictator, but from "the terrifying and welcome voice" of imagination which "annihilates everything we thought we knew, and restores everything we have never lost." This is Frye's inextinguishable Romanticism, which he held to the end of his life (*WWP* was published the year before he died), which his critics simply have to accept or reject, as they feel disposed.

The first word of Frye's title, "*Words*," also bothered Frye's critics, since words chosen for discussion are never chosen randomly. The "power" of *what* "words"? Frye's *de facto* answer is words of western Christian males, composed as literature. In other words, as one look at the index of *WWP* will show, Frye's "words" are (obviously, given his subject) those of the (KJV) Bible, but also of Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, and T.S. Eliot. Mary Shelley, Jane Austen, and Virginia Woolf, for example, are not mentioned in *Words With Power*; George Eliot is, barely. Do we presume women writers are not capable of "words with power"—that they are literally "fe-minus"? This selectivity prompted Frye's critics to see circularity in his system: how surprising is it to find gold in a gold mine? In other words, as *WWP* moves from the theoretical abstractions of Part One to the concrete literary examples of Part Two, it purports to "reveal" that "Western literature"—at least its "major" authors, those authors who "won't go away"—shares a universal body of myth and image patterns. But this claim could hardly come as a surprise when the "deeply traditional" material has been preselected to ensure it. On this point, twenty years later, there is no appropriate response to Frye's critics.

Volume 27 of the *CWNF* reprints Frye's 1971 monograph *The Critical Path*, and much of his 1976 collection *Spiritus Mundi*, along with various contributions to encyclopaedias, dictionaries of literary terms, and occasional papers. The period it covers, 1963-75, reveals a new emphasis in Frye's oeuvre, that is, towards a stronger focus on "the socially emancipating role of the arts" by which he means the power of the arts to "build up a resistance to kinetic stimulus" and marshal the imagination against all the "advertising and propaganda that try to bludgeon it into passivity." This social emphasis was of course a sign of the times—the University of Toronto was no less affected than any other Western university by the war in Vietnam in the 60s

and 70s. Throughout his life, Frye remained famously aloof from all forms of social activism or association with it (he found activists "uncritical" and "humourless"; the student movement he called "The Children's Crusade"); and he insisted in any case that the social dimension of his criticism had always been present. However, in *The Critical Path* the "social function of criticism" gains a sharper focus.

As such, *The Critical Path* may prove to be one of Frye's more lasting books. For the issues he raises here (if not his Romantic solutions) are *a fortiori* ours: what happens, or has happened, he asks, when there's a clash between the "encyclopaedic" myths which give structure to a society (Christianity, Marxism, etc.) and myths of "freedom" which constantly challenge that structure, insisting on detachment, and the sanctity of the individual? What happens, Frye says, is a loss of perspective, toleration, a descent into sectarian violence, a disrespect for objectivity, for secular education, religious sufferance, and all broad-minded ideals. How little things have changed.

The last of the essays collected in Vol. 27 is called "Expanding Eyes." In it, Frye speaks of the arts as forming "a kind of transformer of mental power, sending its voltage into its readers" until, as Blake says, "the expanding eyes of man behold the depths of wondrous worlds." In other words, the love of literature leads to the love of man by "dissolving grosser inequalities, refining manners, disciplining the emotions as well as the intellect." Frye admits then, in one of his very few references to the Holocaust, that, yes, true, some death camp commandants loved music. Against this, Frye says, weakly, that, Nazis notwithstanding, it is possible and important to combine, in our response to the arts, social and personal commitments.

Frye confessed many times to his incurable Romanticism—memorably, in his 1990 CBC interview with David Cayley, when he spoke of the need for something which "transcends" our "abominably cruel and psychotic" world. There "must be something, or else . . . despair," he said. One wonders, after reading these latest volumes of the *CWNF,* if Frye would have maintained his optimism through the beginning of the twenty-first century, when we have clearly become, in the words of Rupert Brooke, blinded, by our own eyes.

Native Textuality

Jo-Ann Episkenew
Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing. U of Manitoba P $27.95

James H. Cox
Muting White Noise: Native American and European American Novel Traditions. U of Oklahoma P $30.89

Lisa Brooks
The Common Pot. U of Minnesota P $22

Reviewed by Beverley Haun

These three books speak to the historic and continuing omission of Native voices in the Eurocentric cultural narratives of Canada and the United States and to the challenge Native writers are now bringing to this exclusionary narrative monopoly. By returning to historic Native texts in *The Common Pot,* and documenting the publication and performance of Indigenous counter-narratives in *Muting White Noise* and *Taking Back our Spirits*, these authors describe and assess the reinsertion of Native voices and stories into historic memory. They demonstrate how Native-authored texts resist Indigenous erasure, assert their survival, and reimagine the story of this continent.

The title *Muting White Noise* refers to American Native writer Sherman Alexie's use of the static emanating from a TV screen, when nothing is being broadcast, as a metaphor for the oppressive noise of white mass-produced culture and its insistence

on conformity to narratives of imperial conquest and domination that not only enact, enhance, and justify colonialism in the past, but continue to do so now. Cox examines historic and contemporary Euro-American texts to demonstrate the frequency with which they express the desire to be relieved of the burden of imagining an Indigenous population in their American landscape.

Cox's book divides into three main sections. He considers American texts by authors of European ancestry, both past novels and current popular cultural production, and the ways they persist in reifying the colonial right to North American space as well as colonial self-described superiority and Native subservience or erasure. He focuses on contemporary Native texts, demonstrating how Native authors are creating both primary and secondary texts simultaneously, combining literary works with social criticism, producing texts that resist the imperial narrative and challenge its authority by writing Indigenous peoples back into their own ancestral spaces. The third section offers 'red readings' of colonial texts to foreground awareness of their overt and hidden maintenance of their Euro-American sense of superiority and to show the many ways that non-Native authors foreclose on a Native future and imagine an inevitable Native absence from the landscape. Cox argues that survival for Native Americans depends on recognition of the power of narrative to shape perception and a sense of self and others, combined with textual strategies for liberating the imagination from those texts—literary, historical, scientific, biological—upon which colonial authors base their grand narratives.

Taking Back Our Spirits, by Jo-Ann Episkenew, focuses on horrific past colonial traumas experienced by Native Canadians and current healing through personal and communal narratives. It begins with an accounting of historic government policies and practices, with a specific focus on the prairies, that displaced and marginalized First Nations. Episkenew then demonstrates how these physical exclusionary policies are also reflected in Indigenous peoples' exclusion from the authorized story of the creation of the Canadian nation-state, resulting in a national collective myth that foregrounds and validates the story of settlers.

In the second part of her book, Episkenew considers the historic and continuing trauma experienced by First Nations as a result of these government policies, specifically removal from the land and residential schooling. She catalogues the repercussions down through time for parents forced to give up their children and children forced to live apart, being taught to discard their own languages and cultures as worthless. Into this bleak scenario, Episkenew introduces the hope of First Nations authors to use narrative, novels, autobiography, and community theatre as a healing anodyne for themselves and their own people. She explains how Indigenous life-writing helps Indigenous readers to heal from the trauma of colonization by recrafting their personal and collective myths. As well, Episkenew makes the case for such texts to find a place in the Canadian school curriculum and a place for study in the academy, arguing that inclusion in curriculum has the potential to disrupt the Canadian settler myth for young Canadians and inclusion in the academy validates the importance of these texts as a vital part of the recalibrated collective voice of the country.

The final portion of Episkenew's thesis is to demonstrate the importance of communal narrative participation—through theatrical production—performance, and attendance, to transform. This transformation is accomplished by addressing unresolved grief and trauma present in so many Native communities. As well as her main focus on damage caused by imperial practices, she also quotes Ian Ross, who

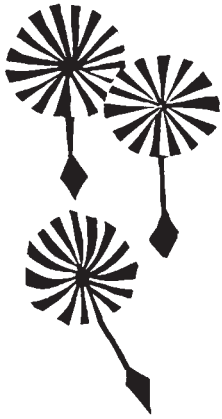
sees his play *fareWel* as having the ability to challenge Indigenous people to examine the roles they play in perpetuating their own victimization and subsequent oppression.

Lisa Brooks' *The Common Pot* is the most theoretical of the three books under review. Like Episkenew, Brooks emphasizes the historic importance of community over individuality for Indigenous cultures on the continent. She examines the connection between the Abenaki people and the land that informs their writing and shows how Native texts, written through the early colonial period on the American North East coast right through the American Revolution, use English to reinforce the importance of Native space, to resist colonization, and to describe the changes that were occurring through colonial imposition. Many maps of the East coast extending into Canada are gathered at the front of the book, offering a Native view of this portion of the continent without the European mapmaking borders and grids imposed through colonization.

Brooks begins by explaining the precolonization Abenaki narrative art of place making, *Awikhigan*, that functions as literature as well as history and is always rooted in their actual geographic space. It is an image-based, land-based communication form, an interactive text-map, originally including birch-bark messages, maps, and scrolls, but later encompassing books and letters with the adoption of the alphabet. Brooks emphasizes that the interpretation of early Native texts cannot take place without a widespread understanding of the extensive place-worlds they inhabit and their role in these narratives of place.

The middle of the book examines postcolonial Abenaki texts, rooted in the Awikhigan tradition, that describe the ideals of their habitation of the land in the metaphor of a common pot into which all contribute and from which all take a share. Cautionary tales of individual land-greed creating hardship, and resistance to that greed-restoring communal order, are layered with overtly political tracts addressed to the colonizers by such Native leaders as Samson Occom and Joseph Brant. Finally Brooks turns to the present and the renaissance among Abenaki who are reclaiming their internal landscape by re-engaging with their Abenaki literary traditions.

Within these three critical works, many issues are addressed which continue to solidify the foundational place of Native voices and texts within a North American and Canadian narrative context. By acknowledging and privileging the work of Native scholars, these writers contribute to critical theory by calling for Native literature to be judged according to its own criteria and not only according to the terms established by Euro-American literature and theory. By analyzing Native portrayal in colonial American texts, and analyzing contemporary Native writers and the power of their texts to memorialize trauma, these writers work to revise dominant histories and discourses and to continue the work of making the narrators and performers of colonial domination accountable for their past and continuing acts and exclusions.



Imagination Generated Imagery

Elizabeth Rollins Epperly
Imagining Anne: The Island Scrapbooks of L.M. Montgomery. Penguin Canada $39.00

Holly Blackford, ed.
100 Years of Anne with an 'E': The Centennial Study of Anne of Green Gables. U of Calgary P $29.95

Reviewed by Sean Somers

Sonja Arntzen, in a foreword to her translation of *Kagerô Diary*, affirms a Cixousian sense of écriture feminine. Arntzen describes the author of this thousand year old diary, known only by the epithet *Mother of Michitsuna*, as "an ancestress for us all in the writing of the self." Today, *Michitsuna no haha* is regarded as a foundational contributor to the development of Japanese literature. But, as Arntzen explores, the developmental relationships between female authorship, private genres (such as diaries), and the nationalized canon involve a great deal of speculation as well as suspicion.

As L. M. Montgomery occupies such a pivotal role in Canadian assessments of a nationalized literary heritage, she has also received much in the way of probing attention to the inner works of her imagination. E. R. Epperly's book presents a visually lush, yet connotatively ambiguous, edition of excerpts from Montgomery's lifelong habit of scrapbooking. The overall effect is both curious and ambiguous. While these pages of cutouts and snippets will probably not revise our understanding of Montgomery, the contents do offer an alternatively imagistic portrait as to how Montgomery envisioned her life and environs.

In presenting this facsimile edition of pages from L. M. Montgomery's *Island Scrapbooks*, Epperly has avoided academic vocabularies in favor of a more personable, intimate encounter. Warmly produced, this book is packaged to feel and look something like a Victorian keepsake album. The bulk of the contents are reproductions—gloriously digitized—from what must be these most private of Montgomery's personal archives. Rather unlike her journals, which have already appeared sequentially in print, Montgomery's scrapbooks resist temporal categorization. We may know the general dates during which a particular scrapbook page was composed, the kinds of memorabilia pasted down vary considerably in time and place of origin.

This invites questions. What was the reasoning behind Montgomery's layout methods? Why insert a leaf, or paste a stranger's marriage announcement from a newspaper? Why glue down a photograph of Mount Royal? Viewing these montages and collages of text and image feels strangely voyeuristic, as these assemblages float in an intensely personal space, one that lacks deliberate explanations or correlations. Epperly tries to overcome this with an editorial presentation that offers the scrapbooks as a kind of museum exhibit: these self-mounted albums can be thought of as experiments of "fun and nostalgia." But these fragments, although stamped and fixed to browning pages, offer only enigmatic suggestions, or perhaps nothing more than labeled moments of whimsy. A rather haunting schism remains between the annotated reproductions herein presented, and the imaginative moment in which the originals were pieced together.

The need to interpret and analyze, to reconstruct the feelings that constellated these material figments, underscores much of Epperly's presence. Her commentary often sits on the facing page to the reproductions from Montgomery. Epperly's notes—particularly in supplying historical detail—are very intriguing indeed. But sometimes their interpretive character moves towards the speculative: for example, in regards to a foregrounded postcard, Epperly suggests, "Using an old moon mislabeled a new

moon at the centre of the page may be a marker for romance gone awry."

Aiming at a general readership of Montgomery admirers, Epperly should receive enthusiastic appreciation for the kinds of imagination-generated-imagery she has organized here. Yet what these excised and snipped bits of print and picture tell about Montgomery's inner life, as an author, is hard to say. The *Island Scrapbooks* do suggest a rather awkward precursor to the Facebook phenomenon: Montgomery obviously took seriously the task of compiling text and image into an abbreviated mosaic, somehow representative of herself as individual-as-narrative. But why these particular tokens, icons, images, pictures and features? The profile evades the contextualizing platform. Adrienne Clarkson's rather bland political endorsement of Montgomery as the Canadian writer, written as this book's foreword, mainly serves to remind us how publicly claimable Montgomery's private domains have problematically become.

Holly Blackford's edited collection exemplifies how the centennial anniversary of *Anne of Green Gables* has revitalized scholarly attention to Montgomery. In many ways, Blackford's volume stands out for the deftness of her editorial precision, and for the remarkable accessibility of its authors. For these reasons, this text should also enjoy a wide readership, as it makes historical and theoretical interpretations of Anne available to non-specialists and a popular audience in general. The collection might offer some kinds of accompanying assessments to the mysteries of the *Scrapbooks*, including an essay by Epperly. Theoretically dense conceptualizations are almost entirely eschewed amongst these authors. This in no way, to my mind, limits the scopes of the authors' ideas. Thematic concepts such as geography, industry, gender, and language receive critical yet accessible treatments that should ensure a wide readership, especially for popular readers who, normally, might avoid academic writing.

The domestic space—sometimes thought of as being a derogation of quaintness to the novel—receives much critical re-imagining in this collection. Christiana R. Salah, with an eye on the context of *household management*, investigates the role of cooking as actually offering an alternative to the *angel in the house* typification of Victorian women. Although some may disagree with Salah's analysis of food as "the spirituality of the everyday" (207), she nonetheless draws intriguing attention to a narrative feature that seems too quotidian to be of interest.

In demonstrating the extent of Anne-with-an-e's influence over one hundred years of circulation, many of the chapters in this collection highlight intertexuality: the image and language of Anne as providing a site of transcendence beyond national and cultural boundaries. Cornelia Rémi's analysis of how Swedish author Astrid Lindgren lifted "Anne's play into her own childhood milieu" reveals this reassembling of Anne in varying places. Yet given the truly global application of this topic—the Japanese example frequently is mentioned, but there are many others—one would have wished for a more intercontinental evaluation than what is presented here. Perhaps the essay on Confucian systems of gender and age, as inscribed into the Korean translation of *Anne of Green Gables*, is still waiting to be written.

Editing Talent

Christine Evain

Douglas Gibson Unedited: On Editing Robertson Davies, Alice Munro, W.O. Mitchell, Mavis Gallant, Jack Hodgins, Alistair MacLeod, etc. Peter Lang $46.66

Reviewed by Dee Horne

A talented editor nurtures authors and their writing. Douglas Gibson is known across the Canadian publishing industry as such a talent. He has worked as an editor with Doubleday Canada, as Editorial Director of Macmillan of Canada, and as Editor and Publisher of a line of books under his own imprint, and later as President and Publisher of McClelland and Stewart. In *Douglas Gibson Unedited*, Christine Evain interviews Gibson and illustrates how he has contributed to the careers of the Canadian authors with whom he has worked.

Evain and Gibson discuss the characteristics required of an editor and the relationship between editor, author, and work. An editor's role is to ask questions and to make the book as good as he and the author can make it. The editor must know how to be supportive. At times, this involves encouraging the author, while at other times the editor must patiently wait or, in some instances, remind the author of the deadline. For example, Gibson explains how he often "runs interference" to protect authors who do not want to take an active role in publicity. No two authors and no two books are alike; thus, the editor must adapt accordingly and do what they perceive to be in the best interest of the work.

In addition to superb copy-editing skills, the editor must pay attention to marketing and distribution and see how the work will suit the targeted market. Some of the tasks this involves include organization of content, coming up with a catchy title, and thinking of the appropriate layout and design.

A strong point of this book is that readers learn about the particular ins and outs of Canadian publishing. Gibson points out that "the way the game is played here in Canada now, the awards have become so prominent and successful that if you're not nominated for an award, suddenly nobody is interested any more."

While Gibson pays attention to the market, he also realizes that he must allow authors to develop their talent even if that means that they deviate from market trends. For example, Gibson had the confidence to break away from the demands of the market to support Alice Munro in her decision to write short stories. Those who said "short stories don't sell" also observed that "People's attention spans are getting shorter." This led Gibson to consider that perhaps Munro is ahead of her time if "short stories are going to become more popular."

Evain is well aware of Alberto Manguel's critique of intrusive editors who "shamelessly take control over an author's work." In a thoughtful conclusion, she discusses the importance of working with authors and identifies seven characteristics of an "editor of quality", all traits that Gibson exhibits in his relationships with writers he has edited and published. This valuable collection of interviews will help publishers, authors, and readers "to raise questions concerning the role of the editor in today's context."

Farting in Church

Pierre Falardeau
Rien n'est plus précieux que la liberté et l'indépendence. VLB $24.95

Reviewed by Mark Harris

The first thing that needs to be said about Pierre Falardeau is that he would almost certainly *not* appreciate having any book of his reviewed in a journal entitled *Canadian Literature*. Best known for his ferociously anti-federalist *Elvis Gratton* satires and for a handful of politically uncompromising passion plays (*Octobre; 15 février 1839*; *Le party*), Quebec's most patriotic filmmaker is also a prolific polemicist, even though his words have almost as much trouble getting into print as his movies have sliding into multiplexes.

Still, love him or hate him, there's no denying that this guy is for real.

Like his earlier books *La liberté n'est pas une marque de yogourt* and *Les boeufs sont lents mais la terre est patiente*, the main theme of *Rien n'est plus précieux que la liberté et l'indépendence* is the absolute necessity of establishing a new nation in the northern half of North America, regardless of the impact this might have on the "*néocolonialistes*" who would inevitably surround it on all sides. Even the articles and screeds about his own life and hard times, and the sufferings endured by other peoples (especially the Palestinians) are a reflection, in one way or another, of this idée fixe.

About half the pieces in this latest collection appear intact originally from such radical journals as *Le Couac* and *Le Québécois*. Many are sympathetic reviews of politically engaged books (dealing with the progressive thoughts of Frantz Fanon, the imperialist crimes of King Leopold of Belgium, etc.), while the rest either emerged from the bottom of the author's slush pile or else were deflected "arrows" aimed at *La Presse* and *Le Devoir* (indeed he apostrophizes many of the journalists employed by these Montreal enterprises with such lapdog epithets as "poodle" and "intellectuel à gages", never missing an opportunity to express his disdain for Paul Desmarais's Power Corporation). What this means, in practice, is that he finally gets to print opinions that were previously rejected out of hand (including his gleefully bloody-minded epitaphs for Claude Ryan and Pierre Elliott Trudeau) or else cut to the marrow. In *Rien n'est plus précieux que la liberté et l'indépendence*, the author finally gets to let loose, and the libel lawyers can go fuck themselves.

The obscenity in the previous sentence, incidentally, was intentional, in the same way that Falardeau`s own unrelentingly scabrous language is phrased with deliberate—and hilariously hostile—intent. For instance, of a journalist who electronically accused him of calling him "une ordure," Falardeau insists that he actually called him "[un] fond d'poubelle, [un] morceau d'cochon, [un] enfant d'chienne, [un] rat sale, [un] bâtard de pourriture, [un] mangeux d'marde, [un] licheux d'cul, [une] pissette molle, et [un] insignifiant successeur d'André Pratte." As for his response to Alain Dubuc's "*collaborationniste*" *A mes amis souverainistes*, it begins with the admonition to "Va donc chier!"

If Falardeau, doesn't like you, he will likely mangle your official moniker (hence "Radio-Vichy" and "la Gen-Marde-rie Royale du Canada").

Funniest of all are his fake *meas culpas*, especially the "apology" this firebrand makes to cultural fixture Nathalie Petrowski for accepting 400-odd dollars from a monied source in exchange for teaching radical poetry to small town kids. For this hunger-driven divergence from his oft-stated political principles, the filmmaker mockingly suggests that he should have gone to Sainte-Adèle "en lichant l'asphalte, pour expier mes péchés." What's more, after

first stoning himself, honour demanded that "Je vais me crever les yeux avec une cuillère à soupe. Je vais trancher les veines à la scie mécanique. Je vais m'allumer par le feu sur la place publique, un pneu autour du cou comme en Haïti (une commandite de Canadian Tire)."

Being largely motivated by righteous rage, Falardeau isn't always scrupulous about historical facts. His account of the conquest of New France, for instance, says nary a word about its place in the larger context of the Seven Years War (which some historians now regard as the *real* World War One). In similar vein, he speaks of the "thousands' of Communards who were gunned down by French troops in front of le mur des Fédérés in Père-Lachaise Cemetery (to be sure, 20-25,000 Communards *did* suffer that fate in the City of [partially eclipsed] Light in 1871, but only a few hundred perished at that particular site). Nationalistic sentiment sometimes prompts Falardeau to overestimate the gifts of his cinematic allies (Gilles Groulx; Pierre Perreault) and to disparage those of his ideological foes (Jacques Godbout).

On the question of national authenticity, Falardeau is quite willing to extend *pure laine* status to émigré Chilean musicians living in Rosemont, but *not* to Mordecai Richler (an "honour" which, Falardeau shrewdly suggests, the cantankerous novelist might not have appreciated anyway).

As you've probably gathered by now, the ideological world that this polemicist inhabits remains essentially unchanged from the one described by Pierre Vallières in *Nègres blancs d'Amérique* more than 40 years ago. The difference between "them" and "us" is absolute. One is either part of the problem or part of the solution. The formula sounds a bit like George W. Bush's notoriously simple schema . . . only played in reverse.

On the other hand, there is something exhilarating about reading a writer who doesn't reset his jib for postmodernist winds. Falardeau's latest thrown down gauntlet is a bit like Camille Paglia's *Sexual Personae* inasmuch as its absolute disdain for received wisdom is a much-needed antidote to skewed reasoning and tippy-toed caution.

And let's not forget one essential detail: many of the accusations he makes are absolutely correct. Corporate control of Western media has now reached the point where all daily newspapers could properly be called *Investia*. What we like to dub democracy could more accurately be described as oligarchy, and neo-colonialism reigns everywhere (*including* English Canada; in fact, sometimes I wish we really *were* the manipulative movers and shakers that Falardeau mistakes us for, rather than the compulsive "ass-kissers" and outside approval seekers that he repeatedly accuses his fellow Québécois of being).

In many respects, the author of *Rien n'est plus précieux que la liberté et l'indépendence* reminds me of the aging Garabaldino in Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo.* Sure, his revolution might be over, but that in no way obviates the need to keep on fighting it to the death.

So here's to you, Pierre. May you always be willing to fart in church.

Pierre Falardeau succumbed to cancer on September 25, 2009, while Gilles Carle was fatally felled by Parkinson's disease two months and three days after that. Although both men were nationalist to the core, Carle was primarily a humanist while Falardeau was a take-no-prisoners firebrand till his unrepentant—and tragically premature—end. Like Michel Tremblay, both cineastes were celebrants of working class Québécois culture in an intellectually challenging, if not always aesthetically refined, way. This double loss constitutes a tragedy that Quebec culture can ill afford (I'd say Canadian, but I don't want to antagonize the recent dead, *especially* Falardeau's doubtless still argumentative ghost).

Traditional Threads

Mara Feeney
Rankin Inlet. Gaby Press $17.95

Reviewed by Jonquil Covello

One of the most enduring clichés of northern literature is that of the southerner who journeys north, stays a short time, and then returns home as a self-styled northern expert to write about his or her experience and perpetuate certain myths of northern people and the land. Mara Feeney is not one of those writers. While working on a degree in Anthropology in the 1970s Feeney spent her summers in various communities around Hudson Bay. After graduation she worked as a Housing Officer in several Inuit communities. She has used her experience and her intimate knowledge of the Inuit and their land to write her first novel, *Rankin Inlet*.

Rankin Inlet is the fictional story of a young British woman who takes a position as a nurse-midwife in the small arctic settlement of Rankin Inlet in the Inuit territory of Nunavut. When Alison arrives in Churchill, Manitoba, on her way north, she is greeted by hoots of laughter and eye rolling when she tells a couple of local civil servants that she is a nurse bound for Rankin Inlet. They warn her of rogue polar bears, drunken Native people and a cold, isolated land lacking the amenities of a civilized society. They also speak disparagingly of a recent Inuit incentive to gain autonomy. "The natives want autonomy—just let 'em try running things themselves," said a "half-stewed patron with a tone that implied of course they would fail." This is 1970, and thirty years later the Inuit have achieved full autonomy and attitudes have changed.

The journey towards the creation of the new northern territory underlies Alison's own personal journey and story. The novel begins in 1970 and ends in 1999, the year that Nunavut was established as an official territory. Feeney constructs a story of change, love, tragedy, identity, and cultural adjustment. Her multivocal technique invokes flashbacks, letters, and personal reminiscences that replicate traditional oral story telling in which people gather to relate and share their memories, their stories, and their hopes for the future. The lack of a clear, central narrative authority allows a multi-voiced social performance that permits Inuit voices to speak for themselves about the cultural changes and social issues that have confronted them throughout the 20th century and into the 21st.

Alison marries into an Inuit family and with her hunter husband, Ivaluk, raises four children, one of whom becomes a lawyer and political activist, and another an engineer. The youngest daughter, Ukaliq, remains in Rankin Inlet designing traditional Inuit clothing. Through the eyes of Alison's children, Feeney portrays a sense of how the Inuit are adapting to the future as proud citizens in their re-created homeland of Nunavut. By 1999 the internet has come to Nunavut and the novel ends with Ukaliq's email to her cousin, Ellen, in England telling her what thoughts and hopes she has for the new millennium and the new territory. Appropriately,"Earthlink" is the name of Ellen's email provider and it is significant that Ukaliq and other young Inuit now view themselves as part of a global family no longer isolated from the people and problems of the rest of the world. They are, as Nikmak, Alison's elderly father-in-law notes, "intertwined and braided together like a rope, stretching from the past into the future."

Rankin Inlet is a fresh and genuine piece of writing. Although I am not familiar with Inuktitut or the modern English vernacular of Inuit young people, my Inuk friend, Rassi, says that the dialogue is authentic and believable. The book will appeal to anyone with an interest in Inuit culture and contemporary issues faced by young Inuit.

Noli me scribere

Patrick Fontaine
Homa Sweet Home. Noroît 24,95 $

Margaret Michèle Cook
Chronos à sa table de travail. Interligne 12,95 $

Compte rendu par Adeline Caute

Que les arts graphiques viennent partout en renfort du langage dans *Homa Sweet Home* de Patrick Fontaine et *Chronos à sa table de travail* de Margaret Michèle Cook, c'est peut-être un premier constat d'échec devant l'inadéquation des mots à dire seuls le réel. Pire : « Je bouge / le moins possible pour n'être pas // sur le point d'écrire » au tout début de *Homa* situe l'acte d'écriture dans la logique d'un risque qui accompagne le mouvement et la vie, et qui pèse, lourd de menaces non dites.

Pourtant, l'inexorabilité de la poésie donne corps à deux recueils dont le mode de représentation est celui d'une série de jets de mots et de flaques de signifiés flottant dans un univers littéraire où l'un des deux axes de l'espace ou du temps est masqué, retirant par là au lecteur l'abscisse (ou l'ordonnée) qui lui permettrait de (se) *situer*. L'inscription dans le temps qui fait défaut à *Homa*, tout entier descriptif d'Hochelaga assorti d'épithètes homériques déclinées à travers le recueil, répond à l'absence de situation spatiale de *Chronos* qui, au contraire, égrène le temps, mois après mois, jour après jour.

À défaut d'être réels, l'espace pour *Chronos* et le temps pour *Homa* s'élaborent dans l'imaginaire linguistique par touches pointillistes : Fontaine procède par la juxtaposition des composantes triviales de la ville moderne (le béton, l'argent, et les bouleaux), et Cook quant à elle nomme les éléments de la nature (bribes de saison, falaises) dans une fresque tellurique passée au microscope. Ce faisant, tous deux créent les trois dimensions d'un monde où sont rendues possibles à la fois l'expérience de soi et l'inscription dans le monde. Et de là vient l'un des points communs de ces deux recueils : la particularité absolue du point de vue qui les sous-tend, relayé dans le texte par des pronoms personnels presque toujours singuliers. Contre le général et le « nous », l'individu se défend des valeurs collectives qui prescrivent et ordonnent pour chacun, et pose partout avec urgence la question du rapport au sens et à la position—sinon la direction—des parties du monde : dans la ponctuation (ou son absence) et la capitalisation en début de page ou d'unité typographique régies par l'auteur au gré des pages ; dans la présence déjà signalée d'images et de symboles graphiques (les véritables « arrêts sur image » photographiques dans *Homa* et la série de flèches dans *Chronos*) ; dans le recours à des citations dans les deux volumes, toutes illustrant la participation des textes à l'élaboration d'un espace linguistique en devenir dont les limites sont bâties et repoussées à chaque nouvelle page des recueils.

Quant aux différences entre *Chronos* et *Homa*, la principale est à trouver dans l'usage que fait Cook du bilinguisme comme métier de son texte. Dans les deux premières parties, le français et l'anglais se font écho d'une page à l'autre en alternance, l'anglais mis entre crochet venant comme compléter le premier texte, toujours en français. Cette symétrie symbolique des deux langues autour d'un axe unique maintenant constitué par la rainure centrale du volume semble tout à fait absente de *Homa*, recueil de l'un, de la solitude, de l'aliénation, et du gouffre, enfin, qui aspire et découpe. Le morcellement inscrit dans la lettre même du texte se retrouve dans une pluralité de phrases retraçant la mort et la peur que nous avons d'elle, et l'angoisse du fragment qui mène à l'extinction totale des contours et de soi.

Intéressante étude sur le temps qui passe et le rapport des mots aux choses du monde, *Chronos à sa table de travail*

cherche dans la nature les modèles du langage et dans le langage, la nature. Parfois au détour des ailes « art déco » d'un papillon, le verbe poétique rappelle Wilde selon qui « la nature copie l'art » et nous dit avec force la profondeur du travail du poète qui pour nous, comme le dit Apollinaire cité dans le texte, pourrait rallumer les étoiles.

Recueil de l'instantané, *Homa Sweet Home* donne à voir l'immense simplicité du réel et la beauté du langage quand il est arraché à la syntaxe classique : c'est alors, associé aussi à des photos de l'intimidante banalité du quotidien, qu'il peut dire les choses. Chez Fontaine, les mots servent souvent plus d'une phrase sans être répétés, glissent de droite à gauche et de ligne en ligne, ininterrompus par la ponctuation qui les ferait mentir sur un monde d'une seule pièce. Ils plongent et expriment la laideur et la beauté sans chercher à circonscrire le monde mais à s'y fondre dans l'immobile et peut-être le silence.

Reality is Nice, Too

Celia Godkin
Hurricane! Fitzhenry & Whiteside $19.95

Jo Bannatyne-Cugnet; Song Nan Zhang, illus.
The Day I Became a Canadian: A Citizenship Scrapbook. Tundra $12.99

Reviewed by Hilary Turner

It is a cultural blind spot of ours that children's non-fiction picture books are not cooed over as effusively as are their fictional siblings. In them, the demands of narrative are as rigorous, and the task of sustaining the reader's interest in matters of fact, not fantasy, is as demanding. Here, as evidence, are two intelligent and absorbing picture books that tell engaging stories which happen to be true.

Celia Godkin's *Hurricane!* is a work of science, powerfully informed by the author's ecological awareness. With beautiful watercolour illustrations, the book charts the beginning, middle, end, and aftermath of a hurricane somewhere in the Florida Keys. The approaching storm is described first from the point of view of the manatees and pelicans whose instincts warn them of an impending disruption in their way of life. As they shelter themselves from the winds, the scene shifts to the human realm, where getting out of the path of the storm is the only possible response. When the full brunt of the hurricane makes landfall, we see lawn chairs and shutters flying through the air and sailboats smashing against their docks. But the natural world, once the ruckus has subsided, is quick to appreciate the benefits of the hurricane. As the humans sadly survey their damaged homes, the manatees, frogs, and various birds return to the mangrove swamp where life has been rejuvenated after this brief interruption—itself just a part of the order of things. In appendices Godkin explains how coastal Florida, protected in large part by its

resilient mangrove swamps, has adapted to seasonal storms. Implicitly, hurricanes are a disaster only from the vantage of the less adaptive human population.

With equal artistry and attention to detail, *The Day I Became a Canadian* also scrutinizes the stages in a process. Young Xiao Ling Li wakes up in trepidation on the day she is to take her oath of Canadian citizenship, and she eagerly walks us through the necessary steps. Along with thirty-six people from thirteen different countries, she swears allegiance to her new homeland in front of a judge and receives a certificate of Canadian citizenship. When the ceremony is over, everyone joins in a rousing rendition of "O Canada." Afterwards, sandwiches, cakes, and cookies are provided for the new citizens, but the liveliest party is arranged by themselves that evening, and they celebrate with delicacies from all the participants' home countries. Though there is nothing sentimental in Bannatyne-Cugnet's succinct and informative text, nor in the able illustrations of Song Nan Zhang, this book brought tears to my eyes. For Canadian-born children it will provide a glimpse of what many of their friends have experienced. For recent arrivals in Canada, it will be a reminder of an important commitment and, one hopes, a meaningful and happy experience.

Future Sexlives: Autobiography Meets Science Fiction

Terry Goldie
Queersexlife: Autobiographical Notes on Sexuality, Gender & Identity. Arsenal Pulp $19.95

Richard Labonté and Lawrence Schimel, eds.
The Future is Queer: A Science Fiction Anthology. Arsenal Pulp $22.95

Reviewed by Jes Battis

Terry Goldie's *Queersexlife* is a kind of adaptation and continuation of *Pink Snow*, his 2003 book of literary analysis with a queer Canadian slant. The publisher describes the work as "evocative of writers Patrick-Califa-Rice and Kate Bornstein," which seems like a difficult act to follow, especially since Goldie is a literature professor and not a performance artist or trans activist. He does include pictures of himself in drag, though, as well as a chapter on *The Crying Game* as a conceptual anchor for the book, which evidences a fairly indeterminate commitment to both trans studies and the cultures of queer performance. Goldie himself calls the book a form of "self-microscopy," and I like this forensic signifier. He also asserts that *Queersexlife*, as a form of critical autobiography, "provides an insider's view of topics rarely explored in academic studies," another difficult claim.

The book offers a cluster of queer-critical essays on everything from penis envy to "Dinge Queens and Racists," all inflected with a distinctly personal flavor. At times, there's some definitely nonconsensual over-sharing ("while being anally penetrated I often take some time to become erect"), which the author contextualizes through the work of Eve Sedgwick, as well as Freud and Lacan. I found some of the cross-cultural comparisons to be rather jarring, as when Goldie, after discussing Jay Prosser's use of photography in

Second Skins, makes an immediate jump to his own lived experience by saying "thus the first photograph of me in drag" (this after describing some of his climaxes as "resembl[ing] a female orgasm.") There seems to be a broad and potentially dangerous reification here, and although this technique may often be the tacit goal of queer theory as an academic endeavor, I'm not sure that Goldie's analysis does anything new in the process of sketching these hazardous sympathies.

He does offer a number of sharp critical readings, especially his starting position of non-shame, which could be a valuable contribution to affect studies: "I actually have not felt this shame from which I must recover." This might be an interesting remediation, and even rebuttal, of some of the work done by Didier Eribon and Sarah Ahmed on the affect of shame. His acknowledgment that "gay white men seem to think that homophobia gives them some unusual sensitivity to other minorities" definitely strikes home, even if it occurs within a chapter on queer race studies that is laden with problematic connections and expressions of ambiguous cultural sympathy. In the end, I'm not sure what this chapter accomplishes, but I still found myself reading it with interest. Goldie describes himself as a storyteller, and he really does have a lot of great stories, even if they don't wholly add up to a legible form of critical autobiography.

The Future is Queer, also from Arsenal Pulp, engages in its own way with issues of autobiographical queerness and storytelling. I immediately thought of Lee Edelman's *No Future* when I saw the collection's title, and in many ways I think that the study of queer science fiction presents a very different kind of futurity than the hetero-mainstreamed version that Edelman critiques (so cattily) in his book. Editors Labonté and Schimel present eight different stories set in alternate futures and near-presents, including a comic by Neil Gaiman and Bryan Talbot. Gaiman's piece, as well as Hiromi Goto's "The Sleep Clinic for Troubled Souls," are definite high points, and I was happy to see their work published side-by-side within an anthology from an independent Canadian press.

Schimel begins the collection with a critical stance, acknowledging that "we are still decades away from achieving any kind of pansexual utopia some forty years after the advent of gay liberation." The stories that follow present anything but a pansexual utopia, addressing issues of imperialism and military conquest, psychoanalysis and its effect on mythologizing, and the shady cultural connections between science fiction, homophobia, and eugenics. A scene in Gaiman and Talbot's comic, involving *The Importance of Being Earnest* and a machine gun, is singularly affecting. Rachel Pollack's "The Beatrix Gates," an unsettling meditation on trans histories in an apocalyptic near-future, ends with a line that encompasses much of the collection's own sensibility: "This is a true story. It is all a true story, and a very old one." Even as it often explores what Darko Suvin calls "science-fantasy" and the queer intermingling of subjectivity and prediction, *Queer Future* also references LGBT history and the culture of memorialization.

In many ways these two books actually go together, since both offer creative and analytic versions of storytelling, and both concern themselves with the intersection of queer autobiography and the transportive/transformative power of erotic desire. Goldie covers mostly realist texts, but his discussion of queer children—himself included—also opens up a horizon of difference, the possibility of childhood as a production of organic dissent rather than the numbing recapitulation of straight parental 'values.' Both Goldie and Labonté/Schimel, in conceptually different collections which share, maybe, a ghostly correspondence, offer ways of queering the past, present, and future.

Poésie, nature, lumière et tranquillité

Jérémie Leduc-Leblanc
Mémoire d'ombres. Triptyque 16 $

Bertrand Nayet
La lune en mille gouttes. David 12,95 $

Hélène Leclerc
Cette lumière qui flotte. David 12,95 $

Compte rendu par Jean-Sébastien Ménard

Dans son recueil *Mémoire d'ombres*, Jérémie Leduc-Leblanc trace la géographie du deuil et se promène sur les rives d'un fleuve et sur celles des souvenirs, des « amas de cendres chaudes [qui] épousent les formes du vide. » Entre les mots et les silences, apparaissent le vent, la mer, des oiseaux ainsi que des draps suspendus à une corde à linge qui tracent le décor de cette marche où « seule l'hésitation . . . permet encore d'avancer ». Chaque poème est une peinture évoquant tantôt le renoncement, tantôt l'abandon, tantôt la désolation. Avec peu de mots, Leduc-Leblanc parle de la mort, des survivants, et de la solitude. Ce faisant, il parvient à évoquer toute la complexité et la subtilité de l'absence.

De son côté, Bertrand Nayet, avec *La lune en mille gouttes*, écrit des haïkus qui plongent le lecteur dans la nature entre feuillages, vent, eau, et galets. Douceur et harmonie sont au rendez-vous de ce court ouvrage dans lequel on retrouve également quelques dessins de l'auteur. Si le « désordre du bonheur » est évoqué ainsi que la présence d'une femme et d'enfants, cette promenade poétique est surtout l'occasion d'un intense recueillement.

Hélène Leclerc, quant à elle, réussit, dans *Cette lumière qui flotte*, à illustrer les petits moments de l'existence. Ses haïkus semblent le fruit de promenades dont elle a su capturer l'atmosphère et les sentiments. Les quelques photographies qui accompagnent ses textes leur donnent une dimension visuelle. Comme elle le souligne : « Avant l'écriture, il y a le regard. Celui qui vient du cœur. Le haïku est un art qui dépend de ce regard attentif que l'on porte à l'instant, aux petites choses de la vie, aux détails du quotidien. » Leclerc réussit à capter l'essence du monde qui l'entoure dans une forme qu'elle maîtrise à la perfection.

Pleasure: Plot or Plow?

Leanne Lieberman
Gravity. Orca $12.95

Francesca Piredda
Bambina. Porcupine's Quill $22.95

Reviewed by Jodi Lundgren

Although fifteen-year-old girls narrate both *Gravity* and *Bambina,* only the former, a page-turner in which vivid description furthers the development of character and plot, will be shelved in the Young Adult section. *Bambina,* a demanding novel, will appeal to patient readers who like episodic, ornately detailed texts.

Raised in Toronto, Lieberman's narrator, Ellie Gold, deepens her love for the natural world when she spends the summer with her grandmother at a lakefront cabin. Ellie, an Orthodox Jew, has never even worn a pair of shorts, so when she meets a Gentile neighbour her own age, it might be culture shock that prompts descriptions such as this one:

> She's stripped off her tank top and jean shorts to reveal just three small patches of white fabric held together with string. All the girls I know dress modestly. . . .
>
> Lindsay's breasts hang full and pendulous in the cups, her hips naked except for the little ties. . . . Her nipples, pointy and brown, show through the white material of her bathing suit.

As it turns out, it is not merely surprise that fixes Ellie's attention on the girl's breasts, but erotic desire. Back in Toronto, she attempts

to stamp out thoughts of Lindsay by biting the inside of her cheek and memorizing the Periodic Table. When she fails to quell her lesbian desire, Ellie quietly abandons her faith and pursues a clandestine, after-school affair with the adventurous but callous Lindsay.

That Ellie weathers her affair and her disillusionment with Judaism without her parents' knowledge reveals that the regimentation of religious observance can replace true attentiveness to one another. The book ends optimistically as Ellie reconciles not only her sexuality but her interest in earth sciences with her faith: "Volcanoes and rocks, they're science, but *Hashem* created them, right? And if we don't learn to protect them, then we are ruining God's creations." In advocating for a heightened ecological emphasis in Judaism, Ellie displays genuine caring and shows that conscious, rather than automatic, responses are what keep any practice alive.

The plot arc that helps to characterize *Gravity* as YA fiction is absent from *Bambina.* A slight story of the narrator's (Eugenia's) summer vacation provides an ostensible frame for stream-of-consciousness "reveries" in which Eugenia reviews her life from early childhood to the present. One memory unfolds into another, creating both rich texture and disorientation. Topic headings such as "At home, bored—Genevieve—Catalogue of the school's girls" provide a much-needed directory to the numbered entries. In them, Eugenia records the minutiae of her daily life as the daughter of a well-off Italian father and a fashion-conscious Québécois mother who live in Rome. Eugenia's enthusiasm imbues the narration, whether she is describing her beloved island of Capri or her "mayonnaise adoration": "It was the most attractive food in the world, connected with sandwiches for picnics and downtown *tramezzini,* the soft triangles of pleasure, the marvelous, irregular half-meals. . . . I would twist the top off and suck it in big long gulps."

Keys to Piredda's aesthetic intentions appear throughout the novel. For instance, Eugenia attends a documentary film in which a Parisian costumer's definition of happiness deeply impresses her: "the only thing I can do to be happy is create, 'create moments.'" In her reveries, Eugenia strives to do the same. Piredda also winks at the reader in the essay question from a French exam: "Explain and comment on this thought of Vigny: 'I can only read books, now, that make me work. On the rest of them, my thoughts slide like a plow on marble. I like to plough.' What enrichment has been brought to you by difficult books, no matter what the subject?" *Bambina* itself joins the ranks of difficult books—at least as compared to a YA title such as *Gravity,* which, if not plot-driven, certainly uses plot to lure the reader on. The difficulty for the reader of *Bambina* lies in maintaining the stamina for over two hundred pages of "record[ed] thought" unmoored from a larger narrative purpose. But again, a self-reflexive passage (in which Eugenia compares her way of thinking to that of her new boyfriend) justifies this free play of detail: "It felt as if I was gaping at everything, and he was thinking of what he would do with all the things he gaped at." Contrary to utilitarian logic, Eugenia does not place what she relishes into the service of any agenda. Piredda's narrative thus embodies the ecological ethics that Lieberman's Ellie professes.

In Stratford's Shadow

Leanore Lieblein, ed.
A Certain William: Adapting Shakespeare in Francophone Canada. Playwrights Canada $35.00

Ric Knowles, ed.
The Shakespeare's Mine: Adapting Shakespeare in Anglophone Canada. Playwrights Canada $35.00

Reviewed by Vin Nardizzi

I adapt the title of my review from Ric Knowles's handsome introductory essay to *The Shakespeare's Mine*. I do so in the spirit of these collections, both of which are christened with a quotation from one of the plays they anthologize. In Larry Tremblay's *Burger Love* (2007), a police officer informs Manu, a subway employee, that he must "confront a certain William," and, in Djanet Sears's *Harlem Duet* (1997), Othello and his first wife Billie (allusions perhaps to both Billie Holiday and Wilhelmina, William's feminine form) discuss the ownership of a Shakespearean textbook: "The Shakespeare's mine," she says, "but you can have it." Taken together, these pieces of dialogue imagine Shakespeare as a person of (dis)interest—a literary criminal in Tremblay—whose *gravitas* in the Western tradition is encapsulated in the book that Billie possesses and then passes on without registering a hint of loss. In each its own way, the plays gathered in these two volumes articulate a similar relation to the Bard's canon: as adaptations, they both express a debt to his art—some plays are more explicit than others in this regard—and divest themselves, sometimes immediately, of his influence. In my estimation, there is no loss in these literary confrontations, only gain, particularly since we now have print access to a dozen contemporary, dramatic adaptations of Shakespeare. Knowles regards his anthology as a university textbook, and both his and Lieblein's are of no insignificant pedagogical heft.

These companion volumes do not bring together just any contemporary adaptations of Shakespeare, of course. They compile a variety of Canadian Anglophone and Francophone Shakespeares, each of which, as Knowles suggests, stands in "the shadow of the Stratford Festival," the theatrical institution that, since 1953, has emblematized the sort of authoritative Shakespeare in Canada that Billie departs with so nonchalantly in *Harlem Duet*. Unsurprisingly, none of the plays Knowles and Lieblein edit premièred at Stratford, although the script of Vern Thiessen's *Shakespeare's Will*, which is included in Knowles's volume, was performed there in 2007 after it débuted in Alberta in 2005. Instead, these adaptations were first produced in Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal, Ottawa, Saskatoon, and Toronto, illuminating the richness and originality of contemporary engagements with Shakespearean tragedy, especially *Hamlet* and *Othello*, in the shadows of Canada's Stratford. Yet despite the volumes' admirable attention to Shakespeare in Saskatchewan, for instance, and because Knowles reports that the Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project at the University of Guelph has amassed over 450 plays already and persists unabated in its documentary efforts, I would have liked to have seen in the tables of contents materials originating from British Columbia, the Maritimes, and the North. As it stands, the "Canada" of these volumes corresponds to four provinces, and it is my sincerest hope that, in the future, collections that shed light on Shakespearean adaptation at Canada's furthest geographical margins will appear in print. A cursory search of the Project's website (http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca/) indicates that, although achieving comprehensiveness would indeed be no easy task, such an endeavour is not entirely unimaginable, perhaps if adaptations of Shakespeare performed prior to 1968—the date of the earliest play anthologized, Robert Gurik's *Hamlet, Prince of Québec*—were considered.

But lest we too narrowly construe

"Canada" in terms of its geographical contours, the subtitles of these collections remind us that language is a significant marker of affiliation and disidentification in Canada. Although translated for English audiences, the Francophone adaptations included in Lieblein's slimmer volume, especially Gurik's *Hamlet* and Jean-Pierre Ronfard's *Lear* (1977), both of which are dense political allegories, are vital artifacts in the history of the Québec sovereignty movement that exploit the fame of England's (and Anglophone Canada's?) national poet in inventive ways. (The cover art of Lieblein's anthology, which depicts Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in Gurik's *Hamlet* wearing reversible capes, one side decorated with maple leaves and the other with *fleurs-de-lis*, is representative of this ingenuity; these turncoats wear their betrayal.) Lieblein affords readers a helpful, albeit brief, historical survey for decoding these allegories in her general introduction and in her prefatory remarks to her translation of *Hamlet*. Some aspects of the other plays Lieblein anthologizes, however, are less successfully contextualized, and I found myself dutifully following her instructions for glossing their more puzzling allusions: "Many of the unfamiliar references can be found elucidated online; therefore, only those that do not contain a keyword to look up or whose significance or humour depends on an untranslatable play on the French words have been annotated." Since I suspect that some students might not be so self-motivated, I wish that this volume—and indeed its companion—were more abundantly annotated, though judiciously so, since the collections do not aim to be Variorum editions of Canadian Shakespeares.

Both anthologies underscore and complicate the dual ways for defining "Canada" outlined above by including plays that adapt Shakespeare to Aboriginal contexts. Although Knowles retains in the script the Native languages peppering Yvette Nolan and Kennedy C. MacKinnon's *Death of a Chief* (2008) and then translates these speeches in footnotes, the translator of Yves Sioui Durand and Jean-Frédéric Messier's *Maleceet Hamlet* (2004) regrettably does not employ a practice of textual estrangement in its presentation of Attikamek and Montagnais, which is all the more lamentable in light of the history of cultural erasure to which the Maleceet have been subject. This criticism aside, Lieblein introduces scholars and students to a stunning Shakespearean adaptation that examines intergenerational conflicts resulting from Maleceet relocation to the Kinogamish Reserve through the claustrophobic and crooked lens of *Hamlet*. In adapting the Bard to articulate the socio-political realities of First Nations life, this play—and, more generally, its counterparts in both collections—productively reconfigures a question Hamlet poses to himself after his encounter with the Players: "What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?" Were we to adapt this question, substituting "Shakespeare" for "Hecuba" and "Canada" for "him," the plays that Lieblein and Knowles anthologize would afford us a rich range of answers.

Kids' Animal Books Moving

Dianne Linden
Shimmerdogs. Thistledown P $10.95

Jill MacLean
The Nine Lives of Travis Keating. Fitzhenry & Whiteside $11.95

Ruby Slipperjack
Dog Tracks. Fifth House $14.95

Reviewed by Lynn (J.R.) Wytenbroek

For centuries, authors have written books for children about animals or told tales through the animal perspective. Some were fantastical, like *Wind in the Willows,* and some realistic, like *Old Yeller*. But they never fail to entrance. Two of three new Canadian books about animals add to that list of great books.

Linden's *Shimmerdogs* is a heart-wrenching tale about a six year old, Mike, who has a near death experience in a swimming pool and is encouraged back to life by a ghostly dog. "Shimmerdogs" the old Polish man he befriends calls them, and Mike sees them frequently when there is trouble or pending death. He meets Merit, a homeless dog who speaks directly into his mind the way shimmerdogs do, and is comforted by her presence, as he initially has no one to tell about his feelings or his strange experiences since his older sister has sworn him to silence because their mother is worn out with two jobs and money worries. When Merit disappears, Mike has no one to talk to until he meets Mr. Lapinski in the new neighbourhood they move to when their mother goes to Afghanistan as a soldier. But when Mr. Lapinski dies, Mike is all alone and cannot cope with the words in his head that repeat over and over as he tries to shut in his feelings. Mike finds he can no longer speak as he has bottled up his words so much, and he retreats into a world of silence.

Shimmerdogs is beautifully told, and has an appropriate voice for a six year old. The psychological dangers of silencing one's feelings comes through strongly in this story about a lonely and frightened child with no one to talk to. While any adult reading it will understand the psychological complexity being explored here, most children will only see a lovely tale about a boy comforted by the ghostly dogs which keep him company and talk with him when there is no one else. This is beautifully and thoughtfully written. The kind of book that raises a lump in the throat.

The Nine Lives of Travis Keating has a similar tone. Travis has moved with his widowed father to a small village in Newfoundland, leaving behind all that is familiar. Hud, the school bully, singles him out, so the other children are too frightened to befriend him. Very lonely, Travis finds some old fishermen's huts full of abandoned and starving cats, and decides to take care of them, especially the pregnant "Blackie." In the course of his quest, he befriends Prinny, the daughter of the village drunk, and Hector, who is almost too shy to speak. Together the children save the cats in the cold winter and find homes for them, while discovering ways to defang Hud.

This is another tear-jerker in places, especially as Travis and his dad try to work out their relationship now there's just the two of them. But like Mike's mother, Travis' dad is sympathetic and supportive, and in the end he helps with the rescue of the cats, even persuading Hector's house-proud mother to let her son adopt Blackie. Travis' determination, strength in the face of opposition, and compassion for those weaker than himself make him a great role-model, although he is a realistic eleven year old so is often in trouble of one sort or another. This book, too, should become a perennial favourite with children.

Slipperjack's *Dog Tracks* has the potential to be another great book. Set on a northern Ontario reserve, it centres on a girl named Abby who is suddenly returned to her

family to live after her grandparents can no longer keep her. Her new dog Ki-moot becomes part of a sled team that takes tourists out to a camp in winter to see how the Anishinawbe used to live before Europeans arrived. The book is full of information about First Nations' cultures, including showing the differences between them. It includes Ojibwe words and shows much about life on a northern reserve and the fascinating mix of characters who live there.

The problem with the book is, in fact, the amount of information and detail. Abby is twelve, but the book is aimed at an older audience. As a resource book for teachers about First Nations, the book may be useful. But there is more information than storyline, which makes the reading frequently hard-going. Further, Slipperjack has written the book as though it were a verbatim account of Abby's life, with the kinds of skips in dialogue and action that occur in real life but do not translate well in fiction. So the book reads very unevenly, with sudden changes of thought or activity in the middle of a paragraph, making it almost impossible to follow in places. The story is more episodic than dramatic, but each episode may last only a few paragraphs, so there is little sense of continuity. It is a shame that the style is so fragmented as the information in the story is so interesting, if too thorough. The characters are also interesting, as many of them are quite quirky, but there are so many of them introduced so fast that is difficult to keep track. This is a book with promise, but that promise is never quite achieved.

City of Words (and Pictures)

George McWhirter, ed.
A Verse Map of Vancouver. Anvil $45

George Stanley
Vancouver: A Poem. New Star $16

Reviewed by Sarah Banting

The verse map and the long poem offer their readers quite different experiences of contact with place. Both, however, chart movements through Vancouver. In the *Verse Map* the poems stay in place at specific sites, while, reading, one skips from one to the next across the space of the city. In the *Poem* the writing records its subject's flow of thought as he ranges along habitual routes; the reader comes along for the reflective ride.

George McWhirter's edited collection is coffee-table sized. Each poem is paired with several large, colour photographs, taken for the purpose by Derek von Essen, a Vancouver-based designer and photographer. The poems and photographs clearly refer to the same places: von Essen has taken care to follow the poems to their vicinities of reference. But while the poems image memories and impressions, evoke hidden interiors, and conceptualize private and civic symbols, the photographs compose surfaces, patterns, and visible depths. The *Verse Map* asks the reader to balance two ways of seeing and negotiate the compressed distance between their perspectives.

McWhirter's introduction indicates that he selected the 100-odd poems for their collective coverage of the city's landmarks and neighbourhoods, not for their poets. The contributors include many (but not all) "legendary" and less well-known published poets who have written, in passing or otherwise, about Vancouver. Several of them, including Oana Avasilichioaei, Maxine Gadd, Gary Geddes, Justin Lukyn, Daphne Marlatt, Roy Miki, William H. New, Bud

Osborn, Meredith Quartermain, George Stanley, and Michael Turner, offer samples from their respective sustained, intensive poetic engagements with the city's spaces and histories.

The poems are mostly free-verse lyrics expressing the emotional tug and cut of everyday moments shaped by specific places: sexual attraction on an express bus, disenchantment in the Bacchus Lounge, vulnerable youth on an East Hastings street corner. They recollect buried histories and recount experiences discovered through lengthening acquaintance with streets and neighbourhoods. Some focus on the social traffic of busy streets; others muse on the long but limited familiarity of neighbours or the bittersweet sites of memory on residential byways. One recurring pattern is a turn from the public streetscape to the private scene. Genni Gunn's striking "Sestina for Shaughnessy," a formal exception, rides an imagined train to Vancouver's most famously elegant wealthy neighbourhood and then rams it "through porticos and granite lives, through market slopes / and slides down an embankment past."

Von Essen's photographs are neatly balanced and, collectively, as nicely varied in perspective and texture as suits the poems. The photographs frame expanses of asphalt, flat patterns of building façades, and the towering vault of trees. They are generously faithful to the poems' subject matter: Lillian Boraks-Nemetz's "A kiss in Nitobe Garden" is illustrated, for example, by the image of a couple kissing in the Nitobe Garden. This faithfulness puts them at the service of the poems' trains of thought, which was perhaps necessary, since the photographs' immediacy and frequently supersaturated colour might otherwise have overpowered the quiet verses. I might have asked for a less obediently direct correspondence between poem and photograph, but then I find myself contrarily opposed when juxtaposition does assert itself. C.J. Leon's "Gulls (Granville Island)" images a commonly observed Vancouver colour scheme: "Grey as the bay, / with its grey-soup waters pressed / to its grey-wash sky at who-knows-where / in all this homogeneity, / they watch, the gulls." The photograph shows Granville Island seagulls aflap in the sunshine against a blue sky. The coffee-table book of poetry may be an odd genre, then. But this one is worth cherishing.

As the writing subject in George Stanley's *Vancouver: A Poem* moves through the city, by bus or on foot, the *Poem* steps forward and back, circling places and memories, articulating the gently halting rhythms of a thoughtful mind in motion. Each of its twelve sections patterns sequences of landmarks, passing thoughts, fragmented encounters with the city's other strangers (homeless men and boys, pensioners, construction workers, neighbours), and brief reflections on its poetic project. Adopting William Carlos Williams' principle of "universals as particulars, ideas / in things," the poet urges himself to focus on the mundane objects that seem to have become, for him, poignant and evocative, without rendering their associated emotions in detail. He notes the changing city in its simple particulars: the "reterritorialization" of a favourite restaurant, the tree roots that "lift & crack the pavement / asphalted over bulges," the ever-accumulating dead weight of concrete and glass. He aims to compose "a catalogue of moments, / glimpses—no, just a disconnected (I imagine a poem about / Vancouver in which Vancouver never appears—no, I mean *no* / *glimpses*."

This *Poem* actually does offer imagist "Glimpses. Of fog, rain-slick decking, / building, windows, light green siding," and other sights. But since the writing subject is a solitary, ageing, low-profile figure, a bespectacled reader on the bus—"it's no big thing, anyway, to be a person, with a / kind of life," he writes—he is determined not to let *self* surface in his poems. So he

foregrounds landmarks instead, recording them as tokens of his moments in mind. (Often these are humble, street-level landmarks: empty lots, a remembered Woodwards, familiar bars.) His self-disciplined poetic record of wandering flows of thought occasionally makes for obscure reading but mostly finds its way to clarity. And, by opening sightlines to a private perception of place, rather than to a panorama, the *Poem* becomes another valuable addition to Vancouver writing.

Childhood's Journey

L.M. Montgomery; Benjamin Lefebvre, ed.
The Blythes are Quoted. Viking Canada $25.00

Philip Roy
Journey to Atlantis. Ronsdale $10.95

Reviewed by Gisèle M. Baxter

The best writers (both for young readers and about youth) understand what a crucial place play-acting has in the development of imagination, and how much it depends on a flexible combination of storytelling and observation. The adventure story both situates the reader in a world familiar from imaginative exploration, and introduces fresh venues for new games. Philip Roy's confident, refreshing *Journey to Atlantis* avoids the tendency now to write such stories as complicated grand narratives set in magical secondary worlds, and provides a lean, linear, episodic tale that doesn't really require familiarity with its prequel, *The Submarine Outlaw*. The setting, or base camp, for its adventure is the relative isolation and sea-proximity of a Newfoundland fishing village. The premise is straightforward and compelling: young Alfred pilots a homemade submarine, maintained with the assistance of kindly strongman Ziegfried; the other characters in his life are his crew (a dog and a seagull), his fisherman grandfather, and an eccentric herbalist and seer named Sheba who lives by herself on a nearby island and encourages Alfred in his explorations. Once the premise is established, the story proceeds through a series of brief adventures, which confront Alfred with various decisions, and bring him to strange places and to meetings with strange characters, echoing the myths and legends that inform this book as much as its knowledge of seafaring and sea lore. However, Alfred also visits recognizable places, and meets people there, and there is just enough vivid, precisely chosen visual detail to bring these places to life, while reminding readers "that it was the interesting places that made you travel somewhere, but the people that made you go back." Like *Treasure Island*'s Jim, Alfred is fifteen, old enough to pursue his quest plausibly, young enough to retain a sense of wonder. While his story may lack the vigour and grandeur of the more ambitious secondary-world fantasy (despite its fantasy elements), it has an odd credibility about it, and appealing characters: as for whether it is a "boys' book," it seems more a mostly male world that doesn't preclude female participation or readership.

L.M. Montgomery sometimes brings to mind Katherine Mansfield in her ability to depict the complex politics of children's play-acting, and while her name is indelibly associated with her first and most famous book, *Anne of Green Gables*, she was a prolific writer of novels, short stories, essays, poetry, letters, and journals. Because of the literary reputation of *Anne*, Montgomery is often regarded as a children's writer, and yet her ambitions were far less specifically focused. She wrote a number of immediate sequels to her first novel, and almost twenty years later, produced novels filling in the gaps. Scholars have often looked at the autobiographical elements of Montgomery's work; Anne in some ways seems to have been Maud's alter ego: the awkward, unhappy duckling who emerges as a slightly eccentric but undeniably glamorous swan, and leads a happy life as a wife and mother, emotionally

and intellectually fulfilled. And yet the huge body of contextual material collected in two volumes of *Chronicles of Avonlea* implicates both the wider world and the dark undercurrents of this idyllic romance. Through non-Blythe characters, the stories hint at (and sometimes detail) thwarted passion, abusive marriages, suicide, madness and despair, postponed happiness, poverty, and cruelty. This is balanced by so much humour and the same vivid sense of place characteristic of the Anne books that for most readers, the general perception of Montgomery's work remains intact. *The Blythes are Quoted*, edited by Benjamin Lefebvre, gathers together a series of short stories, similar in style to the *Chronicles* though often less lush and more confident in tone, some experimental vignettes concerning the Blythe family both circa the First World War and pending the Second, and some poems attributed to Anne (who found in adolescence an outlet for her wild imagination in writing) and Walter, the poet and war casualty of the Blythe sons: evidence that Anne's world continued to intrigue Montgomery, also evidence of her awareness of and interest in developments in Canadian literature. The word "darkness" frequently emerges in mention of this book, and it is melancholy and elegiac in tone (though with a considerable amount of the old wittiness in the stories and in the comments of the Blythes' long-standing housekeeper Susan), but to devotees of Montgomery's novels, these tones are not so much departures as developments, occasionally reflecting on and echoing the early world of children at play, and Montgomery always knew, as J.M. Barrie did, that there is an elegiac quality in childhood play, a realization that the Neverland can never be permanently inhabited, but that its echoes might be maintained in works of the imagination, as diverse as Walter Blythe's poetry, and for that matter, *Journey to Atlantis*.

Farley Mowat's Periplum

Farley Mowat
Bay of Spirits: A Love Story. McClelland & Stewart $34.99

Farley Mowat
Otherwise. McClelland & Stewart $32.99

Reviewed by Bert Almon

Farley Mowat, now in his late eighties, is clearly in a retrospective mood. *Otherwise*, a memoir of his formative years, may be his final book. The work, published in 2008, overlaps with a number of his other books—Mowat is a good recycler—especially the ones which recount his World War II experiences (*The Regiment* and *My Father's Son*) and his important trips to the north in the 1940s (*People of the Deer* and *Never Cry Wolf*). The new book focuses on his love of what he calls "Others," the animals that we share the planet with, although it ends with a shocking confession. The title is brilliant, implying that he sought to become wise about the Others—and yet hinting at the notoriously ornery nature of this celebrated public figure. In his youth, Mowat was fortunate that his great-uncle, Frank Farley, was a distinguished scientist who invited him to go to the tundra around Churchill, Manitoba, to collect birds' eggs, a tremendous opportunity for a fourteen-year-old naturalist-in-the-making. When Mowat was sixteen, a week-long camping trip to one of the last shortgrass prairies in Saskatchewan confirmed him in his love of wild creatures. After his family moved to Toronto, he joined the Toronto Ornithological Field Group, a high-sounding name for a dozen boys and three girls who were interested in natural history. They collected specimens of birds and eggs for the Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology.

Although the book celebrates the animal world, it gains poignancy through its depiction of Mowat's parents, Helen and Angus, who, as he points out, were highly

permissive about his naturalistic forays. Their marriage had tensions and he discusses those frankly. He also celebrates his long friendship with a fellow naturalist, Andy Lawrie, and describes his first marriage, to Frances Thornhill. The book ends before the collapse of the marriage, but he indicates the strains in it. The final disintegration of the union is described in *Bay of Spirits*, published in 2006. A structural flaw in *Otherwise* is yet another recapitulation of his war experiences, which have little relevance to his theme of rapport with animal life. The concluding chapters deal with his sojourn among the Ihalmiut, the neglected inland Inuit of the Barren Lands (the People of the Deer),whose struggle to survive has been the subject of two of his books. These pages have much to say about arctic animals. They also deal with human greed and environmental destruction through the story of Eskimo Charlie, a Slovenian immigrant who came to the Barren Lands to get rich. He used poison as a means of trapping, causing damage to all sorts of birds, animals, and human beings. Eskimo Charlie wound up alone and paranoid, eaten by his dogs after his lonely death. The great shock in *Otherwise* is Mowat's concluding account of his own darkest environmental sin: he panicked in a cave inhabited by wolves and destroyed its inhabitants with gunshots and fire, an act that epitomizes human estrangement from nature. We humans chose the alien role, he says.

Mowat was still married to Frances Thornhill when he began the Newfoundland adventures that are the subject of *Bay of Spirits*. The book describes two love affairs: one with Newfoundland, one with a young artist named Claire Wheeler, who would become his second wife. The relationship with Claire has endured, the one with Newfoundland has had spats and periods of estrangement. Mowat went to Newfoundland in 1957 and took a trip on the *Baccalieu*, a steamer in the CPR fleet that serviced the Sou'west Coast of the island. After this preliminary taste, in 1960 he bought a fishing schooner, which he named *The Happy Adventure*, and explored the coast in the company of his publisher, Jack McClelland. One of the pleasures of *Bay of Spirits* is the portrait of McClelland, an indelible character of Canadian literary life and just the sort of fellow eccentric to recognize Mowat's value and encourage him. McClelland soon left the voyage of the *Happy Adventure* to go back to work, but Mowat went on to St. Pierre and Miquelon. He gives an affectionate view of life on these French islands, which only a few Canadians have ever seen except for brief tourist stops. He met Claire Wheeler on St. Pierre, where she was studying French in a summer school. They began an affair, a summer romance that outlasted the summer, although Mowat found it difficult to extricate himself from his marriage and the lovers had to live common-law for some time, a daring thing to do in the early sixties. He and Claire became disillusioned with St. Pierre after some of the islanders slaughtered a school of pilot whales that blundered into the harbour, an event that foreshadowed Mowat's later disillusionment with Newfoundland after he witnessed the killing of a stranded fin whale in the Outport of Burgeo, where he and Wheeler spent eight years. That event was the subject of his book, *A Whale for the Killing*, and it is described again in all its horror at the end of *Bay of Spirits*.

However, most of the memoir celebrates the life of the outports as Mowat and Wheeler learned about them on their voyages. The book has a rambling organization: it is a *periplum*, to use one of Ezra Pound`s terms from the *Cantos*: a map that shows how the land looks to a sailor following the shore. Mowat's books always chart the territory from the point of the traveler, not the detached cartographer. The life of the narrative lies in the descriptions of places

and people, especially the people. Mowat captures the speech of the Outporters and the anecdotes that explain their lives. He had his notebooks and Claire's to draw on, and the wealth of detail is one of the delights of the *Bay of Spirits*, which mingles accounts of people and historical events with rich evocations of place. The abundant photographs are another pleasure. Maps of the Sou'west Coast and the Bay of Spirits (aka "Baie d'Espoir" and "Bay of Despair"—such are the oddities of naming in Newfoundland) enable the reader to trace the voyages. Mowat would eventually quarrel with Newfoundland, but the disputes were a lover's quarrel with a land that he came to know very well.

The Alchemy of Stories

Reingard M. Nischik, ed.
The Canadian Short Story: Interpretations.
Camden House $88.95

Reviewed by María Jesús Hernáez Lerena

This collection of brief essays on the production of many of the best-known Canadian short-story writers will help students and scholars to refresh and complete their knowledge of the stories as well as discover their originality. Its twenty-eight chapters consider the short story from the 1890s to approximately the year 2000. The book has been planned as a historical survey of the short story in Canada which, however, does not prevent immersion into textual complexities. Chapters are symmetrically arranged in a fluent three-part structure which unfolds as follows:
1. information about the writers´ careers,
2. description of their works, mainly of their thematic and technical features, and
3. analysis of the style and narrative tactics in one selected story. The book thus becomes a hybrid form between an encyclopaedia and an anthology of critical essays. Each chapter—as an entry—delineates the cultural forces and the taste of the times and, simultaneously, chapters—regarded as full-fledged articles—disclose the dynamics of the text in a well-crafted, close-reading fashion, attending mainly to issues of language use and perspective. There are also reflections on the relationship between the Canadian and the American traditions and on how, or where, the experiential and the creative merge in each writer´s life.

Additionally, the book includes a 40-page introduction where the editor provides an outline of the Canadian short story through different literary movements, and a time chart at the end of the book with the names of British, American, and Canadian short-story writers and their masterpieces. In an academic context where the only known book-length historical survey of the Canadian short story was attempted by Michelle Gadpaille in 1988, this lengthier study offering a panoramic view is highly welcome as a reference book.

It is a bit surprising, though, that this undertaking has paid no attention at all to the poetics of the genre, either in the introduction or in any of the subsequent readings. The book sets out to prove the evolution of a tradition, but observation of the short stories has been carried out without any meditation on how the short story is different from other discourses, on how this genre conveys a particular standpoint from which to view experience. As a consequence, all previous theoretical thinking of the discussion of the form (both Canadian and non-Canadian) is absent from the book; also absent are the bibliographical references which would help readers dive deeper into the epistemological grounds of a genre, *genre* conceived as a paradigm for genuine exploration, not as a taxonomical tool.

Another recurrent characteristic in the book that somehow limits its potential is an obsession with analysing only stories that have been "prominent": most contributors duly highlight the fact that they have

chosen for analysis the most frequently anthologized story. As a consequence, the book gives readers information they may know already, making other authors and stories not so often picked up in collections recede from view. So if the proposals of Canadian short story theorists such as, for example, Michael Trussler or Mark Levene, have been left out, the same absence affects writers who—even highly awarded—are never mentioned: Douglas Glover and Greg Hollingshead among others. Important authors alluded to in the introduction do not have a chapter (Guy Vanderhaeghe, Katherine Govier, Rohinton Mistry, etc.), and the only Aboriginal writer discussed is Thomas King.

Since emphasis is placed on modernism and its typical characteristics—which go unexamined and are *a priori* set against the labels of realism, naturalism, and postmodernism—this critical (and cultural) framework that contextualizes the stories is at times somewhat narrow and reminiscent of old literary histories and their generalized manner of appraising excellence in literature. So this worthy agglutinating effort would call for a second and complementary volume, knowledge-refreshing as well as revitalizing, a platform where, by taking a few more risks such as examining the short story´s ideology of representation and by offering a sample of writers and works not so frequently canonized, could give the reader the possibility of engaging with the Canadian short story in a less conventional manner. Regardless of this wish, the book is very useful as a truly informative overview gifted with extremely perceptive approaches to the stories which make us "feel the road" as we read on.

An International History of Canadian Literature

Reingard M. Nischik, ed.
History of Literature in Canada: English-Canadian and French-Canadian. Camden House
US $90.00

Reviewed by Colin Hill

Reingard M. Nischik's six-hundred-page *History of Literature in Canada* includes thirty-five sections by twenty-three established and emerging scholars from Europe and Canada, an editor's introduction, and a substantial bibliography of "further reading." It divides Canada's literary development into six historical periods from "Beginnings" to "Literature from 1967 to the Present." Individual chapters within these sections are divided along linguistic, generic, historical, and theoretical lines: "Orality in the French-Canadian Chanson," "The Modernist English-Canadian Short Story," "Colonial Literature in New France," "English-Canadian Poetry, 1920-1960." Given its international origins and the diversity of its subject matter and contributors, *History of Literature in Canada* speaks with a remarkable unity of tone and narrative clarity. The chapters are universally competent, readable, well-researched, and informative. Many of the chapters are also the most concise and incisive treatments of their subjects available to contemporary readers.

The most original characteristic of *History of Literature in Canada* is its simultaneous exploration of English and French-Canadian literatures. While most of the sections on English-Canadian writing tread ground that will be familiar to many English-speaking readers, such readers are likely to benefit from the intimate knowledge of French-Canadian literatures evident in the chapters by French speaking scholars (some of these were written in French and translated). While the collection

obviously strives to foster cross-cultural dialogue, it is careful to avoid ready-made generic and temporal categories that might create an artificial sense of cultural coherence: "The English-Canadian Short Story since 1967" is countered, for example, with a chapter on "The French-Canadian Short Prose Narrative" preserving key generic distinctions. Accordingly, numerous interesting similarities and contrasts can be gleaned from comparative readings of chapters on contemporaneous literatures in French and English.

Despite its refreshing international treatment of Canadian writing, *History of Literature in Canada* is not revisionist. The material it covers and its interpretations of literary development are usually unsurprising. The collection appears to be imagined as a "history" in the most traditional sense of the word. This is neither surprising nor inappropriate, but it is a little disappointing. The book makes little attempt to broaden the canon or to present challenges to established literary models: as Nischik points out, "[c]ontributors were asked to focus their accounts and analyses largely on 'canonical' texts where possible." While a chapter by Georgiana Banita—"Canons of Diversity in Contemporary English-Canadian Literature"—does an ample job of exploring difficulties associated with canons in the Canadian context, the text as a whole adds little to what can be found in extant literary histories. Why then is this new book necessary? The editor partly justifies the book as "a taking stock and celebration of the diverse literatures written in Canada." Such an enumeration and celebration manifests as a preoccupation with presenting well-established history in great detail. Individual chapters abound with talk of dates, national events, and political figures. There are several historical overview chapters inserted between those on literary topics that provide further (and often redundant) historical context. The book spends much more time recounting how Canada's literature reflects history than it does exploring the myriad ways that some of the best Canadian writing transcends it. In this sense, the collection might seem vaguely reminiscent of Norah Story's *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature* (1967), and it is not surprising that the introduction often seems unable to see beyond a pervasive cultural nationalism of decades past.

A few other aspects of the text also seem to belong to an earlier time in Canadian criticism and it could have benefitted from a more rigorous and contemporary critical framework. Nischik, for example, argues that this new history "mov[es] the debate about what constitutes literature in Canada clearly beyond the traditions of two founding peoples" rather than showing how this debate has already unfolded over the past three or more decades. The terminology that the collection employs is sometimes unhelpful, misleading, and confusing: "Canada's Elizabethan Age, or L'âge d'or . . . is generally considered to have begun in 1967 and to have lasted into the late 1970s." This particular parallel to English writing confuses the literary timeline and implies that Canadian writing is derivative, and many contemporary readers would likely disagree with such an estimation of literary achievement since the centennial. And rather than merely "celebrating" the diversity of Canadian writing, more might have been said about tensions that arise from Canada's literary heterogeneity—think, for example, of how writers such as Neil Bissoondath and Dionne Brand have explored Canadian multiculturalism. The introduction also tends to oversimplify key literary-historical developments. Given the current renaissance of interest in Canadian modernism something more exacting about the relation between Canadian and foreign modernisms might be said than "[w]ith the works of Ernest Buckler

(1908-1984) and Sheila Watson (1909-1998), English-Canadian literature tied in with international modernist literature and foreshadowed postmodern practices." On the subject of postmodernism, I am not sure it is accurate to suggest that Michael Ondaatje single-handedly "ushered in an interest in ethnicity."

Despite its international origins, *History of Literature in Canada* does little to change what we already know about Canadian literature and its development over time. It is nevertheless an accomplished book that packs much information into a single volume, and its focused, concise, informative, and readable chapters are worthy of a more exacting and up-to-date introduction.

Lilies and Realism

P.K. Page
Coal and Roses. Porcupine's Quill $16.95

John Newlove
A Long Continual Argument. Chaudiere $22.00

Don Coles
The Essential Don Coles. Porcupine's Quill $12.95

Reviewed by Alexis Foo

In *Coal and Roses*, P.K. Page explores the subtle yet poignant strength of intertextuality. Through her captivating execution of the glosa (a fourteenth-century poetic form that uses borrowed lines), Page invokes the words of her predecessors (in italics) to capture the nuances and facets of the most mundane experiences to overarching meditations on life and the human condition.

The decadent imagery in "Ah, by the Golden Lilies" spawns from the hues of Jimenez's poem "Yellow Spring" as it beautifully illustrates Jimenez's golden world. The speaker oscillates between her intrinsic knowledge of her childish bewitchment with Jimenez's ideal, "my young head full of follies / *ah, by the golden lilies,*" and the continuous desire to recreate this idyllic world for her own mental delight. "I trail my golden fingers—/ for I am Midas' daughter—/ *in the tepid golden water.*" The speaker's keen awareness of her "Jimenezian" influence unveils the way in which we as readers borrow and perpetuate the visions and creations of others. Page's poem becomes an Eden, Virgil's Arcadia, and Dante's Paradiso.

In the title poem, "Coal and Roses" Page contextualizes the strength of Anna Akhmatova's words. Though Page's poem explores the most morbid aspects of our age—"car bombs account for many, cluster bombs. / Madmen shoot up classrooms, shoot themselves"—"Coal and Roses" ends in a kind of exaltation. The poem is distilled down to a pure sense of being and existence that is undeniably present and shared by all of humanity. "We share a heartbeat . . . this quiet clock, unnoticed day by day, / But wild in our breast for centuries."

Infused with the echo of literary voices, *Coal and Roses* provides a sense of unwavering clairvoyance. Lines such as Jorge Luis Borge's "*there is a door I have shut until the end of the world*" from "The Last Time" become the fibres of an incessant philosophy.

A Long Continual Argument chronicles John Newlove's poetry from 1961-2003. Despite the span of years, Newlove's poetry resonates with the same synthesis of unshaken pragmatism, realism, and irony. In "My Daddy Drowned," an early poem from *Elephants, Mothers, & Others* (1963), Newlove compares a chilling incident in which his father "drowned still blind kittens / in the rainbarrel" to the sadistic way in which he as a poet exploits women by making them into material. The speaker confesses: "sometimes / I let those women slip to the surface / & squeak a little before I kill them." Though unafraid to confront the demons in all of us, Newlove's poetry does not lack a compassionate voice. In "For Judith, Now about Ten Years Old" from *Moving in Alone* (1965), Newlove mourns

the disfigurement of his young niece, asking, "what will you do / when your breasts come?" recalling the way he "spread salve" on her "rubber-laced skin." The speaker's insight into the grave tragedy of the loss of beauty at an age of innocence unveils the acute perceptiveness and unchanging realism of Newlove's continual argument.

The two-line poem "Love Affair," from the *Tasmanian Devil & Other Poems* (1999), "diagnoses" the futile nature of love. "I'm not in love with anyone, not even myself." The unapologetic tone of the poem leaves readers to confront one of the cruxes of human existence—that "it's hard, living without hopelessness."

Poetic pragmatism is a strong element of Don Coles' poetry. Coles' voice, according to critic Robyn Sarah, is "civilized yet informal," for Coles neglects any attempt to "primp" and aestheticize his language. Though Coles' raw honesty throughout *The Essential Don Coles* resonates with a confidence in the power of the immediacy of thought and impression over aesthetics, many of the early poems from *The Prinzhorn Collection* (1982) lose their vocal momentum. Despite its fascinating content, the title poem of the collection gets lost in its own lyricism. Though the poem divulges the cognitive layers of the speaker's experience, the purposefully choppy lines become unmemorable. "Of course Munch / was called mad too. I have always / felt I knew what to think about that."

The poems from *Landslides* (1986), however, capture the confessional essence of the "I" voice while maintaining a lingering sharpness in the lines. In "Walking in a Snowy Night," the pensive speaker ponders the purifying effect of the white night through which he walks. "I needed to renew myself like this with silence / and with thinking of you." Coles successfully integrates the authenticity of informal speech with the sentimentality of the moment. The terrain of "Forests of the Medieval World" from the 1993 collection of the same name invokes a mythological history through which the speaker navigates while lamenting the distance between himself and a lover. Within the volatility of Coles' subjects remains a quiet beauty that is both mildly elegiac and accepting.

A Couple Pairs of Shorts

A.S. Penne
Reckoning. Turnstone $18.95

Betsy Trumpener
The Butcher of Penetang. Caitlin $17.95

Andrew Hood
Pardon Our Monsters. Esplanade/Véhicule $17.95

Rebecca Rosenblum
Once. Biblioasis $19.95

Reviewed by Owen Percy

The significant stink raised by John Metcalf in reaction to Jane Urquhart's editorial choices for 2007's *Penguin Book of Canadian Short Stories* must be read, I think, as oddly reassuring to the world of Canadian letters. The importance of the short story to CanLit can hardly be overestimated and so stink-raising on its behalf is, by now, old hat for Metcalf who remains—like it or not—one of the finest and most assiduous editors and guardians of the genre in Canada; one wonders, then, how these four recent debut collections of short fiction might fit into the plans of future anthologists of the genre, Urquhartian, Metcalfian, or otherwise.

Reckoning, by A.S. Penne, is a collection of seventeen stories that revolve around broken families, dissolving or evolving relationships, and middle-aged desire. In each story, characters face losses of innocence, moments of forgiveness or resignation, or the realization of potentials and limitations in and around their lives. These are short stories in the traditional mould; most develop through coherent nostalgic recollection or an ornate third-person

omniscient narrator. The collection's better pieces like "What He Wished For" in which a separated father struggles to reconnect with his children who have taken to calling him "Uncle Daddy," stand out when read alongside less subtle pieces (of which there are significantly more) like "A Different Kind of Wanting" with its tragic father-son dynamic, and the coming-of-age "Summer About to Happen." In fact, the majority of Penne's stories unravel predictably, as if they were methodically performing all of the imagined constitutive elements of a short story in turn. The result is a collection that treads on familiar pathways and which offers little by way of innovation and excitement; that Penne's narrators and characters insist on over-telling their stories instead of trusting their readers to read well makes for a didactic experience, all reckonings aside.

Betsy Trumpener, on the other hand, trusts her readers implicitly. In fact, if there is one major criticism of *The Butcher of Penetang*, it might be that it assumes a readership possessing the intellectual gumption and desire to engage with texts that look more like experimental prose poems than stories. The book is comprised of forty very short stories, perhaps more appropriately called sketches (none more than eight pages long), though Leacock this ain't. Like Stuart Ross's *Buying Cigarettes for the Dog*, several of these tight and slight texts verge on the absurd while managing to establish a sense of underlying menace in the characters' worlds. Divided into four sections, *The Butcher of Penetang* houses a wide variety of characters, voices, and styles that, as in any strong collection, somehow speak to one another despite their great formal and thematic diversity; the stories in "A Slip of the Tongue" revolve around the strangeness of rural life in northern BC; those in "Even a Blind Hen" explore ancestry and cultural heritage; those in the concluding "Zap Valley" are predominantly urban and travel pieces. The lone story in "Let Not Your Hearts be Troubled", the *The Butcher*'s penultimate section, however, offers what I think is the book's most remarkable writing: "All the Child I Ever Had Sleeps Yonder" is a mini-Western which manages to pack a succinct and haunting historical family drama into just over five well-wrought pages. Trumpener's writing is odd yet striking, off-putting yet inviting, and at its strongest (in stories like "The Search Party" and "Pop Goes the Weasel!") it offers readers intimate and privileged access to the lives of its characters. Like Ross, Trumpener brings a poet's economical toolkit to the short story and in turn, builds a place for herself among our most promising writers in the genre.

Speaking of promise, Andrew Hood's *Pardon Our Monsters* signals the arrival of a surprisingly young writer of very considerable talents. Set both literally and figuratively in Alice Munro-country, Hood's stories spiral out of the fictional town of Corbet, west of Toronto, which is quickly morphing from isolated small town into bedroom community. These dozen stories are strange, funny, and spectacular: a father and son attend a Guy Fawkes Day party, a woman tries to haunt her own house, a stepmother and stepson make an awkward pilgrimage to the Santa Monica courthouse in an attempt to get a glimpse of the then-on-trial Michael Jackson. On the surface they revolve around baseball, masturbation, recreational drugs, and the *beyond* beyond high school. But they are intricately crafted so as to often reflect the universal in their various particulars, and the quality of the writing is more than strong enough to sustain such a colossal task. Most are told from a distinctively wry male perspective, in a culturally savvy casual cadence that feels convincingly natural. Stories like "Chin Music" and "Thirty-Six in the Cellar" examine the stereotypical suburban male loser/geek; one part milquetoast, one part pantywaist, with a dash of suppressed

rage, a pinch of self-awareness, and an abundance of irony—a recipe that makes *Pardon Our Monsters* as gut-wrenching as it is gut-busting. Hood's is the kind of writing that trumpets a sophisticated and honest simplicity that is teeming with pithy pop-cultural detritus. His brand of humour can be sensitively nuanced or scatalogically testicular, often at the same time. *Pardon Our Monsters* is the kind of funny that is unlikely to win the Leacock medal or be blurbed by Will Ferguson, but it is, truly, a hilarious and remarkable debut.

There is little doubt as to what Metcalf might think about Rebecca Rosenblum's *Once*; winner of the 2008 Metcalf-Rooke Award, and edited by Metcalf and Leon Rooke themselves, Rosenblum's collection offers sixteen stories that share much with those in *Pardon Our Monsters*. Displaying a wider range of convincing speakers, and written in deceptively simple sentences, *Once* wades confidently into the world of intertwined urban and suburbanites in Montreal and Toronto who are struggling to find places for themselves in a world which, like the irregular TTC bus in "Route 99," only slows for them when it feels like it. The characters populating these stories are less well-off than Hood's; they are mostly working class, disenfranchised, and naïve. They are remarkable factory workers, waitresses, grad students, and tech geeks—characters who can smell conversations ("A break-up conversation smelled like a fart in an elevator"), or who hear birds in their heads like the squeegee-toting squatter in "Wall of Sound" who still manages to cut his grandparents' lawn every week. Like Hood's, Rosenblum's writing is honest and humorous, clearly voiced and intricately layered, but she approaches characters and events with a delicacy of perception and nuance that gives *Once* a larger seriousness; the stories "The House on Elsbeth" and "Massacre Day," for example, tackle issues of domestic violence and school shootings respectively with unsentimental pathos and narrative grace. This is another young writer for whom devotees of the short story in Canada will surely come to be thankful.

An omnibus review such as this one can hardly do justice to the excellence of several of these stories by Trumpener, Hood, and Rosenblum. The best of their stories read with an unaffected effortlessness that is, of course, the evidence of tremendous writerly effort. I do not envy anthologists for the editorial omissions they will be forced to make in future attempts at collecting the short story in Canada, but if Trumpener, Hood, and Rosenblum are among the omitted, you can surely expect more stink.

Growing Up in Quesnel

Lily Hoy Price

I Am Full Moon: Stories of A Ninth Daughter. Brindle & Glass $19.95

Reviewed by Haymen Leong

I Am Full Moon is Lily Hoy Price's first book—a touching memoir of her childhood and adolescence in the quiet and developing British Columbia community of Quesnel. Born ninth in a family of twelve children to the celebrated pioneer photographer Chow Dong Hai and his strong-willed wife Lim Foon Hai, Lily recalls one unforgettable tale after another in this moving and intimate portrait of life growing up in rugged Quesnel from the 1930s to the 1950s. Sheaves of photographs carefully selected from her father's portfolio provide a visual account of her many experiences. Sincerely written, Price's memoir is filled with tender stories of love, loss, family secrets, and family tragedies but fails to evoke sustained interest in her family's problems and solutions.

The book begins in 1930 in the small, shingled red house in which Lily was born. Her childhood revolved around her parents, eight sisters, and two brothers, with summers lived outdoors and winters spent

huddled around a small stove in the living room. Growing up was tinged with pain for Price. Even though she does not comment on overt racial discrimination in Quesnel, there were times when she resented being Chinese and wished that she were white. Price seamlessly weaves both the innocence of adolescent expectations with the heartbreaking tragedies that befall her family once she reaches adulthood. In simple but plaintive language, Price retells the devastation her parents experienced after cancer claimed the life of their eldest son when he was only sixteen, and later the lives of another son and, Irene, the youngest daughter. Amidst the tragedy, however, Price delicately ends the memoir hopefully as her family is finally reunited with Irene's long-lost daughter and her family.

Rather than being a continuous narrative, every chapter in this memoir chronicles a different episode in Price's life. The result is a disjointed and seemingly random collection of narratives that concentrate primarily on her family. As a memoir that chronicles life in the British Columbia interior, Price's exclusive focus rarely makes connections to larger political or cultural transformations. Only in one episode about Chinese New Year does she briefly depict the ramifications of the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act on the Chinese community in Quesnel, when her mother sent Lily and a sibling running through the streets of the town to deliver bags of *tay* to lonely Chinese bachelors in hopes of alleviating the homesickness resulting from their forced separation from their families. Aside from readers with an interest in small town history or the untold stories of Canadians, Price's honest portrayal of her life fails to offer any significant insight into the greater developments of Canadian society. I wonder if these stories needed to be told.

Despite Price's graceful prose and affecting tone, the lyrical writing stumbles when nostalgic moments become explicitly didactic or critical of those who have ruined her childhood memories. Reflecting on how chores imbued her with a strong work ethic, she laments how many of today's children are exempt from domestic duties: "I believe chores for children can only help them grow into strong, dependable adults." Elsewhere, she censures logging companies for destroying fields where her family picked berries in the summer and local governments for neglecting to protect history by declaring the house her father built a Quesnel heritage site. In her acknowledgements, Price expresses her desire to "describe the influence of my family and my community upon my life," and she succeeds in doing so, but the result is an unfortunately banal addition to the historical literature of Chinese Canadians in British Columbia.

From Nature to the Nursery

Michel Rabagliati; Helge Dascher, trans.
Paul Goes Fishing. Drawn & Quarterly $19.95

Reviewed by Candida Rifkind

Paul Goes Fishing is the fourth installment in Michel Rabagliati's semi-autobiographical (in interviews he has used the term "auto-fiction") series of graphic narratives that follow the title character through the trials of young and middle adulthood in Montreal. Like the earlier critically acclaimed books, this latest installment uses the fluid, clear-line style of one of Rabagliati's earliest influences, Hergé's *Tintin*, and draws on the author's background in graphic design to produce a beautifully designed book in the tradition of the French *bandes-desinnée*. The pleasing visual style contains anything but a traditional narrative, however, as *Paul Goes Fishing* chronicles the physical and emotional turmoil Paul and his wife, Lucie, experience in trying to have their first child. While the narrative does have a happy

ending with the birth of their daughter, it also chronicles Lucie's two miscarriages from Paul's point of view, and includes panel drawings of the related medical procedures that register her physical and emotional pain and his anxiety and turmoil. However, this fertility plot only comes to dominate the narrative in the second half as the first half of the book lives up to the title: it is about Paul and Lucie's trip to a fishing camp in rural Quebec, where they spend a week with relatives and Paul, typical of so many male comics protagonists, feels alienated from the masculine camaraderie of the sporting men around him.

What is so clever about this book is Rabagliati's subtextual connections between the two stories, one about the trials of modern fertility and the other about the tourist-fishing industry: over the course of the narrative, these seemingly disparate topics are connected by meditations on the artificiality of supposedly natural processes. Just as Lucie's pregnancies are difficult and she needs hormone therapy to carry a baby to term, so are Quebec's natural fish populations tampered with in order to ensure the tourists' success. Paul's dismay at the lack of sport in this kind of fishing becomes a full-blown critique of using modern technology to tamper with natural ecosystems that takes on poignancy when the supposedly natural process of conception requires medical intervention. And there is yet another layer of this often nostalgic meditation on the transformation of the spontaneous, personal, and productive lives of previous generations to the planned, commodified, and dehumanizing experiences of today. Paul reflects on his youth in several self-reflexive sequences about the shift in graphic design from an artisanal craft, requiring interdependence among workers skilled in various trades, to a solitary computer-based industry. These sequences unify the themes of the fishing and fertility stories to produce a critique of contemporary culture that is nevertheless humorous and engaging, working with both pictorial images and narrative units to produce a nuanced representation of the conflicts Paul experiences in his work, on vacation, and in trying to begin his family, all within the context of a Montreal and Quebec that have changed enormously within his lifetime.

In the Family

Andreas Schroeder
Renovating Heaven. Oolichan $18.95

Elizabeth Kelly
Apologize, Apologize! Knopf Canada $29.95

Roberta Rees
Long After Fathers. Coteau $18.95

Reviewed by Alex Ramon

To different degrees, and within contrasting cultural contexts, each of these books takes family life and the struggle to assert individual identity within it as their subject, exploring the often fraught relations between parents and children. Drawing on his own background, Andreas Schroeder's *Renovating Heaven* documents the coming-of-age of Peter Niebuhr, whose reaction against a strict, insular Mennonite upbringing provides the main thrust of the novel's plot. Peter is only a year old when his parents, Margarete and Reinhard, leave war-torn Germany to settle on a small farm in Agassiz, BC. The rigid and taciturn Reinhard, the long-suffering, artistic Margarete, and their three children—Peter, Heidi, and Gutrun—struggle with the harsh conditions of farm life. The family is not helped by the attitude of Reinhard who is "a pessimist who'd come by his pessimism honestly" or by his firm distrust of "the English."

The text is structured, effectively, as a triptych. The first section, "Eating My Father's Island," details Peter's childhood in Agassiz in the 1950s and pivots around

his father's winning an island—or, as Peter sees it, an "unimpressive little pile of rocks in the ocean"—in a contest. The second section, "Renovating Heaven," finds Peter and his family in South Vancouver and charts Peter's increasingly critical relationship with the Mennonite tradition and his growing interest in writing as the rift between father and son deepens following the sudden death of Margarete. The final section "Toccata in 'D'" skillfully links two parallel strands, juxtaposing Reinhard and Margarete's courtship in the early 1940s with the adult Peter's visit to Germany in the 1970s. These two strands cohere into a final revelation that throws a new light upon the Niebuhrs's history, challenging Peter's perception of his parents and of past events.

As Peter finds himself perched between cultures and traditions so Schroeder pitches his novel—for the most part successfully—between apparent irreconcilables: humour and tragedy, past and present, fiction and autobiography, Old World and New World. This feels like a text that Schroeder has been working towards for sometime: indeed, a version of the "Toccata in 'D'" section was originally published as "a micro-novel" in 1984. But, despite the familiarity of some aspects of the plot, the perceptions here ring fresh and true. It is a deeply felt, funny, moving, and rewarding book.

Like *Renovating Heaven*, Elizabeth Kelly's debut novel *Apologize, Apologize!* also charts the growing pains of a young male protagonist, in this case Corrie Flanagan, the sensible first-born son of a wealthy, wildly eccentric Massachusetts family. But Kelly's rambunctious, excessive Flanagan clan could not be further removed from Schroeder's protagonists. Possessed of a crazy, dog-loving, Marxist mother, a drunken, philandering charmer of a father, and a media mogul grandfather known as The Falcon, the quieter Corrie struggles to assert his identity, particularly in relation to that of his beloved, irrepressible younger brother Bingo. In a bold move, Kelly dispatches two of her most vivid characters halfway through the novel, leaving the guilt-stricken Collie to come to terms with the emotional fallout, try out a succession of professions, and finally stumble his way towards something like redemption.

Despite effective and amusing set-piece scenes, the overall tone of *Apologize, Apologize!* tends towards the glib, its emphasis on familial conflict and dysfunction feeling increasingly predictable. Kelly's characters are drawn with broad brushstrokes and emerge more as collections of quirks and eccentricities than fully developed protagonists. The novel's dialogue, though lively, is only intermittently convincing, and there is an over-fondness for simile and hyperbole throughout. Corrie's experiences and encounters often seem to bear less emotional weight than they might: extraneous excursions to El Salvador and Ireland towards the end of the novel are particularly weak. Canadian readers may also question Kelly's decision to set the action entirely in the US; Canada figures here only in a couple of very brief references. The novel's primary intertexts and inspirations would seem to come from American cinema: *The Royal Tennenbaums*, *Igby Goes Down*, *What About Bob?*, *Running With Scissors* and *Grey Gardens* are just some of the films that Kelly appears to be channelling here. *Apologize, Apologize!* is fitfully entertaining but suggests a novel written with too firm an eye on being optioned.

In contrast, the tone of Roberta Rees's story sequence *Long After Fathers* is exceedingly literary—sometimes to a fault. Located in Calgary and the Crowsnest Pass, and evoking Toni Morrison's work in both structure and elliptical, poetic prose style, the fifteen interconnected stories here are arranged into sections named after four female protagonists: Jessie, Rosalind,

Solange, and Olive. Of these, the first section, "Jessie," is the strongest, its first story, "Lucky Strike" opening with a vividly rendered scene of familial misery and its second, "Iodine," pivoting upon an incident of savage violence which reverberates throughout the rest of the collection.

These stories emphasize familial legacy and inheritance in intriguing and sometimes oblique ways. In the second section, Jessie's daughter Rosalind takes over the narrative, imagining her way into her mother's memories as she forges her own identity as a writer. "Past, present and future. I melt them all together," Rosalind states, her words offering a metafictional comment on the collection's narrative strategies.

Rees conjures a highly evocative sense of place throughout, has a feel for the details of working-class life, and controls a range of voices with assurance and skill. Some sections are over-written and the collection's insistent play with perspective and form sometimes distances the reader from the characters in a frustrating way. But, at its best, *Long After Fathers* is a rich, unsentimental, and compelling work that powerfully and perceptively explores family as a site of both recurrent damage and potential redemption.

This City Is Made for Walking

Mary Soderstrom

The Walkable City: From Haussmann's Boulevards to Jane Jacobs' Streets and Beyond. Véhicule $39.00

Reviewed by Maia Joseph

In *The Walkable City*, Mary Soderstrom takes the pulse and considers the future of the peripatetic life in urban and suburban communities. Describing walking as "the quintessential human activity" and recalling that, until a little over a century ago, walkability was an integral feature of cities, Soderstrom explores the decline and re-emergence of walkability in community planning and development. Focusing especially on environmental sustainability, and also on issues such as social interaction, health, and neighbourhood safety, Soderstrom makes the case for walkability as a key to better communities, and discusses various approaches to enhancing this aspect of today's cities.

Soderstrom would readily admit that her general argument in favour of pedestrian-friendly communities is not a new one: walkability is a firmly established principle of sustainability-oriented planning. However, the book serves as a fine, up-to-date introduction to this still-pertinent issue. Soderstrom's judiciously selective overview of the history of walking and its changing place in urban life (from Roman settlements to nineteenth-century Paris to post-war North American suburbs to newer master-planned communities in Brazil and Singapore) makes engaging, informative reading for the generalist or readers new to the topic. (I would, however, recommend Rebecca Solnit's *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* for a more expansive overview of walking's aesthetic, philosophical, and political dimensions. Solnit also draws more extensively on literary treatments of walking, though Soderstrom does enhance her discussion of Paris with references to literary texts.)

The Walkable City includes fairly informal but illuminating case studies, covering both successful communities as well as those that "got it wrong" in terms of planning for pedestrian activity. The book features a number of Canadian examples, including Montreal, North Vancouver, Don Mills and Vaughan, Ontario, and of course Jane Jacobs' adopted city, Toronto.

One of the most interesting aspects of *The Walkable City* is the conversation that Soderstrom imagines between Jacobs—whose advocacy of walkable communities in *The Death and Life of Great American*

Cities and subsequent writings inspired the livability and sustainability planning movements—and Baron Georges-Eugène Haussmann, who famously spearheaded the extensive mid-nineteenth-century reorganization of Paris. Jacobs and the Baron, Soderstrom admits, make "a rather odd couple": while the Baron caused the displacement of thousands of residents in the process of creating his Paris "of broad boulevards and grand views," Jacobs (a staunch critic of neighbourhood razing in the name of urban "renewal" in the United States and Canada) favoured piecemeal development and slower, more organic change that would not disrupt communities. But Soderstrom is interested in the tension between the Baron's and Jacobs' points of view. In her ensuing discussions of walkability planning strategies and examples, she tends to favour Jacobs' planning principles, but also looks to exemplary instances of master planning for ideas that could help transform North America's decidedly unwalkable cities. Planning for more pedestrian-friendly communities, she suggests, will require both grand visions and careful attention at the human scale.

In My Fashion

David Staines, ed.
The Letters of Stephen Leacock. Oxford UP $45

Reviewed by Coral Ann Howells

David Staines's superb edition of Stephen Leacock's letters contains a portrait by Yousuf Karsh of the elderly author at his desk in his home at Orillia, caught in characteristic pose: "I have as I say been *writing writing*." This staged image from the early 1940s represents an iconic figure of masculine authority, though Leacock's smile as he looks up from his cluttered desk gives the portrait a disarming informality. Karsh's photograph catches the many-sidedness of Leacock: "Humanist and humorist, educator and economist, professor and pundit" as Staines describes him, and these eight hundred letters, many never published before, amplify that single image into a story of the man's professional and private life. The letters span the whole of Leacock's career as Chair of the Department of Political Science and Economics at McGill for thirty years, as writer and popular lecturer, ending only on the day he went into hospital for his last operation. There are business letters to his publishers and magazine editors, letters on management of his Orillia farm, letters to family, friends, McGill colleagues and literary acquaintances, together with a miscellaneous selection including one to the Brockville magistrate expostulating over a traffic fine. Just as Leacock wrote across many genres, from humour and satire to political science, economics, social policy, education, and literary criticism, so his letters reflect that breadth of reference.

The challenge of researching and editing this vast mass of material has been met admirably by Staines, who worked for fifteen years on the project, collaborating with Barbara Nimmo, Leacock's niece and literary executor, till her death in 1993. Names of correspondents are precisely annotated, the index contains a complete list of Leacock's major and minor works, and the contextualising overviews are extremely helpful. This volume is more than a scholarly edition of the letters; it is also a literary biography. It is arranged with considerable narrative flair in ten chronological chapters of selected letters, prefaced by Staines' s introductory commentaries which highlight important events in Leacock's life and his central claim to international celebrity as a humorist, a design very similar to Leacock's own book, *The Greatest Pages of Charles Dickens* (1934).

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the letters is their revelation of Leacock's personality and his talent for writing to the moment, so that his letters read like good conversation. Typically for its time

Leacock's professional world was an exclusively masculine one and his tone, genial and direct, might be described as clubbable. His voluminous correspondence with publishers provides many instances of his "clearness in our business relations" and of his energetic engagement with the project at hand. "Do Rush the book and boom it" (all doubly underlined) is a typical exhortation, and to Thomas B. Costain at Doubleday while awaiting publication of *Montreal, Seaport and City* (1942) he writes enthusiastically about his next book: "(Our book, READ IT WITH ME) . . . I am at it, absorbed in it . . . but with various points to discuss." Leacock's negotiations over book contracts and increasingly complex copyright arrangements involving Canada, the United States and Britain provide valuable insights into colonial publishing history.

It is, however, in his informal correspondence with family and friends that the Leacock of *Sunshine Sketches* is most evident, particularly in the travel letters written during his three extensive lecture tours—one across the Empire in 1907-08 to promote imperial development and trade ("I am an Imperialist because I will not be a Colonial"), one to England and Scotland 1921, and on his retirement from McGill in 1936 a final tour across Western Canada where he lectured often twice a day on topics from Social Credit to "educational and literary things." "Wonderful success—all records broken, but it's hard," he wrote to his niece Barbara, and on returning to Montreal he decided to give up on public lecturing—but not on writing. Honoured by the Royal Society of Canada with the Lorne Pierce Medal in 1937 and winning the Governor General's Award for the book about his Western tour in 1938, Leacock, now in his early 70s, continued to produce a stream of books and articles, with no less than five books published in 1942-43. There is seldom a word about his failing health even in his detailed domestic letters to his niece and his close friend and research secretary Mrs Herbert T. Davis, for Leacock was extremely reticent about his private feelings. Even at the end of 1943 when finishing *While There Is Time: The Case Against Social Catastrophe*, he was still writing to publishers and magazine editors planning more new projects. But this was Leacock's end game, played "in my own way and fashion"; he died of cancer early in 1944. Staines's monumental volume is a fitting tribute to a significant figure in English-Canadian cultural history.

The Full Circle

Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, Madeleine Dion Stout, and Eric Guimond, eds.
Restoring the Balance: First Nations Women, Community, and Culture. U of Manitoba P $27.95

Reviewed by Madelaine Jacobs

By merging indigenous principles of communication with constructive academic norms, *Restoring the Balance: First Nations Women, Community, and Culture* transcends its inert print to serve as an active space of knowledge sharing and cultural continuity. Editors Madeleine Dion Stout and Eric Guimond dedicate *Restoring the Balance* as a posthumous continuation of the reconciliatory work of fellow editor, Gail Guthrie Valaskakis. The true resilience of First Nations women is made manifest when the authors use frank analysis of sensitive realities to orient the present and realize positive futures.

The diversity of First Nations within territories now claimed by Canada contributes to the authors distinct perspectives as they focus on women's contributions to community development despite the social, spatial, and legal controls of colonialism. As accomplished women who have overcome discrimination to embark on reforms, the contributors are eminently qualified to write essays within the themes of historic

trauma, intellectual and social movement, health and healing, and arts, culture, and language.

Undeterred by complexity, a unity of purpose guides *Restoring the Balance*. Cynthia C. Wesley-Esquimaux establishes clear principles that flow throughout the volume in "Trauma to Resilience: Notes on Decolonization." Wesley-Esquimaux articulates a major premise of historic trauma: as colonial efforts excised Aboriginal women from central roles, communities were divided, destabilized, and became more violent. Colonialism has on-going repercussions for First Nations people for whom the "loss of their cultural identity was not an abrupt event, but continued in one form or another through centuries of pain and suffering, and so they were never able to reach a full stage of recovery." Women now orienting to balanced First Nations ways of life improve the well-being of the entire community.

Using carefully contextualized statistical measures to meet the standard set by Wesley-Esquimaux, Cleo Big Eagle and Eric Guimond demonstrate the vital role that First Nations women play in sustaining burgeoning Aboriginal-identifying populations in "Contributions That Count: First Nations Women and Demography." Yvonne Boyer's "First Nations Women's Contributions to Culture and Community through Canadian Law" speaks about the important ways that First Nations women are changing the legislation that negatively defined and criminalized them. "Leading by Action: Female Chiefs and the Political Landscape" is Kim Anderson's tribute to impressive female leaders. Jo-ann Archibald's "Creating an Indigenous Intellectual Movement at Canadian Universities: The Stories of Five First Nations Female Academics" honours the educational attainment of women in a field that was once antithetical to recognized status under the *Indian Act*. Emma LaRocque's "Reflections on Cultural Continuity through Aboriginal Women's Writings" situates the literary work of First Nations women. The incredible "Sisters in Spirit" campaign against the violence reflected in high numbers of missing and murdered Aboriginal women is at the centre of Anita Olsen Harper's chapter. The authors identify the "everyday" racism in Canada against all Aboriginal people as the crux of the challenge. Marlene Brant Castellano's "Heart of the Nations: Women's Contribution to Community Healing" calls for traditional values to be translated into actual opportunities for Aboriginal women to engage in public discourse. "A Relational Approach to Cultural Competence" is Gaye Hanson's practical evaluation of the best way to promote cultural competence. Hanson recognizes that classroom teaching does not result in true cultural competence. Nevertheless, a formal pedagogical setting can provide a preparatory background for life experiences that integrate cultural competence into individual lives. Viviane Gray "A Culture of Art: Profiles of Contemporary First Nations Women Artists" is a thought-provoking examination of women as First Nations art and artists. Sherry Farrell Racette offers a nuanced response to historical theft and museum representation in "Looking for Stories and Unbroken Threads: Museum Artifacts as Women's History and Cultural Legacy." Completing *Restoring the Balance* with "The Role of First Nations Women in Language Continuity and Transition," Mary Jane Norris links the circumstances of Aboriginal women to the critical cultural transmission of language.

The chapters of *Restoring the Balance* are rich and well-written enough to stand on their own as compelling educational tools on their respective topics. Taken together, the constituent parts of *Restoring the Balance* comprise stimulating sustenance with a specific analytical mandate that opens up possibilities rather than shutting wider relationships out. While maintaining

a strong rationale for celebrating the particular roles and meanings associated with women, masculine gender roles are respectfully treated as essential to community balance. In this way, *Restoring the Balance* defeats what Wesley-Esquimaux discerns as colonialism's major restriction on the physical and metaphorical social movement of Aboriginal persons. Through their example, the contributing authors of *Restoring the Balance* demonstrate that intellectual freedom can be judiciously employed to produce valuable work that is simultaneously academic and activist.

Grasping Ondaatje

Joan Elizabeth von Memerty
Michael Ondaatje: Distance, Clarity and Ghosts. An Analysis of Ondaatje's Writing Techniques Against a Background of War and Buddhist Philosophy. VDM $97.42

Lee Spinks
Michael Ondaatje (Contemporary World Writers). Manchester UP $22.95

Reviewed by Sofie De Smyter

It is not given to every author to see the volume of his works surpassed by the amount of critical attention devoted to them, but it is safe to say that Michael Ondaatje was already familiar with the uncanny nature of scholarly fame well before the publication of Lee Spinks' and Joan Elizabeth von Memerty's recent monographs. Although they take the same author as their subject, Spinks and Von Memerty approach their field of research from widely divergent angles. Whereas Von Memerty's publication mainly focuses on *Anil's Ghost* (2000) and *Handwriting* (1998), Spinks' much more wide-ranging study aims to be "the fullest account of Ondaatje's work to date" and this especially "for students and readers coming to his work for the first time." The fact that *Distance, Clarity and Ghosts* is a published master's thesis and *Michael Ondaatje* a volume in Manchester University Press's *Contemporary World Writers* series explains many of their differences as well as their individual strengths and weaknesses.

Relying on notions from Buddhist philosophy as well as ideas of "clarity" and "distance," Von Memerty seeks to better comprehend the effect of Ondaatje's techniques of writing on his readers. Although the book's eight thematically oriented chapters offer occasional moments of insight, coherence is at times difficult to find, even between the paragraphs making up a single chapter. Some of the information provided is incorrect (both *Anil's Ghost* and *Handwriting* are wrongly dated; Sarath, one of the protagonists from *Anil's Ghost,* is continuously referred to as Sareth), and interpretations are sporadically based on mistaken attributions (an argument related to a character wearing a certain T-shirt, for instance, is based on the wrong character), or insufficiently motivated (the idea that Ananda may be a co-conspirator in Sarath's death may strike many readers of *Anil's Ghost* with surprise). Nevertheless, it seems justified to suggest that the book is more true to its small-scale promises than Spinks' monograph to several of the favourable expectations created on its back flap.

Admittedly, writing on Michael Ondaatje is never an easy undertaking, especially not in view of the complexity of the writer's oeuvre and the bulk of critical material devoted to it. Composing a study that takes this double difficulty into account, that is moreover easily digestible by newcomers to his works and caters to the editorial demands of the series it forms part of is even harder. Apart from some typographical errors, editorial oversights (the Cliftons are repeatedly referred to as the Cliffords), and other mistakes (*Anil's Ghost*'s Ananda was not commissioned to paint the eyes on the destroyed Buddha statue, but on a new one), the book's nine chapters, including a "Contexts and Intertexts" and "Critical

Overview and Conclusion," do offer their readers a well-informed introduction to Ondaatje and his major writings.

To some extent, however, the references to concepts used by, among others, Deleuze and Guattari, Hallward and Nietzsche (the subject of another monograph by Spinks) complicate the introductory aims of the monograph. Although these allusions fit in with the series' aim to offer, in addition to good introductions, "original theses," they often lack the explanatory context that is vital to readers not familiar with these terms. This want of a sound theoretical introduction makes some of the book's arguments hard to follow; some even seem far-fetched. The suggestion that *Coming Through Slaughter* is in "many ways an exemplary post-colonial work," for instance, is insufficiently substantiated. The references to critical theory repeatedly appear too unfocussed to enable substantially innovative readings of Ondaatje's oeuvre. Despite Spinks' often astute interpretations, readers well familiar with Ondaatje's works and their scholarly criticism might therefore find the back flap's presentation of the book as "an original reading of his writing which significantly revises conventional accounts of Ondaatje as a postmodern and/or postcolonial writer" slightly overblown. Connoisseurs of postcolonial and postmodern criticism may experience the same uneasiness with respect to the book's claim to make "a distinctive contribution to debates about postcolonial literature and the poetics of postmodernism."

What is more, although the scarcity of footnotes linking Spinks' interpretations to those of other Ondaatje critics may be partly attributed to editorial demands of brevity, the list of bibliographical references is astonishingly short, and the selection of critical articles is never convincingly motivated. It is a mystery as to why the critical overview is postponed until the final chapter where it moreover occupies only ten pages. More problematic is that no articles or monographs from the period 2006-2009, including Annick Hillger's insightful *Not Needing All the Words. Michael Ondaatje's Literature of Silence* (2006), were taken into account. The fact that the publication of a book does not happen overnight—Spinks' *Michael Ondaatje* was originally due in 2008—is not sufficient to justify this omission. A paragraph acknowledging the critic's knowledge of Hillger's monograph, and a multitude of equally influential articles, would have made the book's claim to be "the fullest account of Ondaatje's work to date" somewhat more acceptable. That Ondaatje's *Divisadero* (2007) was left out of consideration for a full-scale analysis is understandable, but, again, the fact that it does not receive even one sentence of attention is regrettable (*Anil's Ghost* is still referred to as "Ondaatje's most recent novel").

In short, although each of the books—and, partly due to its scope, especially Spinks'—adds to the critical efforts to grasp Michael Ondaatje's oeuvre, Von Memerty's lack of coherence and Spinks' inability to fulfil the promises made on the dust jacket may somewhat compromise their achievements, especially to readers very familiar with Ondaatje and his critical reception.

Probing Montgomery's Magic

Elizabeth Waterston
Magic Island: The Fictions of L.M. Montgomery.
Oxford University Press $24.95

Reviewed by Christa Zeller Thomas

Magic Island, intended as a companion piece to Mary Rubio's new biography of Montgomery, *The Gift of Wings* (2008), and marketed as the "first comprehensive 'reader's guide' to all of Montgomery's novels," highlights both Montgomery's talent for story-telling and her "dogged persistence" in producing more than twenty novels and hundreds of short stories as well as thousands of pages of diaries. Written in an informal and accessible style by Elizabeth Waterston, co-editor with Rubio of five volumes of Montgomery's journals, this handy and concise work considers the sources and influences of Montgomery's fiction. It would make a helpful reference manual to any student of Montgomery's work interested in exploring the author's complex personality and fictional subtexts.

As might be expected, Montgomery's journals are an important resource for Waterston's readings, both for the undisguised light they shed on the fiction and for their "oblique" effect on and reference to it. Scholars familiar with Montgomery will not be surprised to learn that the journals harbour "dark passions," but Waterston also relies on "an awareness of iconography and symbol" and on recent research on Montgomery's background to "decode" the novels while offering their "deconstruction." In her reading of *Anne of Ingleside*, for instance, Waterston observes an "unexpected growth of darkness in the aging writer's view of childhood," and notes that the fiction here "obliquely elucidates the life that the journal doesn't care to, or dare to report."

Given Waterston's format, which devotes approximately ten pages of discussion to each novel, the goal of "deconstruction" is, however, quite a tall order. The individual analyses cannot dig deeply and are therefore better suited for supplementing encounters with the fiction as a kind of introductory psychoanalytical interpretation. Some novels lend themselves better to this treatment than others. The discussion of *Mistress Pat*, a novel in which Waterston detects narrative fatigue on the author's part—Pat Gardiner's "interesting qualities wear thin," she writes, through reiteration—delivers a fine reading of the story against both the events in Montgomery's life and her journal entries, by showing Montgomery's struggle, and ambivalent results, in creating upbeat fiction while her own life was going awry. The analysis of *A Tangled Web*, by contrast, is somewhat heavy on plot summary, as Waterston admits at the end of the chapter that "the patterns in the web still appear mysterious," even after the journals are consulted.

Waterston highlights some important observations and trends in criticisms of Montgomery's work. She notes, for instance, that *Emily Climbs* suggests "the ambivalence of the author's concepts of womanhood [and] artistic calling," a topic increasingly explored in Montgomery's writing. As well, she remarks that *Rilla of Ingleside* is valued as "one of the very few records of war from a woman's perspective," and that *Anne of Windy Poplars*, as an "episodic novel," fits into "an important Canadian genre, the 'Sketch-Book' type of fictional local history popularized" by Leacock and Scott.

One drawback of the collection might be that it accords the same kind of treatment (in terms of the length and involvement of analysis) to all of Montgomery's novels. Any reader who knows only that Montgomery's fame rests on *Anne of Green Gables* would be hard pressed to determine which of her other works have more substance and lasting interest than others. This is not to

suggest that only selected Montgomery novels should be studied, but Waterston shies almost completely away from any value judgments. Some guidance here would be helpful, particularly for students less well-versed in Montgomery's work than Waterston is. Ultimately, of course, the "magic" of Montgomery's talent cannot be explained, and Waterston is quite right in pointing this out.

Performing CanLit Vernaculars

Our Mobile Cosmopolitan Pedagogies

Sneja Gunew

Having long been curious about the performative aspects of our profession, I am increasingly interested in analyzing the diasporic dimensions of our pedagogical practices. Both actually and virtually we move around the world constructing unexpected pathways and connections. Even if we do not have the means to physically travel we certainly all participate in the diasporic dissemination of our pedagogies. The extent to which these performative iterations circulate is not something examined as often as it should be. The question is how can we use this travelling (whether virtual or actual) to think more reflexively about our teaching of varieties of CanLit. To what degree can we think of our pedagogies as diasporic; what do we 'perform' and how does this resonate with proliferating debates on the new cosmopolitanism, sometimes re-named as 'vernacular' or 'critical' cosmopolitanism?

By vernacular or critical cosmopolitanism I am referring to debates that have attempted to move beyond the binary oppositions that have most recently been reinforced by such campaigns as the 'war on terror.' Cosmopolitan debates over the last decade have attempted to suggest that there are many regimes of knowledge, not in terms of infinitely relativistic values necessarily but certainly enmeshed in different belief systems (including those supposedly immune realms of science). Thus cosmopolitanism, in the sense of extending the term to the many groups and classes who have travelled and dispersed widely over the globe over the last century and more, offers exposure to these other ways of knowing—if there is a receptiveness to what they have to give. In Homi Bhabha's (possible) coinage of the phrase, the concept attempts to capture the "growing, global gulf between political citizenship, still largely negotiated in 'national' and statist terms, and cultural citizenship which is often community-centred, transnational, diasporic, hybrid" (Bhabha and Comaroff 25). Bhabha also associates this concept with minorities who don't necessarily wish to claim majoritarianism and whose defining impetus is that of translating across cultures in an economy marked by iteration rather than teleology (Bhabha). It is a direction that occurs as well in Paul Gilroy's desire for a cosmopolitanism that encompasses a new planetary consciousness whose roots he locates in Montesquieu's eighteenth-century satiric text *Persian Letters*. Gilroy calls the phenomenon a 'vulgar' or 'demotic' cosmopolitanism (74). Kwame Anthony Appiah's *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* situates his plea, in similar ways, for a cosmopolitanism that embraces contamination and fallibility, that is, precisely the opposite of instituting the earlier truth-claims associated with 'European' or 'Western' Enlightenment

subjectivity and modernity. Discrepant modernities are indeed the general contexts and vernacular cosmopolitanism is the direction of this model—which includes the marginalized and wretched of the earth. It is also articulated in Stuart Hall's plea for an "agnostic democratic process":

> We witness the situation of communities that are not simply isolated, atomistic individuals, nor are they well-bounded, singular, separated communities. We are in that open space that requires a kind of vernacular cosmopolitanism, that is to say a cosmopolitanism that is aware of the limitations of any one culture or any one identity and that is radically aware of its insufficiency in governing a wider society, but which nevertheless is not prepared to rescind its claims to the traces of difference, which makes its life important. (30)

These thoughts became linked with notions of performative pedagogy while I watched a lecture given in 2004 by Gayatri Spivak. Among the audience were members of the Subaltern Studies group; several performative moments occurred when Spivak was in conversation with them as another middle-class Bengali who had shared with them a political formation in the Calcutta/Kolkata of the fifties. Some of these interactions were also (presumably) in Bengali thus instantaneously designating insiders and outsiders. In the talk, Spivak situated herself as a teacher who does both high theory and a type of secular activism (this was at the height of the Hindu nationalist BJP movement) and admonished her audience to learn from the subaltern, including the not inconsiderable task of learning other languages. She situated herself as teaching at both ends of a pedagogical spectrum: in the rural schools of India and the classrooms of the Columbia University—the one paid for and enabled the other.

We don't all construct our pedagogies in this scrupulous and self-reflexive way but how might the process of naming a diasporic pedagogy unfold? The notion of itinerant teachers throws us back to the beginnings of the university and early technologies of teaching and learning as well as reminding us of the varied history of the vernacular in these processes. (Sheldon Pollock points out that the term 'vernacular' contains notions of the native and the Roman *verna* or house-born slave.) A reflexive pedagogy not only requires different models for diasporic intellectual work, but these also vary depending on where one is located on the spectrum of privilege. In contrast to Spivak and other international keynote speakers, young scholars who have moved to North America from elsewhere seeking to enter the tenure stream of privilege are pressured to learn the vernacular style. This ranges from current theoretical frameworks and categories, to what one could call a corporeal grammar, or, more popularly, 'body language.' For example, intonation, gesture, references to local sporting metaphors, serve to place one's peers and students within their comfort zone, thus lowering their resistance or skepticism when confronted by unfamiliar bodies. There needs to be as well, in this model, a kind of referencing of cultural stereotypes or of versions that elsewhere we have come to recognize as the mechanisms of orientalism. This last point is a complicated one to unpack and depends very much on the kind of body involved in the performance. If the body is coded as 'non-Western' then the expectations of being seen as a 'native informant' of non-Western truths (pedagogical, theoretical etc.) has to be balanced by the articulation of familiar North American idioms, including those of dress and address. Gender complicates these matters further. It is worth pointing out as well that diasporic scholars often possess greater awareness of being confronted by multiple audiences; this is a

well-understood dimension of being located in these interstices of the academy and of globalization.

If the body is coded as 'Western' but is transmitting or demonstrating knowledge of non-Western cultures then there is an expectation of proof that one has the *Einfühlung* (a term that can be translated as 'empathy' but carries the sense of being able to permeate another's being) for the other culture. (I was reconnected with the subtleties of my own mother-tongue, German, at a workshop, "Varieties of Empathy in Science, Art and Culture" where the term 'empathy' was derived from its original German *Einfühlung* and its embedding in nineteenth-century German aestheticism.) To give an example, part of the skill set of these diasporic scholars involves demonstrating their knowledge of other languages; the term *Sprachgefühl* has an interestingly ambiguous translation that captures some of the contradictions involved (Ross King alerted me to the frequency that this term appears in translation studies). Its literal translation is 'feeling for' or 'of' language. On the one hand it can be seen to reside within the language, a kind of linguistic ecology that provides an organic dynamic for a vernacular language. On the other hand it can be located within the speaker, and refer to an understanding of the many local dimensions and inflections of a linguistic system. Thus it can be defined as inherent within the language, a buried key to its knowledge, or as a demonstrable skill to be displayed by the speaker. Both are difficult to quantify but the concept undeniably inhabits the pedagogical domain. In the case of Western aspirants to non-Western knowledge ('wannabes' in a different parlance) there are certainly tried and tested repertoires for 'exposing' their limitations (from charges of appropriation to the dismissive label 'political correctness'), but on the other hand, if we invoke the mechanisms of the new cosmopolitanism, then perhaps the derogatory inflections of this phenomenon could usefully be revisited.

Negotiating this terrain in terms of a comparativist diasporic pedagogy is tricky to say the least as one walks the tightrope between 'wannabe' and 'native informant,' between the metaphysical dimension that inheres in terms such as *Sprachgefühl*, *Einfühlung*, etc. and a pragmatic attempt to grapple with differences and apparent incommensurabilities. While the recent vigilance concerning the appropriation of subaltern knowledge is an important safeguard against the proliferation of neo-colonialisms, we also need to recognize that the desire to know, to feel another culture in all its complexities is not in itself inevitably a sign of colonial impulses or of touristic consumerism (Gunew). The problems arise when people prematurely claim expertise in this terrain or displace subaltern knowledges. In some ways, the terms of engagement with cultures that are not visceral to one's subject formation are encountered every day in settler cultures—whether it be with dimensions of indigeneity or of 'ethnicity.' Our diasporic pedagogical performances may be usefully harnessed to enable this project to be more scrupulously reflexive.

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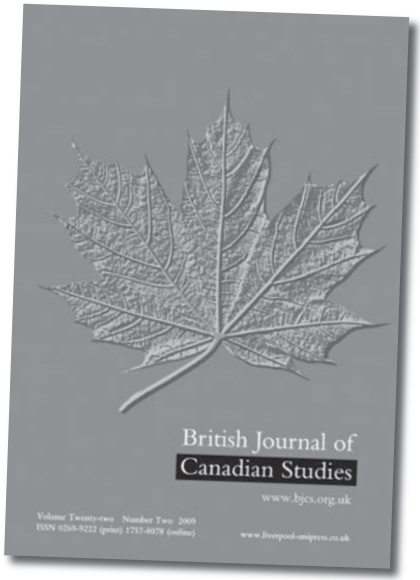

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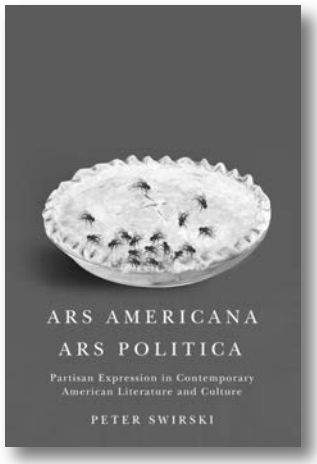

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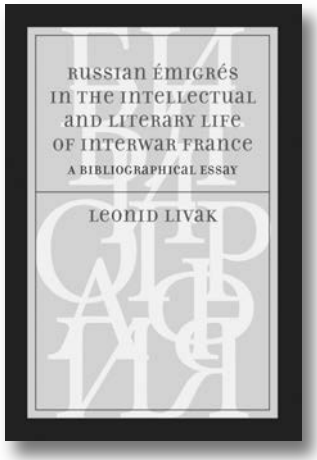

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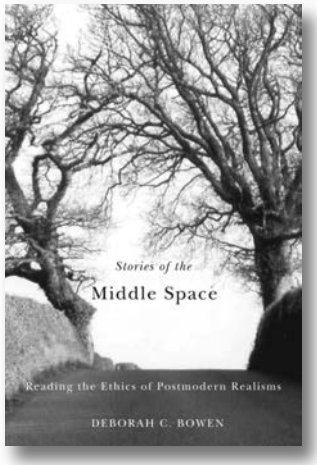

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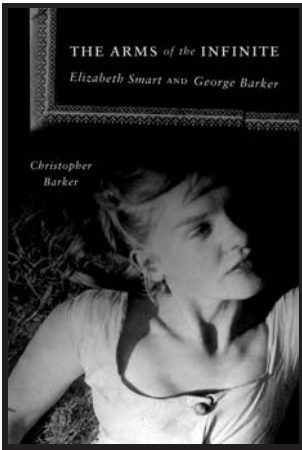

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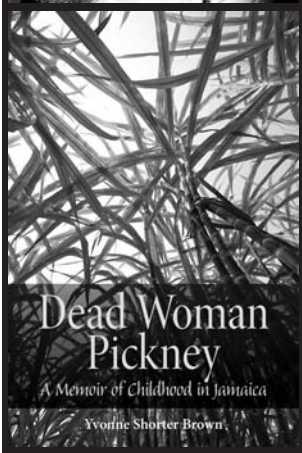

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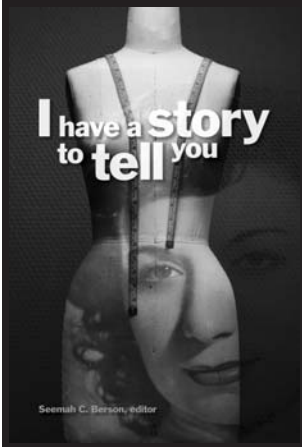

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