

A Quarterly of Criticism and Review

Number 204, Spring 2010, 50th Anniversary Interventions
Published by The University of British Columbia, Vancouver

Editor: Margery Fee

Associate Editors: Laura Moss (Reviews), Glenn Deer (Reviews), Larissa Lai (Poetry), Réjean Beaudoin (Francophone Writing), Judy Brown (Reviews)

Past Editors: George Woodcock (1959–1977), W.H. New (1977–1995),
Eva-Marie Kröller (1995–2003), Laurie Ricou (2003–2007)

Editorial Board

Heinz Antor *University of Cologne*
Alison Calder *University of Manitoba*
Kristina Fagan *University of Saskatchewan*
Janice Fiamengo *University of Ottawa*
Carole Gerson *Simon Fraser University*
Helen Gilbert *University of London*
Susan Gingell *University of Saskatchewan*
Faye Hammill *University of Strathclyde*
Paul Hjartarson *University of Alberta*
Coral Ann Howells *University of Reading*
Smaro Kamboureli *University of Guelph*
Jon Kertzer *University of Calgary*
Ric Knowles *University of Guelph*
Louise Ladouceur *University of Alberta*
Patricia Merivale *University of British Columbia*
Judit Molnár *University of Debrecen*
Maureen Moynagh *St. Francis Xavier University*
Reingard Nischik *University of Constance*
Ian Rae *King's University College*
Julie Rak *University of Alberta*
Roxanne Rimstead *Université de Sherbrooke*
Sherry Simon *Concordia University*
Patricia Smart *Carleton University*
David Staines *University of Ottawa*
Cynthia Sugars *University of Ottawa*
Neil ten Kortenaar *University of Toronto*
Marie Vautier *University of Victoria*
Gillian Whitlock *University of Queensland*
David Williams *University of Manitoba*
Mark Williams *Victoria University, New Zealand*

Editorial

Margery Fee

Past, Present, and Future

6

Articles

Ching Selao

Les mots/ maux de l'exil/ ex-île. Les romans de
Marie-Célie Agnant

11

Michel Nareau

La nation à l'épreuve d'un récit métis. Ouvrir le Québec
par le biais hispano-américain dans l'œuvre de
Francine Noël

27

Articles, *continued*

Bart Vautour

From Transnational Politics to National Modernist Poetics:
Spanish Civil War Poetry in *New Frontier* 44

Josée Vincent and Eli MacLaren

Book Policies and Copyright in Canada and Quebec:
Defending National Cultures 63

Sarah Krotz

Shadows of Indian Title: The Territorial Underpinnings
of "The Height of Land" 85

Poems

<i>Paul William Zits</i>	9	<i>Jesse Patrick Ferguson</i>	61
<i>Marie Carrière</i>	26	<i>M.W. Field</i>	83
<i>Sharanpai Ruprai</i>	43	<i>Patricia Young</i>	102

Interventions

<i>Laura Moss</i>	103	<i>Ian Rae</i>	134
<i>Herb Wylie</i>	108	<i>Larissa Lai</i>	137
<i>Carrie Dawson</i>	110	<i>Christl Verduyn</i>	140
<i>Alison Calder</i>	113	<i>Lily Cho</i>	142
<i>Rita Wong</i>	115	<i>Christopher Lee</i>	144
<i>Susie O'Brien</i>	118	<i>Roxanne Rimstead</i>	146
<i>Sophie McCall</i>	121	<i>Winfried Siemerling</i>	150
<i>Deena Rymhs</i>	123	<i>Marie Vautier</i>	152
<i>Daniel Coleman</i>	124	<i>Lorraine York</i>	156
<i>Susan Gingell</i>	127	<i>Linda Hutcheon</i>	157
<i>Deanna Reder</i>	131	<i>John Clement Ball</i>	160

Books in Review

Forthcoming book reviews are available at <http://www.canlit.ca>

Authors Reviewed

<i>Neil Aitken</i>	167	<i>Laurent Chabin</i>	174
<i>William Anselmi</i>	169	<i>Ann Charney</i>	175
<i>Kevin Bales</i>	182	<i>Marie Clements</i>	176
<i>Fiona Beckett</i>	170	<i>Gregory M. Cook</i>	169
<i>Jonathan Bennett</i>	189	<i>Becky Cornell</i>	182
<i>Joseph Boyden</i>	172	<i>David Elias</i>	189
<i>Ami Sands Brodoff</i>	175	<i>Deborah Ellis</i>	182
<i>Alice Burdick</i>	167	<i>Maureen FitzGerald</i>	186

<i>Louise Forsyth</i>	178	<i>Eleanor Ty</i>	194
<i>Daniel Francis</i>	179	<i>M.G. Vassanji</i>	194
<i>Pierre Gariépy</i>	174	<i>Christl Verduyn</i>	194
<i>Terry Gifford</i>	170	<i>Luise von Flotow</i>	196
<i>Helen Humphreys</i>	181	<i>David Watmough</i>	186
<i>Anosh Irani</i>	176	<i>Nathan Whitlock</i>	197
<i>Mark Anthony Jarman</i>	192	<i>Rachel Zolf</i>	167
<i>Phil Jenkins</i>	187		
<i>Kevin Kerr</i>	176	Reviewers	
<i>John Lorinc</i>	182	<i>Ranbir K. Banwait</i>	194
<i>Christine Lowther</i>	179	<i>Jenny Bingold</i>	196
<i>Anand Mahadevan</i>	192	<i>Gordon Bölling</i>	172
<i>Ami McKay</i>	176	<i>Julie Cairnie</i>	197
<i>Donald W. McLeod</i>	186	<i>Caitlin Charman</i>	191
<i>George Murray</i>	167	<i>Paul Denham</i>	181
<i>Reingard M. Nischik</i>	196	<i>Mark Diotte</i>	179
<i>Sheree-Lee Olson</i>	191	<i>Neta Gordon</i>	189
<i>Christopher Plummer</i>	184	<i>Crystal Hurdle</i>	167
<i>Scott Rayter</i>	186	<i>Suzanne James</i>	182
<i>Tony Rees</i>	187	<i>Emily Johansen</i>	192
<i>Linda Rogers</i>	169	<i>Jessica Langston</i>	175
<i>Sarah Schulman</i>	189	<i>Vanessa Lent</i>	169
<i>Anita Sinner</i>	179	<i>Andrew Lesk</i>	186
<i>Patricia Jean Smith</i>	191	<i>Marlene Moser</i>	176
<i>Mary Soderstrom</i>	175	<i>Samuel Pane</i>	187
<i>Gaétan Soucy</i>	181	<i>Susan Rudy</i>	178
<i>Fred Stenson</i>	172	<i>Lisa Szabo</i>	170
<i>Paul S. Sunga</i>	192	<i>Jerry Wasserman</i>	184
<i>Joan Thomas</i>	181	<i>Kinga Zawada</i>	174

Canadian Literature, a peer-reviewed journal, welcomes original, unpublished submissions of articles, interviews, and other commentaries relating to writers and writing in Canada, and of previously unpublished poems by Canadian writers. The journal does not publish fiction.

Articles of approximately 6500 words (including Notes and Works Cited), double spaced, in 12-point font size, should be submitted in triplicate, with the author's name deleted from two copies, and addressed to The Editor, *Canadian Literature*, The University of British Columbia, Buchanan E158, 1866 Main Mall, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6T 1Z1. Submissions should include a brief biographical note (50 words), an abstract (150 words), and a self-addressed return envelope, either with Canadian stamps or accompanied by International Postal Reply Coupons. Submissions without SASE cannot be returned.

Articles should follow MLA guidelines for bibliographic format. All works accepted for publication must also be available electronically.

Canadian Literature, revue universitaire avec comités d'évaluation, reçoit des soumissions originales d'articles, d'entrevues et autres commentaires inédits portant sur les écrivains du Canada et sur leurs oeuvres, de même que des poèmes inédits d'auteurs canadiens. La revue ne publie aucune fiction narrative.

Les manuscrits, d'une longueur approximative de 6500 mots, doivent être soumis en trois exemplaires (dont deux anonymisés), adressés au directeur de *Canadian Literature*, The University of British Columbia, Buchanan E158, 1866 Main Mall, Vancouver, C.-B., Canada V6T 1Z1, et accompagnés d'une note biographique (50 mots), d'un résumé (150 mots), et d'une enveloppe de retour pré-adressée et pré-affranchie (timbrée ou munie de coupons-réponse internationaux), sans quoi ils ne pourront être retournés à leurs auteurs.

Les articles soumis doivent répondre aux exigences de forme bibliographique définies par la MLA. Tous les textes acceptés pour publication devront être fournis électroniquement.

Our website, canlit.ca

Cumulative index (canlit.ca/search)

All issue content can be searched by title, author, or full text; direct links to articles, book reviews, and poems where available.

Online store (canlit.ca/store)

Order subscriptions and back issues securely with credit card or Interac.

Archives (canlit.ca/archives)

Issues #1 to 155 are freely available online as are pre-print book reviews, including unpublished upcoming reviews, from issue 156 and onwards.

Online Exclusives

Online Exclusives is content not available in the journal. This includes our award-winning *CanLit Poets* poetry archive, Interviews with Canadian authors and scholars, and extensive databases of Canadian publishers and scholars.

Copyright © 2010 The University of British Columbia

Subject to the exception noted below, reproduction of the journal, or any part thereof, in any form, or transmission in any manner is strictly prohibited. Reproduction is only permitted for the purposes of research or private study in a manner that is consistent with the principle of fair dealing as stated in the Copyright Act (Canada).

GST R108161779

Publication of *Canadian Literature* is assisted by The University of British Columbia, the Faculty of Arts (UBC), and SSHRC. 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 is available from PROQUEST, GALE, and EBSCO Publishing. The journal is available in microfilm from University Microfilm International.

Publications Mail Agreement

NO. 40592543

Registration NO. 08647

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN
ADDRESSES TO

Canadian Literature

The University of British Columbia
Buchanan E158 - 1866 Main Mall,
Vancouver, BC
Canada V6T 1Z1

TELEPHONE: (604) 822-2780

FAX: (604) 827-4040

E-MAIL: Can.Lit@ubc.ca

<http://www.canlit.ca>

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

ISSN 0008-4360

Managing Editor: Donna Chin

Donna.Chin@ubc.ca

Production Staff: Matthew Gruman

Kevin Hung Te Tjia

Beth Veitch

Design: George Vaitkunas

Illustrations: George Kuthan

Printing: Hignell Printing Limited

Typefaces: Minion and Univers

Paper: recycled and acid-free

Past, Present, and Future

Margery Fee

We are still dining out on stories of the 50th *Canadian Literature* Anniversary Gala, which was a rich literary and intellectual feast. We have titled this issue after the interventions provided by many of those who came to our workshop. Laura Moss, who took the lead on this wonderful event, has more to say about these pieces below. However, suffice it to say here that we asked the participants to comment on the future both of the field of Canadian literature and the journal. They provided us with many specific suggestions on how the journal might meet the challenges to come. With the help of our Editorial Board (many of whom were present), we will consider all of this advice seriously.

It is gratifying to point out that one of the articles in this issue, Ching Sela's "Les mots/ maux de l'exil/ ex-île. Les romans de Marie-Célie Agnant," deals with an author promoted by Winfried Siemerling in his intervention as deserving more attention in English Canada. (This Haitian author's novel *Le livre d'Emma* (2001) has now been translated by Zipha Ellis as *The Book of Emma* (2006); some critical material is also available in English.) *Canadian Literature* has recently published articles that deal with several other Quebec Haitian authors, including Dany Laferrière, Emile Ollivier, and Gérard Etienne (see Amy J. Ransom's article in #203, for example). Indeed, many of our articles in French deal with writers from a variety of diasporas. Michel Nareau's article in this issue examines the influence of Latin American literature on Quebec literature through the writing of Francine Noël, for example. Another transcultural connection is made in Bart Vautour's account of how the Spanish Civil War impacted Canadian poetic modernism through

work published in *New Frontier* (1936-37). The problem is, as a couple of the interventions point out, that we publish these articles in French *or* English, although many of our readers are monolingual. We could do more to promote interaction between the “two solitudes” by translating some articles from French to English and vice versa (although this requires funding). Another article in this issue compares book publishing in Quebec and English Canada: a French version will appear elsewhere. Collaborations like the one between Josée Vincent and Eli MacLaren are another way to promote both comparative literary studies and cross-cultural understanding—and these articles are of interest to both literary communities and, indeed, almost require translation to fulfill their research mandate. The final article in this issue, by Sarah Krotz, deals with an area of cross-cultural misunderstanding, or perhaps even worse, incomprehension. “Shadows of Indian Title,” on Duncan Campbell Scott’s poem “The Height of Land,” shows how he failed to engage even with the idea of Aboriginal title by looking more closely at the actual landscape he travelled as a treaty commissioner and used as the setting of his poem.

The interventions, which follow the articles, focus on the future of the field and the journal; reading them piqued my curiosity about what’s happening in the present for the journal. Are we already in the future? I wondered. I made a quick survey of the last ten issues (194-203), which contain fifty-nine articles, nine in French. Given the increasing pressure to publish, it’s not surprising that there were so many graduate students (14) and post-doctoral fellows (5) among the authors, as well as tenure-stream assistants (11) and contract instructors (3). Twenty-five tenured authors (assistants, associates, senior lecturers, and full professors) also contributed. One article was by a writer. Special issues tend to skew any analysis of subject matter, although contemporary fiction certainly has the lead. Dionne Brand was the subject of three articles, and two were on what are variously referred to as graphic novels or comix. However, we also had articles on such past canonical figures as Margaret Laurence, L.M. Montgomery, Susanna Moodie, Réjean Ducharme, and Alfred Garneau. Our submissions are holding steady (since 2002 averaging ninety-two a year). For these ten issues, no clear story about how the canon might be changing emerges, perhaps because although *Canadian Literature* is an important site of critical activity, many more journals are publishing work on Canadian literature now than there were fifty years ago. And of course, the present is always a puzzle because we are immersed in it. The past, however, is yet another country, one whose terrain

always seems more manageable. The challenge of charting how *Canadian Literature* has represented Canadian literature over the years is one that requires more space than any editorial can provide, but I hope there is a graduate student out there with a talent for literary and institutional history willing to take it up.

50th Anniversary Acknowledgement



Canadian Literature is very grateful to have had the support of staff, volunteers, colleagues, sponsors and partners that made the 50th Anniversary Gala such a tremendous success.

50th Anniversary Committee

Laurie Ricou (Chair), Donna Chin, Margery Fee, Sherrill Grace, Laura Moss, John O'Brian, Jerry Wasserman

50th Anthology Committee

Eva-Marie Kröller, (Chair), W.H. New (Editor), Réjean Beaudoin, Donna Chin, Margery Fee, Susan Fisher, Iain Higgins, Laurie Ricou

Student Assistants

Sarah Banting, Denise Lee, Kelsea O'Connor, Laura Potter, Melanie Sanderson, Evgenia Todorova, Kevin Hung Te Tjia, Stephen Ullstrom, Jordan Wilson

Staff

Donna Chin, Matthew Gruman, Beth Veitch

Partners

UBC Faculty of Arts • UBC English Department
President's Office of UBC • Museum of Anthropology
UBC International Canadian Studies Centre

Sponsors

Chernoff Fine Art • UBC First Nations Studies Program
SFU English Department • Vancouver International Film Festival
UBC French, Hispanic & Italian Studies • UBC Opera Ensemble
UBC Creative Writing Program • UBC French Centre • Catriona Jeffries Gallery • the Estate of Roy Kiyooka

from the mouth of the sprach-machine,

in a hazy afternoon atmosphere with scarcely a breath of air stirring, but a day after a smart shower fell, the bedding of a dense fog in the morning with candles lighted to enable persons to transact their ordinary business, and with a rumbling of distant thunder and lightning visible in the early evening

pain, heat or perfume A complete set of natural teeth, beautifully mounted in gold Children may be trusted with impunity to the most careless hands Invalid's wheel chairs, spinal carriages, self-moving chairs Redness, tan, freckles, and other defects of the skin Heals chilblains Imparts a youthful roseate hue Papier mâché tea trays coffee urns Baths of all kinds, shower, hot, cold, vapour, plunging Loose teeth fastened without springs, clasps or wires Incorrodible, artificial, or natural teeth of surprising beauty applied without contents having been in the slightest degree injured A speedy sure cure for those painful annoyances without cutting or pain Paul's Every Man's Friend Tea-caddies, tea-trays, dish covers, magic strops Patent chest expander Botanic cream for the general improvement of the hair Eradicates all pimples, spots, and forks Gold horizontal watches Second-hand silver watches Shaving soap, tooth powder, wash cakes Fire-proof safes and boxes one of his patent fire-proof boxes taken redhot from the great fire at the Royal Exchange, after exposure to the flames for twelve hours, without it Is harmless Efficacy is astonishing Never failed in a single instance Invaluable in sick rooms, crowded assemblies, and warm climates Those who once use it will never be without it Handsome fringes and gimps A cottage to let Iron fenders, parlour fire-irons, with bright pan, knives stout, Crowley's Alton pale ales Fish and barrelled oysters punctually executed Novel article for the toilet Decidedly one of the most useful preparations ever offered to the public A little of it, twice a day Removes from perspiration the unpleasant odour that usually accompanies its bowels My Working Friend, The Mysteries of Paris, The Latin Governess, Farmer's Magazine, The Sportsman, Belle Assemblée Brett's brandies may now be obtained from respectable retailers in all parts of

London and the country Sealed pint and quart bottles direct from the wholesale establishment Order by post Reid's XXX or Buttoning, and comfort and neatness, without pressure Now admitted to be the most unique and best to eradicate either hard or soft corns In opposition to slang, vulgarity, and meanness Ventilating waterproof frock Mr Cockle's antibilious pills Cure for indigestion and liver complaints, Another most amusing novelty has just been added to the glaciarium Being altogether a matchless exhibition Free exhibition Teaching and encouraging the art of swimming To suit the views and the means of every class of insurers Affords convenience by drawing on without lacing The weather affects the tension of the Indian-rubber

Les mots/ maux de l'exil/ ex-île

Les romans de Marie-Célie Agnant

Dans son premier recueil de poèmes, *Métropolis Opéra*, Joël Des Rosiers avait mis de l'avant le terme « ex'îles » pour révéler l'influence marquante de la terre d'origine, l'inspiration puisée dans cet ailleurs ou, plus précisément, dans ces ailleurs vers lesquels il ne cessera de revenir par la poésie. À propos de l'importance de l'île natale dans la production haïtienne, le poète ajoutera, dans *Théories Caraïbes. Poétique du déracinement* : « L'exil s'y donne comme lieu de déterritorialisation, lieu de transgression, de plaisir où l'écriture soulève sans la désigner, le nom de l'île. » (1996 : 16) Bien que la phrase fasse ici référence à un auteur vivant en France, en l'occurrence Jean Métellus, elle décrit également la production « haïtano-qubécoise » dont parle aussi Des Rosiers dans quelques chapitres de cet essai. Alors que Joël Des Rosiers réinvente l'île dans l'exil par l'écriture poétique, Marie-Célie Agnant revisite le territoire de l'enfance, l'ex-île devenue à la fois réelle et imaginaire, désirée et rejetée, par la fiction romanesque. Qu'elle soit explicitement nommée, comme dans *La dot de Sara* ou dans *Un alligator nommé Rosa*, ou évoquée en tant qu'une des nombreuses îles des Caraïbes comme dans *Le livre d'Emma*¹, Haïti est en effet l'île qui hante l'œuvre de Marie-Célie Agnant. En exil et pourtant constamment plongés dans l'ex-île, ses personnages traduisent la « migrance » d'Émille Ollivier, néologisme forgé à partir des mots migration, souffrance, et vigilance, et qui renvoie à la position d'interrogations, à la fois douloureuse et privilégiée, inhérente à l'expérience exilique (Ollivier, *Passages* 119). Si Dany Laferrière a déclaré, dans la foulée des entretiens accordés pour la parution de son roman *Je suis un écrivain japonais*, dont le titre est un pied de nez à la critique universitaire, que le fait d'être

« un écrivain migrant dans les anthologies [l]e tue » (Desmeules 2008). Ollivier soulevait pour sa part cette question, après avoir mis en relief sa propre irritation et les pièges de « ghettoïsation » de l'épithète : « Mais à y regarder de plus près, l'écrivain-migrant ne présenterait-il pas quelque spécificité qui justifierait cette appellation? » (Ollivier, *Passages* 70-71)² À l'instar d'Ollivier qui voyait en l'hétérogénéité de son identité « un miroir et un stimulant » (Ollivier, *Passages* 119), Agnant revendique les identités multiples qui la traversent—« féministe, femme, négresse, haïtienne, québécoise, canadienne, humaine [rires] » (Proulx, “Breaking” 48)—, étant tout à fait consciente qu'elle n'écrit pas à partir de rien, de nulle part, et que l'écriture lui permet certes de sortir d'elle-même sans pour autant lui faire oublier ce qui la caractérise.

Se plaçant sous le signe de l'exil doux et amer—plus doux qu'amer dans *La dot de Sara* et plus amer que doux dans *Le livre d'Emma* et dans *Un alligator nommé Rosa*—, les romans d'Agnant explorent les maux à travers les mots de l'île inoubliable, de ce pays natal dont il est difficile, voire impossible de faire le deuil. En cela, ils rejoignent l'œuvre d'écrivains haïtiens de l'exil présentés par Jean Jonassaint dans *Le pouvoir des mots, les maux du pouvoir*, mais s'en distinguent dans la mesure où le « pouvoir des mots » est principalement et intimement lié à ce que Maryse Condé a étudié comme « la parole des femmes », ce « triste chant de la solitude féminine qui s'élève » au contact de l'écriture (91). Sans totalement rompre avec une tradition littéraire « haïtiano-québécoise » dans laquelle les figures féminines abondent, l'œuvre d'Agnant est toutefois plus engagée et plus fidèle à son désir d'exprimer cette parole née d'un double silence, d'une double aliénation. En privilégiant le point de vue des femmes noires, Agnant déplace le pouvoir des mots vers une minorité migrante dont la parole reste à naître et qui, de fait, prend naissance dans chaque roman. Dans *La dot de Sara*, qui tourne autour de l'immigration vue à travers plusieurs générations de femmes, l'héritage de l'aïeule Aïda est transmis par la voix douce, maternelle et par moments ironique de Marianna, tandis que la transmission d'une mémoire douloureuse, à la fois individuelle et collective, se fait plus brutalement dans *Le livre d'Emma* et dans *Un alligator nommé Rosa*, qui abordent respectivement les thèmes de la folie liée à la malédiction venue des bateaux négriers et de la dictature des « reines-choches³ ». Ces deux derniers romans soulignent non seulement la difficulté de faire le deuil de l'ex-île, et ce, que les personnages se retrouvent au Québec ou en France, mais aussi l'impossibilité de guérir des maux sans le souffle des mots. Mutilée, bafouée, meurtrie, la mémoire est précisément ce qui empêche et permet d'envisager le deuil, sorte de double mouvement, presque paradoxal,

où le désir de deuil est confronté au désir de mémoire qui le repousse et l'attire en même temps. Dans ce corps à corps inévitable, le désir de mémoire, plus vif, plus impérieux, l'emporte sur le désir de deuil sans jamais l'anéantir puisque l'un anime l'autre, afin de contrer la pétrification de l'oubli, la transformation d'une mémoire fragile en un « silence comme le sang », pour emprunter le titre du recueil de nouvelles d'Agnant, pareillement habité par la nécessité de dire, malgré les lacunes, tant le silence étouffe⁴.

Les parenthèses de l'exil

Le désir de mémoire et le désir de parole ne peuvent que difficilement être comblés, car comment garder en mémoire l'inimaginable, comment parler, comment « *paroler* », pour reprendre un terme cher à Patrick Chamoiseau, à partir de l'indicible? Chez Agnant, la quête des mots ne cesse de se heurter à un refus, comme s'il était impossible de dire, d'exprimer avec justesse ou avec cohérence les maux dont souffrent les âmes meurtries de ses romans, si bien que la quête doit nécessairement passer par la conquête et la reconquête des mots. Il est vrai que dans *La dot de Sara*, la parole ne frôle ni la « folie raisonnée » d'Emma ni le « délire hallucinatoire » (*Rosa* 113) d'Antoine dans *Un alligator nommé Rosa*, puisque le récit de Marianna ne verse ni dans la démence ni dans la colère, mais Marianna n'en représente pas moins celle qui ouvre la voie à la lignée de personnages qui transmettront les récits du « monde de femmes et de légendes » (*Sara* 67) des livres d'Agnant. Monde de femmes, monde de légendes, autant dire monde de l'ex-île qu'évoque Man Mia pour sa petite-fille, afin que Sara n'oublie pas ses origines, n'oublie pas qu'elle vient aussi de cette île qu'elle connaît sans vraiment la connaître. « Ce monde appartient aussi à Sara, c'est en quelque sorte ce que je lui laisse en héritage : mes souvenirs, poussières de vie et d'espérance. » (*Sara* 67) Traçant un itinéraire à partir de ces poussières de vie, Marianna parcourt le chemin de la nostalgie en compagnie de Sara qui, dès ses six ans, lui demandait de lui « raconter là-bas au temps longtemps » (*Sara* 26). Pour la grand-mère arrivée l'année de la naissance de sa petite-fille, selon le souhait de sa fille Giselle, Sara avait été, dès les premières années d'exil, « le baume pour panser la blessure de [s]on déracinement » (*Sara* 27). La parole n'a donc pas seulement pour fonction la transmission, elle est l'oxygène qui permet à Marianna de vivre son arrachement à la terre natale sans sombrer dans l'isolement, en créant un lien intergénérationnel et interculturel avec Sara.

Le rapport privilégié, maternel, que Man Mia entretient avec sa petite-fille la préserve du sentiment de vide que ressentent les autres femmes de son âge.

Si l'immigration apporte son lot de problèmes—douleur liée aux pertes du pays d'origine, de l'univers de l'enfance ou de la langue natale—, les obstacles que rencontrent les personnes qui immigreront à un âge avancé sont d'autant plus importants que leur intégration est le plus souvent improbable, voire impossible. La solitude de Marianna, quoique atténuée par la présence de Sara, n'est qu'une des nombreuses solitudes qui peuplent les rues de Montréal. Dans *La Brûlerie*, roman posthume paru en 2004, Émile Ollivier relate l'anonymat des Haïtiens montréalais dans la ville des quatre solitudes (francophone, anglophone, immigrante et noire) : « Ici, nous, on nous appelle : minorités visibles, mais paradoxalement on a l'impression d'être des spectres, des invisibles, tout juste après les nuages et le souffle du vent. » (16) Chez Agnant, une cinquième solitude s'ajoute à ces quatre solitudes, celle des femmes et, qui plus est, des femmes haïtiennes âgées.

Se retrouvant chaque samedi dans le sous-sol d'une église, ces femmes créent un espace où déverser leur déception face à leurs enfants qui les ignorent, leur colère face à la situation désastreuse de l'île et leur incompréhension devant une société à leurs yeux étrangère. Ce lieu où le présent n'existe que pour revenir en arrière, pour retourner dans le passé, partage avec la *Brûlerie* de la Côte-des-Neiges d'Ollivier, siège social du « Ministère de la Parole », l'ambiance nostalgique animée par des êtres déracinés en quête d'échanges, de mots pour apaiser leurs maux. Aux souvenirs de Marianna, légués à Sara comme une dot, se greffent aussi des souvenirs d'autres femmes exilées dont les rencontres hebdomadaires permettent « de ne pas oublier tout à fait le goût, le plaisir de parler, tout simplement, du temps longtemps » (*Sara* 105). Par-delà la volonté de garder vivant le goût de la parole, c'est le sentiment d'exister, d'appartenir à un groupe, à une communauté qui est bénéfique, dans une ville où chaque jour qui passe est un jour qui les éloigne de leurs enfants, « étrangers » pourtant sortis de leur ventre. Dans ce lieu de solidarité féminine où Raymond fait figure d'exception et d'intrus qui parle toujours à la place de son épouse, le plaisir de « papoter » (*Sara* 105) sur le passé révèle cependant le déchirement du présent, le tiraillement entre l'ici et l'ailleurs, le sentiment d'avoir perdu un pays, un imaginaire, sans en avoir retrouvé un autre. Si les notions d'« entre-deux » et de « hors-lieu » sont souvent valorisées dès qu'il est question des écritures migrantes, les personnages de *La dot de Sara* ne sont en rien emblématiques de cette valorisation. Dans *La Québécoise* de Régine Robin, devenu le « classique » des écritures migrantes, Montréal, ville plurielle et fragmentée, représentait un « hors-lieu » permettant « cet étrange bonheur montréalais vécu dans l'absence

d'harmonie » (Harel 152). Or, dans *La dot de Sara*, la métropole symbolise certes toujours ce lieu des mémoires éclatées, des cultures en friction, mais cette tension n'a rien d'euphorique⁵.

Quoiqu'elles admettent être plutôt bien au Québec dans la mesure où elles ont de quoi vivre et des soins lorsqu'elles tombent malades, les femmes dans le roman d'Agnant n'en ont pas moins l'impression de vivre coincées « entre deux parenthèses », d'avoir une vie insignifiante, de mettre leur vie *entre parenthèses*.

Autant de femmes, autant d'histoires, les mêmes histoires . . . Entre le tricot, nos parties de cartes très animées et les blagues où nous retrouvons un peu la saveur de nos pauses-galerie de là-bas, sans contraintes et sans retenue, c'est un même défilé d'existences entre deux parenthèses. Je me rends compte, confie Marianna, que j'étais loin d'être la seule à avoir remué sans cesse les entrailles de mon île pour "chercher la vie" (*Sara* 111-112).

En ressassant les histoires du « temps longtemps », en plongeant dans le « cocon » (*Sara* 106) des origines, ces femmes entament une quête infinie du pays natal en terre d'accueil. Ce faisant, elles nourrissent, malgré elles, l'« entre-deux » inconfortable, entre ici et là-bas, à la limite du réel. Cette façon de s'accrocher à des souvenirs ne les exclut pas davantage de la société québécoise mais les marginalise un peu plus; marginalisation palpable au sein même de leur famille, puisque leurs enfants tentent autant que faire se peut d'oublier l'ex-île et ses morts. Pourtant, la fille de Man Mia, Giselle, a beau demander à sa mère de cesser de ruminer les vieilles histoires, elle-même ne peut totalement échapper à l'île, comme le lui rappelle Sara en lui reprochant de la traiter comme l'on traite les jeunes filles dans « son pays » (*Sara* 131).

Essayer d'oublier l'ex-île comme tente de le faire Giselle dans son exil quotidien, de même essayer de revivre, de retrouver les saveurs et les odeurs du pays natal dans le sous-sol d'une église de Montréal, s'avèrent être des tentatives aussi nécessaires qu'utopiques pour les exilés de différentes générations. Des visages finiront par disparaître et le décès de Chimène, « l'âme » du club, mettra un terme à ces rendez-vous pour Marianna et précipitera son départ. Ayant joué auprès de sa petite-fille le rôle de « gendarmette » attitrée (*Sara* 163-170) pendant plusieurs années, voire de « tantine macoute » (*Sara* 13), Marianna sait qu'il est temps pour elle de rentrer après un « étrange voyage » de 20 ans (*Sara* 165). Son retour paraît d'abord ne pas en être un, puisqu'il s'accompagne de l'impression que son île ne reconnaît plus le bruit de ses pas, comme Ulysse revenant à Ithaque après 20 ans d'errances et dont la démarche sous son habit de vieillard n'est reconnue que par son chien Argos,

qui meurt après avoir revu son maître après 20 ans d'exil (Homère 249). Il est intéressant de remarquer que le narrateur de *Pays sans chapeau* de Dany Laferrière, tout comme Marianna, ne retournera en Haïti qu'après 20 ans d'exil⁶. Cependant, à la différence d'Ulysse qui finit par retrouver ses proches, sa femme Pénélope et son fils Télémaque, et du narrateur de *Pays sans chapeau* qui retrouve ses amis, sa tante et, surtout, sa mère (« ma mère, mon pays », écrit-il [150], le retour au pays natal de Marianna s'est fait au prix d'une séparation d'avec Sara et Giselle. L'absence de leur présence physique, d'un contact quotidien, jette de l'ombre sur le bonheur de retrouver l'odeur du café et la « pause-galerie » de l'île, « si différent[e] et si pareil[le] à autrefois » (Sara 172). Entre deux parenthèses, entre l'île natale et l'île de Montréal, Marianna a choisi celle où elle se sent le moins étrangère, où le bruit de ses pas est reconnu après quelques instants, même si cette parenthèse est l'expression d'un « tombeau à ciel ouvert » (Sara 169).

L'exil des îles

Alors que *La dot de Sara* met en scène un exil entre parenthèses où un retour est possible, *Le livre d'Emma* aborde le sujet de l'exil fondateur, originaire, exil de femmes forcées à traverser les mers, à s'arracher de la terre maternelle pour plonger dans un exil définitif, tragique, un exil duquel elles ne sont jamais revenues. Contrairement à *La dot de Sara* et à *Un alligator nommé Rosa*, l'île n'est pas ici clairement identifiée, le lieu de naissance d'Emma est une « île dans l'île » (*Emma* 19), portant l'appellation générale de Grand-Lagon et pouvant évoquer n'importe quelle île située quelque part dans les Caraïbes, comme si l'histoire d'Emma ne pouvait être confinée à l'histoire d'une seule île ou d'une seule femme. Néanmoins, bien que Haïti ne soit pas nommée, le renvoi aux hommes en noir portant tous des lunettes noires fait évidemment référence aux macoutes des Duvalier. En s'adressant à Flore, Emma raconte :

C'est cette même année de mes neuf ans que sont arrivés les hommes vêtus de noir. Armés de leurs fusils, le regard dissimulé derrière leurs cagoules, ils sillonnent l'île. Le pays couché ne se relèvera jamais, prédisent les vieux, puisque les femmes, pour nourrir leur marmaille, apprennent à vivre sur le dos, sous les bottes des hommes en noir. Moi, je me réjouis d'être aussi rachitique, malingre, la peau si foncée. Derrière leurs lunettes noires, les hommes en noir ne me voient pas (*Emma* 73).

Enfant invisible pour les hommes aux verres fumés, Emma était par ailleurs trop visible, trop noire pour son entourage qui la méprisait, à commencer par sa propre mère. Seule survivante de quintuplées sorties du corps de Fifie,

Emma paiera toute sa vie ce refus de mourir avec ses soeurs et sera perçue comme un « démon » ayant sucé tout le sang de ses jumelles pour pousser le cri de la vie. « [Fifie] ne parviendra jamais à me pardonner de m'être agrippée si violemment à ses entrailles, de tant chercher à me faire aimer, moi et ma peau bleue. » (*Emma* 72-73)

Vomie du ventre de sa mère comme l'île a été vomie par la mer, Emma Bratte, cette femme « à la fois folle et trop lucide » (*Emma* 33), est le personnage qui incarne le mieux l'île meurtrie dans l'œuvre d'Agnant. Le bleu de sa peau noire est à l'image du bleu intense de la mer où gisent les cadavres noirs d'une histoire enfouie dans les profondeurs des eaux. Malmenée par les vents violents, les cyclones et la colère de la mer, l'île ne semble animée que par les phénomènes naturels qui donnent vie à ce bout de terre peuplé de morts-vivants : « Tout ce bleu et toute son angoisse sont les seules et uniques choses vivantes à Grand-Lagon, où les vivants n'ont seulement que l'apparence de vivants. Je dis bien apparence, parce que, sur les bateaux, déjà, nous étions morts. » (*Emma* 22) Avant la « mort » d'Emma, « tuée » dans le déni de son existence dès sa venue au monde, ce sont les esclaves forcés à l'exil et à la traversée de l'océan qui ont été les premiers à incarner cette identité meurtrie au moment même de sa naissance. La violence contre les femmes à la peau couleur de nuit et dont Emma est la cible n'a, à l'instar des atrocités perpétrées au nom d'une hiérarchie de la couleur de l'épiderme, « de passé que le nom » (*Emma* 158). La haine que lui vouent les membres de sa famille, les autres adultes et les enfants est l'un des effets de la traite esclavagiste qui a associé le Noir à des épithètes diaboliques pour justifier ce crime, mais cette haine est également la conséquence d'une aliénation entretenue, nourrie par la société dominée. Fifie et Grazie ne supportent pas la peau très noire d'Emma, comme jadis elles avaient renié leur mère Rosa qui, en dépit de son « corps de nuit », a accouché de deux rejetons « couleur de feu » (*Emma* 114). Rappel inattendu de la tragique « scène primitive » de l'histoire des Antilles—le viol de l'esclave noire par le colon blanc—, la naissance de ces deux « filles dorées » a signé la chute de Rosa dont l'exclusion était similaire à celle d'Emma. Cette dernière est dénigrée à cause de la noirceur de sa peau, tandis que sa grand-mère l'a été à cause de la naissance de ses deux « chabines », mais toutes deux représentent une partie douloureuse de l'histoire de l'île : la traite négrière et le viol des femmes.

Rosa et Emma rappellent le continent noir qui ne cesse de hanter les îles, de les plonger dans un exil incompréhensible où la naissance d'un monde coïncide curieusement avec le meurtre d'un peuple. Incarnation du

continent d'où proviendrait la « malédiction » et métaphore de l'île meurtrie, Emma est la mère qui a tenté d'engloutir son enfant, par diverses tentatives d'avortement, avant sa venue au monde. Son ventre symbolise en ce sens le tombeau qui entoure Grand-Lagon, à l'image de la mer dont l'immensité est un lieu de naissance et de massacres. Au-delà de l'homonymie des mots « mer » et « mère », Édouard Glissant a souligné le caractère à la fois maternel et meurtrier de la mer des Caraïbes sur laquelle voguait la barque, « gouffre-matrice » des origines, « enceinte d'autant de morts que de vivants en sursis » (18). Joël Des Rosiers a, quant à lui, rappelé que l'étymologie du mot « nègre » ne signifiait pas « noir » mais « l'eau qui coule dans le sable », selon sa racine sémitique « ngr », d'où sont dérivés les noms des fleuves Niger et Niagara, ainsi que le verbe « nager » (*Théories* 193). Le poète précise également que « [l]es hommes et les femmes africains se sont donné ce nom très tôt par identification à la fécondité, au principe de l'eau⁷ » (Des Rosiers 1996 : 193). Le lien entre l'eau et la fécondité est partout dans *Le livre d'Emma*, tant la mer semble avoir engendré l'île et tout ce qui s'y trouve. D'après tante Grazie, le père d'Emma, « . . . comme tout ce qui est mauvais, serait venu par la mer, vomi par l'océan au cours d'une journée de furie . . . » (69). Être en dérive et « négresse » à la peau au reflet bleu, Emma elle-même est celle « qui coule », mais qui coule au fond d'un gouffre et qui rejette la fécondité. Si l'expérience du gouffre chez Glissant n'est pas que dévastatrice et meurtrière, dans la mesure où elle a aussi créé des liens inextricables, des liens certes entrelacés dans la brutalité et dans le sang mais qui n'en ont pas moins donné naissance à un peuple, à une réalité créole imprévisible (« La mémoire non sue de l'abîme a servi de limon pour ces métamorphoses » [19], écrit Glissant), le gouffre d'Emma est l'expression d'une maternité monstrueuse en rupture avec la (pro)création.

Ce personnage exilé de la vie et refusant à son tour de donner la vie représente ainsi l'île-femme du roman. Comme le note Françoise Naudillon à la suite de Joëlle Vitiello, le corps de la femme noire en tant que métaphore de l'île n'est pas en soi original, mais « il revient à ces deux auteures [Marie-Célie Agnant et Gisèle Pineau] de lui donner une dimension crue et réaliste dont l'obscénité aveugle » (Naudillon 83). Cette aveuglante obscénité se lit dans l'infanticide qu'aurait commis Emma, acte qui fait de son corps une « matrice dévoreuse de vie », un « ventre porteur de mort » (Naudillon 80). Le thème de l'infanticide, qui insiste sur le désespoir des femmes tuant leur enfant dans le but de leur épargner la mort dans la vie et de mettre fin à la malédiction, s'inscrit dans une tradition littéraire appartenant aux

littératures des îles autant qu'à celles de l'Amérique noire anglophone (Naudillon 77). L'obscène que souligne Emma est par ailleurs également lié à la difficulté de dire, de représenter la douleur, celle-ci devenant cet « ob-scène », cette « chose » hors de la scène de représentation. Emma, dans son projet de « traquer l'obscène que charrie la souffrance » (*Emma* 136), avoue du même souffle : « Je voudrais bien échapper à l'obscène, mais la souffrance et l'obscène vont souvent de pair. » (*Emma* 136) La souffrance des îles est difficilement représentable de par l'indécence inhérente à son histoire. À l'instar de l'île matrice d'un peuple nié dans son existence, la femme est plongée dans l'obscénité lorsqu'elle donne naissance à des enfants qu'elle étouffe aussitôt dans un geste indicible. Pour le Dr. MacLeod et pour les policiers québécois, Emma est un « objet » de folie, un objet échappant à la représentation et à l'interprétation psychiatrique. Elle est objet davantage que sujet, car l'obscène, dit-elle, la « dépouille » de son humanité (*Emma* 136). Emma vit dès lors un double exil à Montréal : un exil en terre étrangère où sa peau noire, si noire qu'elle en paraît bleue, contraste avec les « cheveux couleur de paille » et les « yeux faits pour tromper la nuit » de Flore (*Emma* 23); et un exil dans la folie, dans cet hôpital psychiatrique où on la garde enfermée. Or, cet exil dans l'asile n'est jamais totalement justifié, puisqu'à propos de l'infanticide, le roman laisse entendre plus qu'il n'affirme, Emma n'avouant ni ne désavouant son crime, se contentant de dire que Lola, tout comme elle, était condamnée dès sa naissance et qu'elle « devait mourir » (*Emma* 162).

La mort de Lola devient en quelque sorte le prétexte d'un récit de toutes les morts, le récit d'une histoire morte avant d'être racontée. Emma avoue à cet égard être remplie des silences de Fifie qu'elle porte en elle (*Emma* 56), avoir grandi dans « une absence totale de paroles » (*Emma* 57), d'où la nécessité de libérer ce trop-plein de silences. C'est en terre d'exil, pour laquelle elle a laissé son ex-île, qu'Emma trouve refuge dans l'écoute de Flore, une écoute qu'elle a recherchée toute sa vie, de son île natale jusque dans les couloirs de l'université de Bordeaux en passant par les rues du Sénégal et du Bénin (*Emma* 41). Au-delà de son métier de traductrice et d'interprète culturelle, Flore est le personnage par qui la transmission peut avoir lieu. Dans son ouvrage écrit en collaboration avec Shoshana Felman, *Testimony : Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, Dori Laub précise pertinemment que la transmission de la parole testimoniale n'est possible que dans la mesure où celle-ci est reçue par une écoute attentive (70-71). En cela, le rôle de Flore est crucial puisque si Emma avait trouvé refuge dans les paroles de Mattie, la cousine de sa grand-mère défunte, Rosa qui lui fit

comprendre l'importance de transmettre l'histoire de ses aïeules, c'est en Flore qu'elle trouve l'écoute qui lui permet de sortir du silence, de cet exil insoutenable. Dans *Le livre d'Emma*, l'écoute n'a rien de passif car le récit entendu, accueilli, doit par la suite être « porté » par Flore : « Il n'y avait pour [le Dr. MacLeod] rien d'anormal au fait que je me retrouve seule à porter le fardeau de son récit terrifiant, seule à l'écouter, à lui parler, à lui offrir mon amitié. » (*Emma* 160) La récurrence du verbe « porter » dans *Le livre d'Emma* n'est pas sans faire écho à l'expression « porter témoignage », de l'anglais « *bearing witness* », comme si la transmission du récit de ces femmes—d'Emma, de Fifie, de Rosa et de Kilima—était une façon de les porter comme on porte un enfant, de leur offrir une renaissance symbolique par le biais de la parole, une parole difficile à atteindre. « Parfois, disait Emma à Mattie, je me dis que peut-être les mots n'existent pas pour dire cette honte. C'est ça. Ce sont des choses pour lesquelles il n'existe pas de mots. » (*Emma* 155) Ces mots qui n'existent pas pour parler de ces histoires indicibles dont il faut pourtant parler, Flore et Emma les inventent et les réinventent, dans leur désir de s'approcher au plus près du dicible de cette honte, dans leur plongeon au cœur de « cet océan opaque de l'identité niée » (*Emma* 63)⁸. Cette (re)conquête des mots se fait graduellement, voire difficilement, car comme le mentionne Christiane Ndiaye dans son analyse du « langage du corps » dans la communication entre Flore et Emma : « . . . la "sagesse des femmes" de la lignée de Mattie et Emma conseille de se méfier des mots » (60).

Malgré cette méfiance, les deux personnages féminins plongent au cœur de l'océan opaque et ce voyage permet, d'une part, à Emma de se libérer des maux et des mots que même sa folie ne supportait plus et, d'autre part, à Flore de renaître. « Emma me met au monde, confie-t-elle au terme du roman, elle réinvente ma naissance. Elle est là pour mener à travers moi sa dernière lutte et se jouer du destin. » (*Emma* 167) Ayant aidé Emma à trouver les mots pour *narrer l'inénarrable*, Flore a désormais la responsabilité de faire vivre, à travers sa propre renaissance, ce récit mémoriel. C'est à cette condition seulement que le voyage du retour d'Emma aux sources de la malédiction, aux sources de ce monde où les femmes, les mères portent des enfants comme la mer porte des cadavres, aura un sens. La route empruntée par Emma vers le lieu de tous les commencements se présente comme un « retour », mais aussi comme une sorte de non-retour, ce départ vers les eaux maternelles, quoique salvateur, étant le prélude d'un corps à corps avec ses ancêtres déracinées, à jamais en exil entre les îles des Caraïbes et la Terre-Mère-Afrique.

Les maux de l'ex-île

Si Emma incarne l'île-femme porteuse de la mémoire de son ancêtre Kilima, mutilée et violée, la « reine cannibale » (*Rosa* 115) dans *Un alligator nommé Rosa* représente, quant à elle, l'île tyrannique et tortionnaire sous les Duvalier, devenue un « pays de la démemoire » (*Rosa* 215), selon les termes d'Antoine. Le lieu d'exil, dans ce dernier roman, n'est plus le Canada mais la « France des Droits de l'Homme » (*Rosa* 107) qui a accueilli à bras ouverts cette meurtrière fortunée au nom de fleur. Que les personnages se retrouvent en France plutôt qu'au Québec ne change rien au constant mouvement vers l'ex-île, à partir d'un lieu d'exil, qui semble caractériser l'imaginaire romanesque d'Agnant. En outre, la région au Sud de la France où l'ancienne chef duvaliériste s'est installée, à la végétation luxuriante, coincée entre la mer et la montagne, n'est pas sans évoquer la beauté de l'ex-île, donnant l'impression que Rosa essaie dans son exil de s'accrocher aux paysages du lieu de son pouvoir et de sa terreur. L'ancienne « reine-choche » n'a d'ailleurs pas complètement perdu de son autorité puisque sa nièce Laura est toujours, à son corps défendant, « prisonnière » de cette femme devenue obèse, paralysée et dont le langage, à l'image même de sa personne, n'a plus rien d'humain. Laura, qui enfant avait longtemps cru que ses parents l'avaient abandonnée pour partir aux « Zétazunis », est enfermée dans le mutisme comme Emma s'était réfugiée dans la folie. Il est à ce propos remarquable que pour Emma autant que pour Laura, l'accès à la parole passe inévitablement par la rencontre d'une inconnue ou d'un inconnu. Dans *Le livre d'Emma*, Flore est l'intermédiaire qui non seulement recueille mais reconstitue le récit d'Emma, tandis que dans *Un alligator nommé Rosa*, Antoine, engagé en tant qu'infirmier personnel de l'ancienne tortionnaire, pousse Laura à se livrer aux aveux, en même temps que lui-même se laisse aller à un déchaînement verbal.

Françoise Naudillon a raison de constater que les hommes forts et subtils sont absents dans *La dot de Sara* et dans *Le livre d'Emma*, où leur représentation frôle par moments la caricature (83). *Un alligator nommé Rosa* vient, à cet égard, changer la donne, puisque le personnage d'Antoine échappe, de par ses contradictions et le rôle important qu'il tient dans le roman, à cette représentation monolithique. À l'instar de Marianna dans *La dot de Sara*, Antoine a aussi mis sa vie entre parenthèses, mais à la différence de Man Mia qui a « suspendu » une partie de sa vie afin d'aider Giselle à élever Sara, Antoine a mis la sienne entre parenthèses dans le but de retrouver la meurtrière de ses parents : « J'ai mis toute ma vie entre parenthèses pour te chercher, et je l'ai donnée tout entière pour cet instant où je me tiendrais

devant toi. » (*Rosa* 58) L'exil est ici intimement associé aux maux de l'ex-île et à l'obsession qui en découle. Incapable de faire le deuil de l'assassinat de ses parents dont il a été témoin enfant, Antoine a laissé les douleurs du passé l'envahir au point de dériver vers la folie, de sombrer dans un délire verbal une fois devant Rosa Bosquet. La question lancinante qui traverse tout le roman est la suivante : « Je ne suis pas un héros, marmonne Antoine, je ne veux pas être un héros, mais comment faire pour ne pas devenir un assassin? » (*Rosa* 47) Comment éviter de commettre l'irréparable, si ce n'est qu'en s'accrochant à un brin d'illusion? Alors que pendant quarante ans, l'homme resté orphelin de son enfance a souhaité la mort de l'ancienne tortionnaire, une fois devant elle, il ne peut s'empêcher d'espérer qu'elle niera ses crimes ou, du moins, tentera de justifier l'injustifiable.

Face à ton lit, ici même, je continue à souhaiter que tu mentes, Rosa, que tu essaies, allez savoir pourquoi, par besoin, sans nul doute, de croire en une sorte d'angélisme féminin, je voudrais que tu essaies de me berner, je voudrais, même pour un bref instant, essayer de faire mien ton mensonge : tu n'y étais pour rien, c'est à cause de cette clique, de ces hommes, tous ces dangereux minables avec qui tu buvais, mangeais, forniquais, que, petit à petit, tu t'es transformée toi aussi en chacal sanguinaire (*Rosa* 94).

Les aveux ne viendront pas, pas plus que les mensonges, si bien que la confrontation n'aura pas lieu entre Antoine et Rosa, celle-ci s'étant emmurée dans un silence implacable, sans remords ni regrets, résolue à ne pas laisser les mots de l'infirmier pénétrer son immense corps.

Les mots ne réussissent par conséquent pas à le venger, ni à le soulager, car les mots n'atteignent que ceux et celles qui veulent bien les recevoir. Ce n'est donc pas avec Rosa que l'échange verbal aura lieu, mais avec Laura. Il est significatif que dans ce roman, la nécessité de se délivrer des maux par les mots ne s'effectue plus entre femmes, mais entre un homme et une femme, comme si Antoine Guibert réussissait là où Nickolas Zankoffi avait échoué avec Emma. Antoine et Laura jouent, de façon réciproque, un double rôle dans la transmission de leur histoire, aussi personnelle que collective, l'écoute de l'un appelant la parole de l'autre et la parole de l'un suscitant l'écoute de l'autre. Ce faisant, Antoine aide Laura à guérir de « la parole bannie » (*Rosa* 125), dont elle est victime depuis qu'elle est toute petite et que la migration avec sa tante n'a fait qu'exacerber, et Laura est là pour modérer la folie langagière dans laquelle son nouvel ami a sombré. Qu'ils soient dans la logorrhée ou dans le mutisme, les deux personnages sont exclus de la vie, en marge de cet espace où les mots prononcés peuvent véritablement être reçus. « La vie est là, mais Antoine et Laura n'y sont pas » (*Rosa* 160), nous révèle le

narrateur par cette phrase belle et brève, qui résume à merveille le chemin bifurqué emprunté par chacun. Et pourtant, « [c]ôte à côte, ils se tiennent, orphelins de tout, sauf de leur mémoire » (*Rosa* 160). Conscients que leur mémoire n'est pas encore orpheline, Antoine et Laura savent par ailleurs qu'elle est fragile, d'où le besoin, pour chacune, d'avancer ensemble vers la vie, vers une parole hors du silence, mais aussi hors du hurlement haineux et du ressentiment qui nourrissent l'envie de tuer Rosa. « Donner la mort », expression souvent utilisée par Laura, est de toute façon un *don* que ne mériterait pas l'ancienne tortionnaire. Sans « oublier ce qui ne s'oublie pas » (*Rosa* 117), sans « comprendre l'incompréhensible » (*Rosa* 216), Antoine et Laura s'élançant, au terme du roman, vers la vie et cessent ainsi de mourir un peu plus chaque jour.

S'élançant vers la vie semble être, chez Marie-Célie Agnant, une condition pour lutter contre l'amnésie et pour rétablir la mémoire, même si pour Emma cet élan s'exprime dans la mort, dans laquelle elle devient plus vivante que jamais. Plutôt que l'exil dans l'au-delà qu'a choisi Emma, les deux victimes parmi tant d'autres de Rosa Bosquet ont préféré poursuivre leur exil sur terre, comprenant néanmoins que l'enfermement de l'ancienne « reine cannibale » dans un asile pour aînés ne signifie en rien la fin des atrocités dans le monde. Si le premier roman se clôt sur un retour au pays de Marianna et sur une note d'espoir, le dernier roman d'Agnant se termine sur une impasse qui ne concerne plus seulement Haïti mais qui, à bien des égards, rappelle encore et toujours Haïti. De *La dot de Sara* à *Un alligator nommé Rosa* en passant par *Le livre d'Emma*, l'univers romanesque d'Agnant traduit, à travers une écriture d'une violence par moments à peine retenue, le besoin de faire entendre les maux d'un passé lié à l'ex-île, et ce, à partir des mots d'un présent ancré dans l'exil. Son écriture répond certainement à une exigence littéraire et à une nécessité testimoniale, car s'il est vrai que « nul n'est une île », comme le rappelait le titre de l'ouvrage collectif dirigé par Rodney Saint-Éloi et Stanley Péan, et auquel Marie-Célie Agnant a contribué, il est aussi vrai que nulle île, nul exil, ne devraient être occultés de cette gigantesque fresque romanesque que représente l'Histoire.

NOTES

- 1 Au sujet de la multitude d'îles et d'îlots que forme l'archipel caribéen, Joël Des Rosiers note qu'« autour de Cuba pullulent plus de 1600 îles » (*Théories* 220).
- 2 Notons que si Ollivier élabore le concept de « migrance » dans *Repérages*, un essai autobiographique, le néologisme se trouvait déjà dans *Passages* (160), ainsi que dans *Les*

urnes scellées, roman dans lequel le retour au pays d'Adrien, le « diasporé », ne fait que confirmer que « la migrance était sa patrie sans nom » (226).

- 3 Dans la dernière nouvelle qui donne titre au recueil, Agnant écrit son : « le silence est comme une mer de sable qui petit à petit engloutit Belle-Île. Sous les marées, les gens demeurent immobiles, et leurs corps, peu à peu, se liquéfient. Ils se livrent au silence pieds et poings liés. Puis ils se retrouvent un beau jour enlisés, avec pour seul exutoire, la démence. » (*Silence* 94)
- 4 Mentionnons néanmoins que la survalorisation des concepts du « hors-lieu » et d'« entre-deux » est de plus en plus contestée, et ce, par les critiques et les écrivains les ayant mis de l'avant : voir à ce sujet l'essai de Harel, *Les passages obligés de l'écriture migrante*.
- 5 Dans le dernier livre de Laferrière, *Lénigme du retour*, le narrateur ne revoit son pays qu'après une longue absence de 33 ans, intensifiant le sentiment de l'impossible retour déjà présent dans *Pays sans chapeau*.
- 6 Gaston Bachelard, dans *L'eau et les rêves*, a aussi mis l'accent sur l'imaginaire féminin et maternel lié à l'eau.
- 7 Ici, l'opacité n'a évidemment pas le sens positif que lui accorde Édouard Glissant dans ses écrits critiques.

OUVRAGES CITÉS

- Agnant, Marie-Célie. *La dot de Sara*. Montréal : Remue-ménage, 1995. Imprimé.
- . *Le silence comme le sang*. Montréal : Remue-ménage, 1997. Imprimé.
- . *Le livre d'Emma*. Montréal : Remue-ménage, 2002. Imprimé.
- . *Un alligator nommé Rosa*. Montréal : Remue-ménage, 2007. Imprimé.
- Bachelard, Gaston. *L'eau et les rêves. Essai sur l'imagination de la matière*. Paris : José Corti, 1942. Imprimé.
- Condé, Maryse. *La parole des femmes. Essai sur des romancières des Antilles de langue française*. Paris : L'Harmattan, 1979. Imprimé.
- Desmeules, Christian. « L'art poétique de Dany Laferrière. » *Le Devoir*, samedi 12 et dimanche 13 avril, 2008. Imprimé.
- Des Rosiers, Joël. *Métropolis Opéra*. Montréal : Triptyque, 1987. Imprimé.
- . *Théories Caraïbes. Poétique du déracinement*. Montréal : Triptyque, 1996. Imprimé.
- Felman, Shoshana et Laub, Dori. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York : Routledge, 1992. Imprimé.
- Glissant, Édouard. *Poétique de la Relation*. Paris : Gallimard, 1990. Imprimé.
- Harel, Simon. *Les passages obligés de l'écriture migrante*. Montréal : XYZ, 2005. Imprimé.
- Homère. *L'Odyssée. Traduction, introduction, notes et index par Médéric Dufour et Jeanne Raison*. Paris : GF Flammarion, 1965. Imprimé.
- Jonassaint, Jean. *Le pouvoir des mots, les maux du pouvoir. Des romanciers haïtiens de l'exil*. Paris : L'Arcantère, 1986. Imprimé.
- Laferrière, Dany. *Pays sans chapeau*. Montréal : Boréal Compact, 2006. Imprimé.
- . *Lénigme du retour*. Montréal : Boréal, 2009. Imprimé.
- Naudillon, Françoise. « Le continent noir des corps. Représentation du corps féminin chez Marie-Célie Agnant et Gisèle Pineau. » *Études françaises*, 41.2 (2005) : 73-85. Imprimé.
- Ndiaye, Christiane. « Récits des origines chez quelques écrivaines de la francophonie. » *Études françaises*, 40.1 (2004) : 43-62. Imprimé.

- Ollivier, Émile. *Passages*. Montréal : TYPO, 2002. Imprimé.
- *Les urnes scellées*. Paris : Albin Michel, 1995. Imprimé.
- *Repérages*. Montréal : Leméac, 2001. Imprimé.
- *La Brûlerie*. Montréal : Boréal, 2004. Imprimé.
- Proulx, Patrice J. « Breaking the Silence : An Interview with Marie-Célie Agnant. »
Québec Studies, 41 (2006) : 45-61. Imprimé.
- « Bearing Witness and Transmitting Memory in the Works of Marie-Célie Agnant. »
Québec Studies, 39 (2005) : 35-53. Imprimé.
- Saint-Éloi, Rodney et Péan, Stanley. *Nul n'est une île : solidarité Haïti*. Montréal : Mémoire d'écricain, 2004. Imprimé.



Personne

Dans l'ombre de ton regard
S'éclairer ton angoisse
Que je n'ai toujours pas comprise

Une lutte entre toi et moi
Cet écart inédit de lumière

Le geste suspendu
La perte qui s'installe
Dans un cœur de pierre
Et d'amertume
Le miroir embrumé
Mon visage et le tien

Personne au fond

La nation à l'épreuve d'un récit métis

Ouvrir le Québec par le biais hispano-américain dans l'œuvre de Francine Noël

Elle [Maryse] ira vers l'Amérique latine après en avoir rêvé. . . .
[l]'Amérique latine l'a toujours attirée, c'est une terre d'espoir.
(Francine Noël, *Myriam* 439)

Dans une entrevue accordée pour le numéro que lui consacrait *Voix et Images* en 1993, Francine Noël évoquait la place que prenait la langue espagnole dans sa vie et dans son œuvre, en décalage entre le français et l'anglais :

Pour les francophones montréalais, un dédoublement systématique; deux langages : celui de l'intimité et celui qu'on utilise pour se faire comprendre de son propriétaire . . . Alors, j'ai *bucké*. L'ouverture doit être réciproque, autrement s'installe un rapport de domination . . . J'ai donc fait un transfert—symbolique, comme tous les transferts—vers l'espagnol. C'est un désir d'ouverture, une compensation d'abord émotive; j'ai un fils à moitié espagnol. Mais ce choix correspond aussi à une réalité géopolitique : l'Amérique, en dehors des États-Unis et du Canada, c'est une masse de Latinos. (Pelletier et Saint-Martin 232)

Cette citation laisse entrevoir à la fois la question du nationalisme, de ses enjeux linguistiques, où deux langues, la française et l'anglaise, sont opposées dans une situation d'inégalité, mais aussi l'avènement d'un tiers inclus (Nepveu 73) délibérément choisi qui détourne le clivage initial en faisant paraître ce que Zilá Bernd a nommé « la recherche d'une troisième rive » (409). De même, le recours à l'espagnol est pensé dans un contexte politique interaméricain. Une telle idée est réitérée dans l'entretien lorsque Noël souligne l'importance des écrivains hispano-américains, dont Isabel Allende, Gabriel Garcia Márquez, Luis Sepúlveda, et Antonio Skarmeta (Pelletier et Saint-Martin 229, 234, 238), pour son style, la structure de ses textes inspirée du réalisme magique et lorsqu'elle signale la valeur de *La Malinche*, la passeuse culturelle inaugurale des Amériques¹.

Cet extrait le montre, et son œuvre mettra en lumière une telle conception des rapports interculturels, l'Amérique latine est investie d'une capacité utopique à faire advenir l'Autre et à intégrer à des trames culturelles trop univoques un « désir métis² » de même qu'une mémoire de la bâtardise (Saint-Martin 310-314) qui sont revendiqués par de nombreux protagonistes de ses romans comme des stratégies discursives de résistance à l'uniformisation par les cultures dominantes. C'est dans un tel contexte que le recours aux références latino-américaines dans la tétralogie³ amorcée avec *Maryse* en 1983, et qui trouve son aboutissement au quatrième tome avec *J'ai l'angoisse légère* (2008), laisse entrevoir un travail d'ouverture de la province à une réalité de plus en plus hétérogène. Ce cycle littéraire, qui couvre vingt-cinq années d'écriture et pas loin de quarante années d'intrigues, part de la réalité culturelle québécoise, des angoisses et projets de quelques personnages de l'intelligentsia locale, pour en arriver à concevoir, au final, une utopie métisse, qui s'affirme sur le plan politique dans un Sommet de la fraternité et sur le plan littéraire dans les projets d'écriture des personnages de Maryse et de François. Les quêtes identitaires mises en scène sortent ainsi de la dichotomie usuelle au Québec entre les francophones et les anglophones, pour mieux instaurer le biais d'un tiers inclus, le monde hispano-américain, qui pointe de toutes sortes de façons dans les récits, et de manière de plus en plus prononcée à mesure que les protagonistes prennent la mesure de leurs références.

Dans cet article, j'étudierai à la fois la progression de ce référent hispano-américain—afin de montrer que son insertion s'effectue lorsque le cadre québécois (et national) est établi—, l'usage qui en est fait en tant que découverte de l'altérité, solidarité avec des communautés migrantes, recours à l'ailleurs, exemple de métissage et avènement d'un plurilinguisme grâce à l'espagnol. Ce faisant, l'apport latino-américain est envisagé dans une optique des transferts culturels (Espagne 4-8) qui dégage les motifs et les remises en contexte des emprunts étrangers en vue de transformer la culture d'accueil. La représentation composite du Québec qui se révèle par ce travail interdiscursif et référentiel fait alors une large place à une utopie métisse de la nation, qui prend comme modèle des figures des Amériques qui s'intègrent à une trame mémorielle et narrative québécoise.

Dès son premier roman, Francine Noël a recours à divers référents latino-américains dont la portée symbolique est fort significative : en effet, *Maryse* s'ouvre sur une scène dans un café espagnol, *La luna de papel*, dont l'un des serveurs, Manolo, acquerra une importance majeure à mesure que l'action progressera, en devenant l'amant exotique de Maryse O'Sullivan. En outre, le

roman évoque le parcours de réfugiés chiliens accueillis à Montréal après le coup d'État de Pinochet, et qui seront perçus comme des vedettes de la lutte mondiale par les jeunes universitaires de gauche qui frayent autour de la tribu⁴ montréalaise. Bien que la référence latino-américaine prenne tout son sens surtout à partir du deuxième roman de *La Saga*, on aurait tort de ne pas analyser sous le même angle *Maryse*, qui a aussi son importance car il inaugure ce cycle romanesque. En effet, d'une part, ce roman met en place le contexte énonciatif des aventures de la tribu amicale qui constitue le noyau de tous les romans à venir, d'autre part, il instaure d'emblée une réflexion sur le nationalisme québécois, qui sera ensuite reformulée par l'insertion du récit latino-américain, donné comme métis et résistant.

Le premier roman de Noël met en scène le lent affranchissement de la protagoniste éponyme, libération tant culturelle que féministe. Campé dans le milieu universitaire dont est dépeint le caractère factice, le récit est une charge ludique contre les modes intellectuelles rapidement consommées des années 1970. C'est donc dire que le roman enfile les références, les allusions intertextuelles, les pastiches, le *name dropping* sur un mode caricatural, de telle manière que se constituent dans le texte divers pôles référentiels qui répondent à des enjeux discursifs et identitaires spécifiques. Chacun d'eux est en effet voué à faire apparaître l'autonomie progressive des personnages principaux et leur résistance aux poncifs culturels hérités de la conjoncture québécoise. La narration organise autour de ces références un parcours d'auto-détermination culturelle qui module le Québec, à une époque marquée par une prise en charge politique de l'idée de nation. Si la France, par sa littérature et ses penseurs, est rabrouée à de multiples reprises (voir les personnages de Télémaque Surprenant et d'André Breton, professeurs obnubilés par la grandeur obsolète française), la littérature québécoise demeure associée à certains stéréotypes qui la renvoient à la tradition du terroir (Ringuet, Félix-Antoine Savard, Louis Hémon⁵). La culture populaire, quant à elle, provient des États-Unis, de l'univers anglo-saxon, par le cinéma, la musique et la télévision.

Véritable chronique sociale, construite autour de personnages récurrents et de tableaux épars, le roman couvre six années dans la vie de Maryse O'Sullivan, née Mary d'un père irlandais alcoolique et d'une mère canadienne-française exténuée, mais qui renie les héritages problématiques de ses parents pour embrasser les rêves de la classe intellectuelle francophone. Maryse est donc un personnage métis, clivé, ayant à l'occasion honte de ses origines ouvrières, pauvres et mélangées, qui s'efforce de trouver sa place dans un monde en transformation, marqué principalement par les questions

identitaires et féministes. Maryse vit de l'intérieur les mutations consécutives à la Révolution tranquille, mais elle ne le fait pas, à l'encontre de son amoureux Michel Paradis, sur le mode abstrait, mais à partir de sa posture subjective, qui lui donne un accès tangible aux manifestations culturelles et sociales⁶. Elle appartient depuis peu à la culture lettrée, et ces années d'apprentissage universitaire, décrites avec une suave ironie et un goût féroce de la caricature, lui permettent surtout de trouver sa parole, grâce à l'écriture. Il s'agit donc d'un récit d'accession à l'écriture au féminin afin d'inscrire une mémoire des femmes dans le récit commun. Dans ce contexte, ses amitiés avec Marité Grand'Maison, avocate, avec Marie-Lyre Flouée (MLF), comédienne flyée, et avec François Ladouceur, professeur et confident, lui servent de boussole pour comprendre un monde en transformation.

Ce sont les interactions entre ces personnages qui posent la question de la nation de manière concrète, alors que les amis de Michel, figures de proue des modes de gauche, conçoivent le nationalisme à partir de grilles obtuses. Tous les personnages semblent baigner d'une manière ou d'une autre dans l'effervescence nationaliste, participant à des ralliements partisans, s'inscrivant dans des partis politiques, publiant des lettres aux journaux pour soutenir la cause du français au sein de l'espace public, discutant dans les cafés pour défendre le projet québécois. Marité deviendra même une députée du Parti québécois, François sera membre du RIN (*Maryse* 29), assistera aux réunions du Mouvement Souveraineté Association (*Maryse* 43), et Marie-Lyre fera de la langue française du Québec son cheval de bataille (*Maryse* 136-138)⁷. La position de Maryse est néanmoins singulière. Bilingue, portée par deux identités qui se confrontent, l'irlandaise anglophone et la canadienne-française, Maryse choisit le milieu francophone, mais ne parvient pas à endosser tous les *a priori* partagés par ses amis : « ils [Maryse et François] avaient parlé du goût du pouvoir, du séparatisme et de ses origines à elle; moitié irlandaise, moitié canadienne-française, elle s'était rangée du côté français à cause de son séjour au couvent, mais, pour elle, la position séparatiste n'était ni évidente, ni claire, ni simple. » (*M* 43) Si sa position est ambiguë, ses relations et certains gestes posés laissent néanmoins entrevoir une adhésion au mouvement de résistance nationaliste : elle assiste par exemple en compagnie de Marie-Lyre et de François à une assemblée de soutien au FLQ lors de la crise d'Octobre (*Maryse* 147).

Dans ce contexte d'affirmation culturelle québécoise, la référence latino-américaine semble de prime abord glissée sous le tapis. Le français et l'anglais étant dressés l'un contre l'autre—ce que le déni langagier de Maryse incarne—la cohabitation s'avère impossible. Choisir un camp revient à

abandonner l'autre : la position intermédiaire est inconfortable, bien que Maryse revienne fréquemment sur ses souvenirs d'enfance avec son père, comme si l'héritage irlandais devait refaire surface et s'intégrer à sa nouvelle communauté d'appartenance. Pourtant, dès ce roman, une référence hispanique⁸ s'élabore, autour de Manolo qui est l'Autre auquel s'identifie Maryse, le choisissant comme amant en raison de son métissage culturel (*Maryse* 317), même si la distance est maintenue entre eux. Aussi, François se passionne pour l'apprentissage de l'espagnol (*Maryse* 163), engouement qui menace l'écriture de sa thèse. Un tel intérêt survient dans la diégèse à la suite de la crise d'Octobre : l'interrogatoire de Maryse et les perquisitions chez Elvire et François ne débouchent pas sur une radicalisation du projet politique national, mais bien sur un transfert vers l'espagnol, manière de ne pas sombrer dans l'exclusion et le ressentiment. Ce savoir se traduira ensuite d'une part par une capacité à nouer des liens avec Manolo (*Maryse* 210) à partir de sa langue maternelle, et d'autre part, à s'initier à la littérature latino-américaine qui incarne l'imaginaire compensateur des fixations mortifères de François (*Maryse*, 442). Sont alors convoquées par ce dernier des œuvres littéraires canoniques du monde latino-américain, surtout de la période récente dite du *boom*, tant en espagnol (Gabriel Garcia Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Julio Cortázar) qu'en portugais (Jorge Amado), ce qui laisse voir une réelle connaissance de ce corpus alors contemporain. La langue espagnole, qui perce timidement la narration, créant un effet de plurilinguisme, permet une ouverture à l'Autre, et surtout une compréhension du Québec hors du discours de la survivance du fait français dans une mer d'anglophones. C'est cette fonction utopique attribuée à l'espagnol qui explique en partie l'engouement provoqué par l'arrivée d'exilés politiques chiliens à Montréal, qui ne sont que le symbole d'une résistance (*Maryse* 368-369). Dans *Maryse*, le rôle de l'Amérique latine n'est pas central, il n'est qu'un contrepoint fantasmé d'une réalité référentielle qui s'appuie sur le nationalisme alors en vogue pour discriminer entre les apports états-uniens, français, irlandais, canadiens-français, afin de faire advenir une autonomie culturelle québécoise, qui serait néanmoins apte à puiser à toutes ses sources. Toutefois, ce travail d'autonomisation se fait sur un mode conflictuel, lors des luttes entre intellectuels et des crises privées entre Maryse et Michel. L'avènement d'une soupape comme le référent latino-américain soulignera, dès le deuxième tome, le caractère utopique du récit métis, à même de chambouler les cloisonnements identitaires perçus dans *Maryse*.

L'action de *Myriam première* est plus ramassée que dans le roman précédent : les amies Maryse, Marie-Lyre et Marité, vivent près l'une de l'autre, se voient

souvent et travaillent ensemble. Délaissant en partie l'université, le roman s'intéresse davantage au « beau milieu », le théâtre, lieu de la parodie dans le roman. Les événements se déroulent sur un peu plus d'un mois en 1983, avec comme plaque tournante le jardin de François et de Marité qui aime la tribu. Il s'agit d'un roman des filiations où sont privilégiées les fratries matrilineaires, la narration d'une résistance au féminin permettant d'un seul mouvement de faire valoir un univers de résistance et d'affranchissement des femmes, de signaler la dimension hybride du Québec, portée par des héritages irlandais, campagnards, urbains, et d'ouvrir à l'ailleurs les solidarités établies par ces récits. C'est ainsi que le Nicaragua se voit associer au Québec, par les récits que Maryse transmet à Gabriel et à Myriam, les enfants de Marité, par les projets romanesques de Maryse, qui rêve d'écrire une œuvre épistolaire qui unirait Managua et Montréal grâce à la vision télescopée de deux prostituées, et par l'introduction du personnage de Laurent, le nouvel amoureux de Maryse travaillant dans « les pays du bas de la carte » (*Myriam* 180).

Dans *Myriam première*, les références à l'Amérique latine se font donc de plus en plus nombreuses. Non seulement la région intéresse-t-elle les protagonistes, plus particulièrement le Nicaragua, aux prises avec une guerre civile qui suscite l'intérêt de Maryse, de Laurent et de Gabriel, qui prennent parti pour les Sandinistes, mais la langue espagnole perce le récit, les allusions aux œuvres et aux productions culturelles latino-américaines abondent. De fait, la structure du roman prend appui sur le réalisme merveilleux latino-américain, mis en évidence entre autres par Garcia Márquez, par la manière dont l'onirique, le baroque, le fantastique se mêlent aux éléments plus réalistes et à ceux marqués par la parodie. Le bar Le diable vert devient dans ce contexte l'espace le plus évocateur et rassembleur de ce réel merveilleux partagé par les personnages de la tribu, puisqu'il permet de se confronter à ses rêves et à ses cauchemars, à ses projections et à ses désirs, sans qu'interviennent les contingences spatio-temporelles. Ce lieu n'est accessible qu'aux personnages ouverts à de telles réalités merveilleuses, agissant alors comme un espace prescriptif susceptible de donner un sens nouveau à la tribu, puisque ses membres ont accès pour la plupart à ce Graal de la différence assumée.

Chaque journée décrite dans le roman est encadrée par un exergue et le premier est tiré d'un récit de l'écrivain uruguayen Hector Bianciotti (*Myriam*, 10), alors que le dernier renvoie à un texte de Delia Munez Febrero (l'écrivaine que voulait traduire Amélia Malaise dans *Babel prise deux*). C'est donc dire que le roman est encadré par deux écrivains latino-américains, qui donnent une dimension continentale au récit, en le sortant en quelque sorte de

l'épuisement post-référendaire dans lequel baigne le milieu intellectuel montréalais. Cet effet d'un ailleurs ressourçant est présent aussi dans le fantasme qu'est l'Amérique centrale en mutation : grâce aux discussions, aux récits et aux témoignages de Laurent ayant déjà connu la région, aux reportages journalistiques et télévisuels, Gabriel et Maryse en viennent à se construire un espace utopique de lutte et de résistance, qui a pour modèle le Nicaragua révolutionnaire⁹ et les guérilleros salvadoriens¹⁰.

L'Amérique latine travaille donc le texte dans sa forme, sa structure, ses référents (Mères de la place de Mai, musique populaire—tango, bandonéon, chants chiliens—, actualités politiques, Mafalda, comptine pour endormir les enfants—la Maja desnuda). La langue espagnole est aussi employée de plus en plus fréquemment. Le Sud devient un refuge, un espace rêvé, un espoir intense de renouveau, qui passe selon Maryse par la procréation (elle découvre qu'elle est enceinte au moment du départ pour le Nicaragua, scène qui constitue l'*excipit* du roman) et la création romanesque. Il convient néanmoins de noter que ce fantasme latino-américain, ouvert à une réalité de métissage et d'hybridation des pratiques, se joue entre Québécois dits « de souche ». En effet, la réalité migrante latino-américaine est laissée de côté dans le roman, toutes les scènes évoquant les exils et les départs, les contacts difficiles avec la société d'accueil concernant la communauté irlandaise, taisant du coup la situation nouvelle provoquée par les vagues migratoires en provenance d'Amérique centrale et du Cône sud. Laurent, le nouveau compagnon de Maryse, acquiert, dans ce contexte, le statut de passeur culturel ; il est bien celui qui transmet la culture latino-américaine par le biais de son urgence révolutionnaire. Il trouve une oreille attentive, non seulement chez Maryse, qui accepte de le suivre à la fin du roman au Nicaragua, mais aussi chez Gabriel, qui se passionne pour la langue et la région, et chez François, qui est un interlocuteur apprécié, connaisseur de l'idiome hispanique et de la culture cinématographique, musicale et littéraire du sous-continent.

L'ensemble des référents évoqués plaide pour une lecture tronquée de l'Amérique latine, où les productions culturelles et les faits sociaux dignes d'intérêt pour les Québécois sont ceux qui pallient à leur monde désenchanté¹², post-référendaire. Ce sont les artistes bafoués par les pouvoirs dictatoriaux qui plaisent (Victor Jara, Carmen Bueno, *Myriam* 44), les écrivains capables d'illustrer la magie du réel et les imaginaires composites, les opposants déclarés et transformés en martyrs de la lutte comme Monseigneur Romero, (*Myriam* 177), les battantes entêtées comme les Mères de la place de Mai (*Myriam* 128, 245). L'Amérique latine personnifie donc ce que le Québec ne

parvient pas à réaliser : elle symbolise une terre de lutte, de syncrétisme culturel, de métissage des influences diverses, comme le montrent le tango, le bandonéon, la vision si originale de Mafalda et les écrivains latino-américains cités. Néanmoins, au-delà de cette vision extérieure et exotique¹³ de l'Amérique latine, perce dans le récit le constat d'une violence couvrant la région, de conflits indiquant que le désir métis accolé à ces pays est là-bas aussi difficile à imposer qu'ici. Cet élément a pour conséquence d'établir des liens entre les deux aires culturelles, relations basées sur une reconnaissance des « histoires marginales » oubliées, histoires toujours équivoques, toujours fondées sur des clivages et des identités multiples. L'Amérique latine devient un projet québécois, une extension des récits montréalais migrants narrés par Maryse et qui concernent les lignées matrilinéaires de ses amies. Le désir de création de Maryse, qui finit par prendre le détour latino-américain par la juxtaposition de Managua à la matrice montréalaise, laisse voir une volonté manifeste d'intégrer les deux cultures, de les faire dialoguer. Il faudra toutefois attendre le roman suivant pour que ce dialogue intègre des voix latino-américaines, que des sujets dits subalternes, selon l'expression de Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (271), acquièrent la parole et agissent sur la trame narrative.

Le troisième tome de *La Saga*, *La conjuration des bâtards*, se déroule presque entièrement à Mexico, où a lieu le Sommet de la fraternité, organisé en partie par Laurent, qui vit avec Maryse dans cette ville. Les Québécois s'y rendent en grand nombre et la tribu est rassemblée autour de cet événement politique et culturel qui cherche à refonder le monde en une semaine, allusion à la fois au mythe biblique de la Genèse¹⁴ et aux nombreux discours utopiques qui ont perçu les Amériques comme le lieu du recommencement et de la régénération (Nouveau Monde, le puritanisme, Terre promise¹⁵, etc.). Le Sommet fonctionne dans l'économie narrative à la fois comme un prétexte, puisqu'il sort l'intrigue du Québec, en faisant converger à Mexico tous les personnages de *La Saga* happés par les questions contemporaines, et comme un lieu d'énonciation d'une utopie qui est celle d'un devenir métis, d'une reconnaissance de la bâtardise intrinsèque du monde :

Ignacio dit qu'il se considère comme un métis culturel à cause de sa double appartenance : il n'est pas seulement américain . . . En l'écouter s'expliquer, Myriam comprend tout à coup ce qui rapproche ces gens. Ignacio est moitié Mexicain, moitié américain. Clara aussi est métissée, Lilith et Tristan ne savent pas qui est leur père, Mercedes a eu un enfant bâtard, Mariana est bâtarde et métisse, sa fille Elvira métisse, Bérénice est mulâtre et Cher Antoine, exilé . . . Et elle a le sentiment que c'est de leur marginalité qu'ils tirent leur force. (*Conjuration* 434)

Ainsi, à l'homogénéité voulue par le pouvoir mondial répond un projet collectif bigarré, contradictoire, plurivoque, qui mise sur le dialogue (ce que laisse deviner la multiplicité des contre-sommets et des zones vouées à l'affirmation individuelle durant le Sommet), l'hybridité, les influences composites et qui trouve dans des figures de résistance un modèle de contestation capable de lier les communautés et les individus. La conjuration (sous ses sens de complot, de mise en commun ou de parole cérémonielle) des bâtards du titre, c'est le désir métis récité et réitéré à plusieurs voix, dans de nombreuses langues, sous l'égide d'une double prédominance, celle du Québec, surreprésentée dans les débats et dans l'intrigue, et celle de l'Amérique latine, dont les référents percent partout. Il en résulte une mise au rancart de l'anglais, langue qui est vue comme un synonyme de l'uniformité mondiale et des iniquités qu'elle produit (Saint-Martin 319). La narration, de même que le manifeste final écrit par Monsieur Quan qu'elle porte, reconfigure la géopolitique des Amériques, en donnant un rôle central aux espaces usuellement périphériques du continent, espaces auxquels est d'emblée attribué un substrat métissé.

L'action du roman se déroulant à Mexico, il n'est pas étonnant de retrouver de multiples allusions à ce lieu : elles vont de la littérature (Octavio Paz, Fernando del Paso) à la peinture (Diego Rivera, Frida Khalo), en passant par les sites archéologiques aztèques, l'histoire nationale mexicaine, les grands héros de la patrie, le soulèvement zapatiste, le chamanisme, les hallucinations au peyolt, les coutumes comme la fête des morts. En somme, toutes les images centrales du pays, et d'autres plus singulières, sont retravaillées par la narration. Par contre, le biais latino-américain déborde largement ce seul pays : nombre de protagonistes proviennent du Pérou et ils ont souvent un lien avec le Québec, comme Cher Antoine, l'amant d'Elvire au nom francisé, Bérénice Nuuru, l'amie journaliste de Maryse, Québécoise vivant à Lima. Ce deuxième pôle participe comme le premier d'un métissage référentiel entre les cultures hispano-américaines et québécoises, les protagonistes passant d'une langue à l'autre, d'un contexte énonciatif à l'autre, selon les interlocuteurs. Les couples mixtes formés (avant et pendant le congrès) par ces rencontres laissent entrevoir un renouvellement hybride du monde, que les postures d'aubains et de déplacés d'Agnès, d'Alexis, de Clara, d'Orfelia, de Bérénice, de Tristan et des autres prolongent. Ces parcours croisés sont bidirectionnels : certains partent d'Amérique latine et aboutissent au Québec, d'autres font le chemin inverse. Pourtant, entre eux, se crée une complicité, un désir de communauté, qui trouve son prolongement dans les suites du Sommet. Il résulte de ce va-et-vient une pratique concrète du *code-switching*, une pluralité d'appartenances

qui semblent bien cohabiter, à tout le moins faire œuvre d'utopie à formuler. Le pôle nicaraguayen est aussi réitéré, par la présence de Mercedes Rios, amie prostituée de Maryse. Celle-ci apparaît alors comme une force d'intégration culturelle, capable de lier ces individus, de leur fournir un lieu fédérateur, comme en font foi les multiples intrusions tolérées de son appartement.

Dans ce cadre composite et cosmopolite du Sommet, les Québécois sont bien acclimatés : ils maîtrisent plusieurs langues—le professeur Pavón allant jusqu'à souligner, ahuri, que « Putas ! Toutes ces Québécoises comprennent l'espagnol » (*Conjuration* 183)—, ils professent des utopies et une ouverture bien accueillies par les congressistes, ils rêvent et pratiquent le métissage culturel. Ils sont en quelque sorte le nouveau prototype de la cohabitation désirée à la suite de la rencontre : un vaste essaimage de réseaux, d'alliances, d'informalité et de références est proposé comme utopie à réaliser, en accroissant les identités et les appartenances possibles, afin de faire de ces apports multiples la richesse première d'un dialogue à refonder.

C'est pourquoi le biais latino-américain est ici central dans cette ouverture du Québec, puisqu'il permet de réinscrire autrement l'histoire nationale en recherchant une nouvelle trame composite, plus à même de décrire correctement le contexte américain ou continental du Québec, fait de solidarité et de rencontres. Les récits évoquant Louis Riel, Gabriel Dumont, Denis Fraser, puisés dans le travail littéraire de François (*La Saga des survivants*) et de Maryse (*La Terre des Métis*) et repris par les conteuses comme Myriam et Clara, disent un horizon métis à réhabiliter, et ce travail narratif et mémoriel québécois prend appui sur les modèles syncrétiques latino-américains comme Garcilaso de la Vega, véritable « figure emblématique du métissage de ce continent » (*Conjuration* 436), auquel un signataire du manifeste collectif s'identifie.

Si le texte est perforé de toutes parts par l'espagnol, si cette langue est présente dans les descriptions du narrateur hétérodiégétique et dans les expressions d'une bonne vingtaine de personnages, il convient de noter que sa présence obsédante nécessite un travail constant de traduction, qui s'effectue soit dans le texte, soit par des notes explicatives fournies par l'auteure. Si l'anglais dans les trois romans n'est pas traduit, donné comme lisible pour le lectorat québécois, l'espagnol conserve sa part d'étrangeté et le plurilinguisme qu'il impose dans le roman est retraduit (voire naturalisé) en français. Néanmoins, ces juxtapositions entre le français et l'espagnol participent d'un mouvement plus vaste de rabattement des réalités québécoise et latino-américaine l'une sur l'autre, chiasme qui se produit aussi dans les lieux, alors que le bar montréalais Le Diable Vert, inspiré par le réalisme magique des écrivains comme

Alejo Carpentier, Garcia Márquez et Isabel Allende, trouve à se dilater dans l'espace *chilango* sous le nom hispanique d'El Diablo Verde, où la télévision en vient à rejoindre et lier les deux univers. Les figures historiques, les protagonistes du roman de Noël, les personnages des récits métis de François Ladouceur et de Maryse y circulent, dans un capharnaüm qui allie l'imaginaire, le passé, le fictif et le réel dans un même projet d'hybridation. C'est d'ailleurs dans ce lieu irréel, à l'écart du Sommet, que se réalisent le mieux les idées énoncées par les intellectuels invités au congrès. Le bar, dans son informalité même, dans sa double appartenance, dans sa fonction imaginaire et culturelle, actualise et concrétise, par les échanges entre les résistants du passé et la jeunesse d'aujourd'hui, entre les personnages historiques et fictifs (ceux de la narration et ceux créés par les protagonistes), entre les Québécois et les Mexicains, un récit métis continental auquel tous prêtent leur voix.

L'attentat qui survient à la fin du Sommet, et qui cause la mort de Maryse, a beau montrer qu'il existe des entraves violentes à ce projet métis utopique, il n'en demeure pas moins que la démarche d'ouverture à l'Autre est poursuivie et réaffirmée fortement, notamment par le manifeste final. Maryse est tuée certes, mais sa démarche d'ouverture à l'Autre est léguée à la tribu; sa mémoire est ainsi commémorée par les signataires du manifeste et ses histoires métisses sont reprises par les protagonistes de *La Saga*, ce qui fait en sorte que sa voix se multiplie dans celle des autres, acquérant de cette façon une autorité nouvelle. Cela transparait d'autant plus dans *J'ai l'angoisse légère*, dans la mesure où François, en faisant l'exégèse des *Carnets*, part inédite de l'œuvre littéraire de Maryse, réitère la vision métissée de cette dernière et la transpose dans sa propre écriture, faisant des Amériques le théâtre d'une quête d'hybridité sans cesse rejouée malgré les défaites, les résistances et les reculs qui découlent de l'exigence d'une telle utopie.

L'Amérique latine, on le voit aisément à ces brefs exemples, répond dans le cycle à un besoin d'ouverture et de métissage, en servant de révélateur à un passé québécois lui aussi fondé sur la confrontation et l'imbrication de diverses cultures. Le biais latino-américain réactive ainsi une histoire de contacts et d'alliances, qui trouve dans la littérature et le conte oral—puisque les membres de la tribu s'approprient et retravaillent les œuvres de François et de Maryse, pour activer cette mémoire—une forme de reconnaissance de la diversité et une manière de transmettre cet héritage, ainsi exhaussé. Le dernier tome du cycle, *J'ai l'angoisse légère*, poursuit, malgré sa portée plus intimiste, le même travail, mais en recentrant l'action sur Montréal, qui apparait comme une extension latino-américaine, lieu d'accueil et de réalisation du métissage. En effet,

les personnages de *La Saga* participent d'un mouvement centrifuge, qui ne correspond pas à un déni de l'expérience antérieure latino-américaine, mais au contraire à une habitation renouvelée du Québec à partir d'un legs métis et continental. La référence latino-américaine n'est alors plus jugée étrangère, mais bien un élément constitutif du quotidien québécois des membres de la tribu. Cet apport banalisé et naturalisé de l'ailleurs et de l'autre se traduit dans ce roman, entre autres, par un réexamen des sports nationaux que sont le hockey (associé au Québec) et le soccer (rapporté à l'Amérique latine) sous l'angle d'une rencontre des cultures et des transferts culturels (en permutant les intérêts nationaux esquissés). Le sport, dans une telle lecture clivée à partir du postulat de pratiques nationales en déplacement, est alors un lieu fédératif où les protagonistes se rassemblent devant le téléviseur (qui reprend le rôle interculturel rassembleur qu'il avait aux bars *Le Diable Vert/El Diablo Verde*) pour rêver le monde, faire surgir leurs espoirs et leurs passions à partir d'une intimité qui communique et accueille l'Autre. L'intérêt de cette conclusion au cycle entrepris avec *Maryse* réside dans la capacité à poser dans ces gestes concrets, quotidiens, ludiques, les grands principes défendus par les protagonistes à la suite du Sommet sous une forme abstraite. En rejoignant le lieu d'origine de la Saga, les protagonistes prennent soin d'intégrer les leçons du legs métis latino-américain qui accorde une nouvelle dimension continentale à la nation québécoise¹⁶, elle-même lue dans le sillage des utopies métisses de Gabriel Dumont.

Le référent latino-américain, d'un roman à l'autre, bouge et remplit des fonctions plus ou moins importantes, mais à partir d'un jeu qui déplace les frontières mobiles et poreuses entre le soi et l'Autre, intégrant, à mesure que la suite prend forme, l'apport continental. D'une présence diffuse, et toujours associée à son appartenance étrangère, la référence est appropriée, intégrée à un parcours identitaire complexe réalisé par de nombreux protagonistes en fonction de leur intérêt propre. Il résulte de ce travail une ingestion partielle de l'Amérique latine (celle qui donne à voir ce projet d'Amérique métisse dont parlent Anne Remiche-Martynow et Graciela Schneier-Madanes [1992] à partir des positions de José Martí), qui cesse d'être un territoire symbolique étranger pour devenir au contraire un lieu d'accueil, un espace habité, un habitacle protecteur. Ce cheminement se fait dans les deux sens puisque le Québec occupe dans le tome final cette même fonction pour des immigrants latino-américains, principalement Cher Antoine. Ce mouvement en miroir des romans montre le caractère bidirectionnel des échanges mis en scène par Francine Noël de même que les logiques de sélection, de médiation et de réception qui concourent à réaliser les transferts culturels interaméricains. Si

le biais latino-américain ouvre le territoire québécois de manière originale, la tétralogie évoque néanmoins le cadre métis d'abord dans une perspective utopique, comme si l'accès à cette hybridité devait se poser tel un horizon à atteindre, une direction à suivre. Lu ainsi, le référent latino-américain participe d'un projet identitaire et discursif qui prolonge le rêve d'intégration bolivarien en lui donnant une extension pluriculturelle, mais en abolissant le détour états-unien. Dans un tel cadre, l'omission de l'anglais (au Sommet), et plus généralement de la place prépondérante des États-Unis dans ce schéma utopique, laisse apparaître un malaise certain, qui serait de nature à signaler que le devenir métis envisagé répond davantage aux impératifs culturels de cultures périphériques ou fragilisées qu'à des ensembles jugés hégémoniques.

NOTES

- 1 Sur la question de La Malinche, voir les contributions de Valérie Raoul et de Catherine Khordoc (78-79). Ce sujet est présent dans presque tous les textes de Noël, surtout dans *Chandeleur* (1985) et *Babel prise deux ou Nous avons tous découvert l'Amérique* (1992). La place de la culture hispanique en général, de la langue espagnole en particulier et de la référence latino-américaine a été peu observée par les critiques, si ce n'est l'étude intertextuelle d'André Lamontagne (104-105).
- 2 Ce désir métis est aussi investi dans l'espace québécois, mais l'état de fait métis, constaté par l'origine clivée de Maryse, ne devient positif et revendiqué que par la prise de conscience de la métamorphose (Morency 12-13) latino-américaine. Une fois intégrée l'utopie qu'incarne le modèle latino-américain de métissage culturel, les figures de Louis Riel, de Gabriel Dumont, d'immigrants irlandais, d'Amérindiens, etc., peuvent être représentées comme de nouveaux modèles contrevenant à un récit unique, borné, réducteur, patriarcal.
- 3 Cette tétralogie, longtemps vue comme une trilogie avant l'*addenda* récent qui transforme une part du projet romanesque, n'est pas nommée. Pour les besoins du présent travail, nous y référerons sous le nom de La Saga, en référence au travail romanesque de François Ladouceur. La Saga contient les titres suivants : *Maryse* (1983), *Myriam première* (1987), *La conjuration des bâtards* (1999) et *J'ai l'angoisse légère* (2008). Ces romans étant substantiels, j'aborde peu le dernier tome, faute d'espace et parce qu'il ne poursuit pas de la même manière le mouvement qui accorde une importance de plus en plus manifeste au référent latino-américain, et je laisse de côté pour cette étude les trois autres titres publiés par Noël (*Chandeleur* [1985], *Babel prise deux ou Nous avons tous découvert l'Amérique* [1992], *La femme de ma vie* [2005]), qui traitent tous, d'une manière ou d'une autre, et en établissant des liens avec les œuvres de La Saga, des thèmes de l'hybridité référentielle. *Babel prise deux* est le roman le plus commenté de Noël, et celui dont la dimension identitaire a été relevée avec le plus d'insistance, notamment parce qu'il joue et reprend les stratégies discursives des écritures migrantes québécoises. Voir à ce propos : Lange, Raoul (2004), Khordoc, Potvin, dont les lectures signalent une dimension latino-américaine.
- 4 J'utilise le mot tribu en me référant à la manière dont Noël évoque le clan constitué par les familles élargies et les amitiés tissées autour de Maryse, de Marité, d'Elvire, de Marie-Lyre et de François. Bien que ces membres fondateurs de la tribu soient blancs et des « pures-laines », à l'exception de Maryse, il ne faut pas prendre le mot tribu dans un sens

communautariste. Le terme tribu permet aussi de jouer sur une lecture—qui ne sera pas faite ici—qui réinscrit dans le Divers (au sens d'Édouard Glissant [1994]) le projet épique québécois fantasmé par Victor-Lévy Beaulieu autour de *La Grande tribu*.

- 5 Anne Élane Cliche et André Lamontagne ont étudié l'intertexte québécois dans *Maryse*, pour signaler comment Noël réécrit le récit patriarcal et nationaliste dans un cadre urbain et parodique.
- 6 Avec raison, Katherine A. Roberts élargit la préhension du réel de *Maryse* aux autres personnages féminins du roman : « En donnant la priorité de l'espace textuel à *Maryse*, Noël raconte une version autre de cette période capitale dans l'histoire québécoise et suggère que les personnages féminins ne l'ont pas vécue de la même façon que les hommes. » (58)
- 7 La portée nationaliste des actions de ces trois personnages indique clairement que le milieu intellectuel en entier, hommes et femmes, est façonné par le nationalisme, contrairement à ce qu'affirme Roberts, qui fait de la position des femmes une affirmation critique du nationalisme patriarcal. La perspective de Roberts a le mérite d'indiquer les différences entre le groupe de Michel et celui de *Maryse* quant à cette problématique identitaire, de mettre en lumière l'histoire occultée des femmes dans le discours nationaliste, mais une telle dichotomie laisse en plan la position ouverte de François, les envolées de Marie-Lyre, l'engagement au sein de Parti québécois de Marité à partir de *Myriam première*, de même que les réactions de *Maryse* lors de l'interrogatoire durant la crise d'Octobre et lorsque sa sœur se met à parler en anglais. Aussi, cette lecture laisse de côté le travail d'autonomisation vis-à-vis de la France qui couve tout au long du roman et qui participe au discours social de l'époque ayant modulé une partie importante du nationalisme québécois. L'autre altérité, l'anglo-saxonne, dans ses versants britannique, états-unien, canadien, est elle aussi traitée avec ironie, distance et des nuances.
- 8 D'autres références au monde hispano-américain effleurent la narration : le tango (*Maryse* 48; *Maryse* 458), les paroles de Gardel auxquelles *Maryse* s'identifie, les évocations de la chanteuse Violeta Parra (*Maryse* 89), les amourettes avec des Chiliens exilés à Montréal, etc. Mais puisque le roman de Noël est fondé sur un jeu référentiel important, ce cadre latino-américain est somme toute assez secondaire dans le premier texte du cycle.
- 9 Voir, sans être exhaustif, les passages suivants : *Myriam* 16, 63, 98, 269, 272, 346, 435, 438, 464-465, 557-573.
- 10 Voir, sans être exhaustif, les passages suivants : *Myriam* 108-109, 177, 280.
- 11 Plusieurs éléments structurels et discursifs du roman évoquent cet état de désenchantement. Ainsi, le roman débute le premier mai, sans qu'une allusion révèle qu'il s'agit de la journée mondiale des travailleurs, omission singulière pour un cycle construit autour d'intellectuels de gauche. Aussi, l'insertion du personnage de la sorcière-punk Miracle Marthe souligne la montée du nihilisme contemporain, tout comme l'essai sur le désenchantement contemporain que François fait lire à sa mère (*Myriam* 293).
- 12 La vision proposée dans *La Saga* correspond bien à l'image véhiculée au Québec à propos de l'Amérique latine, terre de révolutions, de guérilleros, de culture militante, représentation analysée par Daniel Gay dans *Les élites québécoises et l'Amérique latine* à partir d'un dépouillement systématique des journaux québécois. Une telle conception de l'Amérique latine appartient donc au discours social de l'époque, malgré le caractère informé des références utilisées par Noël.
- 13 Pour reprendre le titre d'un recueil de nouvelles de Luis Sepúlveda, *Historias marginales* qui, à la manière du personnage de *Maryse*, conteuse des migrations montréalaises, cherche à restituer une narration des résistances populaires et à exhausser le statut des oubliés de l'histoire, tout en déboulonnant les voix officielles. La phrase fétiche de Sepúlveda (8),

- reprise de João Guimarães Rosa, « narrar es resistir » (« narrer, c'est résister »), s'applique à tous les personnages principaux du cycle romanesque de Noël, d'où la profusion d'histoires enchâssées dans les récits et qui évoquent, par la résistance et la résilience, ce devenir métis du Québec et des Amériques, à partir d'une trame événementielle et mémorielle québécoise.
- 14 La structure du récit, en deux parties, fait ressortir non seulement une fondation par la bâtardise et la résistance, mais aussi une petite apocalypse, dans la mesure où le Sommet est entravé par un acte terroriste commandité par un organisme raciste d'extrême droite voué à la suprématie blanche. La tribu est secouée par ce geste puisque Maryse est tuée d'une balle. Il convient de souligner que si le Québec dans le roman en vient à incarner un pôle important de la refondation métisse du monde et des Amériques, l'un des terroristes est Kid Gaufrette, un militaire québécois, ennemi d'enfance de Gabriel et de Myriam. Ce point est important pour comprendre comment l'utopie métisse est décrite comme une sortie du cadre national et une lutte contre la xénophobie et les crispations identitaires, fermeture susceptible d'advenir partout.
- 15 D'ailleurs, cet effet de rupture d'avec l'Ancien Monde était déjà annoncé dans *Myriam première* dans la partie intitulée « Les Chevaliers de Colomb de l'after wave » dont l'exergue de Paul Chamberland distingue bien un recommencement propre aux Amériques : « Un jour il n'y aura plus d'Espagne/Les rythmes sacramentels/Persistent dans les trous noirs d'Amérique/Le prochain millénaire est en vue » (*Myriam*, 288). De même, la partie est pour une bonne part consacrée à la tirade de Marie-Lyre qui s'en prend aux modes européennes et qui prône un réancrage américain, pour reprendre l'idée de Jean Morency (1995). Pour saisir la portée de l'utopie de régénération imposée aux Amériques, voir O'Gorman (1995) et Bercovitch (1975).
- 16 L'émergence d'un tel biais latino-américain dans le débat identitaire québécois est aussi mise en scène dans les romans de Louis Hamelin, de Pierre Samson, de Guillaume Vigneault, de Linda Amyot, de Serge Lamothe, de Daniel Pigeon, parmi d'autres.

OUVRAGES CITÉS

- Beaulieu, Victor-Lévy. *La grande tribu. C'est la faute à Papineau*. Trois-Pistoles : Trois-Pistoles, 2008.
- Bercovitch, Sacvan. *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*. New Haven : Yale UP, 1975. Imprimé.
- Bernd, Zilá. « Écritures hybrides. À la recherche de la troisième rive ». *Les entre-lieux de la culture*. Laurier Turgeon (dir.). Sainte-Foy : PUL, 1998. 409-421. Imprimé.
- Cliche, Anne Éline. « Paradigme, palimpseste, pastiche, parodie dans *Maryse* de Francine Noël ». *Voix et Images* 36 (1987) : 430-438. Imprimé.
- Espagne, Michel. *Les transferts culturels franco-allemands*. Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1999. Imprimé.
- Gay, Daniel. *Les élites québécoises et l'Amérique latine*. Montréal : Nouvelle optique, 1983. Imprimé.
- Glissant, Édouard. *Introduction à une poétique du Divers*. Montréal : Presses Université de Montréal, 1994.
- Khordoc, Catherine. « Découvertes plurilingues dans *Nous avons tous découvert l'Amérique* de Francine Noël ». *Littératures mineures en langue majeure (Québec/Wallonie-Bruxelles)*. Jean-Pierre Bertrand et Lise Gauvin (dir.). Montréal : PUM, 2003. 71-80. Imprimé.

- Lamontagne, André. « *Maryse* : la quête identitaire du roman québécois ». *Le roman québécois contemporain. Les voix sous les mots*. Montréal : Fides, 2004. 79-113. Imprimé.
- Lange, Ulrike C. « Altérité, multiplicité, complicité. Énonciation et subjectivité dans *Nous avons tous découvert l'Amérique* de Francine Noël ». *La francophonie sans frontière. Une nouvelle cartographie*. Lucie Lequin et Catherine Mavrikakis (dir.). Paris : l'Harmattan, 2001. 467-480. Imprimé.
- Morency, Jean. *Le mythe américain dans les fictions d'Amérique. De Washington Irving à Jacques Poulin*. Québec : Nuit blanche, 1994. Imprimé.
- « Les modalités du décrochage européen des littératures américaines ». *Québécois et Américains. La culture québécoise aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles*. Yvan Lamonde et Gérard Bouchard (dir.). Montréal : Fides, 1995. 159-177. Imprimé.
- Nepveu, Pierre. « Les juifs à Montréal : le tiers inclus? ». *Montréal. L'invention juive*. Montréal : Département d'études françaises/Université de Montréal, 1991. 73-86. Imprimé.
- Noël, Francine. *Maryse*. 1983. Montréal : Bibliothèque québécoise, 1994. Imprimé.
- *Chandeleur*. Montréal, VLB, 1985. Imprimé.
- *Myriam première*. 1987. Montréal : Bibliothèque québécoise, 1998. Imprimé.
- *Babel, prise deux ou Nous avons tous découvert l'Amérique*. Montréal : VLB, 1990. Imprimé.
- *La conjuration des bâtards*. Montréal : Leméac, 1999. Imprimé.
- *La femme de ma vie*. Montréal : Leméac, 2005. Imprimé.
- *J'ai l'angoisse légère*. Montréal : Leméac, 2008. Imprimé.
- O'Gorman, Edmundo. 1958. *La invención de América. Investigación acerca de la estructura histórica del nuevo mundo y del sentido de su devenir*. 1958. Mexico : Fondo del cultura económica, 1995. Imprimé.
- Pelletier, Jacques et Lori Saint-Martin. « Je suis une femme dans un pays ». Entretien avec Francine Noël. *Voix et Images* 53 (1993) 224-238. Imprimé.
- Potvin, Claudine. « De l'Éden à Babel : écrire l'utopie ». *Voix et Images* 53 (1993) : 287-303. Imprimé.
- Raoul, Valérie. « Le "lieu commun" disputé. Partage du territoire et du langage entre les sexes et les ethnies dans les romans de Francine Noël ». *Sexuation, espace, écriture. La littérature québécoise en transformation*. Louise Dupré et al. (dir.). Québec : Nota bene, 2002. 329-349. Imprimé.
- « Immigration from a Québécois Perspective: Francine Noël's *Babel, prise deux ou Nous avons tous découvert l'Amérique* and Monique Proulx's *Les aurores montréalaises* ». *Textualizing the Immigrant Expression in Contemporary Quebec*. Susan Ireland et Patrice J. Proulx (dir.). Westport : Preager, 2004. 161-171. Imprimé.
- Rémiche-Martynow, Anne et Graciela Schneier-Madanes (dir.). *Notre Amérique métisse*. Paris : La Découverte, 1992. Imprimé.
- Roberts, Katherine A. « Une cohabitation fragile : nationalisme et féminisme dans l'œuvre romanesque de Francine Noël ». *Malaises identitaires. Échanges féministes autour d'un Québec incertain*. Diane Lamoureux, Chantal Maillé et Micheline de Sève (dir.). Montréal : Remue-ménage, 1999. 53-77. Imprimé.
- Saint-Martin, Lori. « La famille et le monde : métissage, bâtardise et nouvelles alliances dans *La conjuration des bâtards* de Francine Noël ». *Les voix du temps et de l'espace*. Jeannette den Toonder (dir.). Québec : Nota bene, 2007. 299-323. Imprimé.
- Sepúlveda, Luis. *Historias marginales*. Barcelone : Seix Barral, 2000. Imprimé.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. « Can the Subaltern Speak? ». *Marxism and the interpretation of Culture*. Cary Nelson et Larry Grossberg (dir.). Chicago : U of Illinois P, 1988. 271-313. Imprimé.

Gurdwara in Five Acts

Act 1—Fortune (Teller)

in the back yard we use chunis as turbans not quite long enough for our hair black twigs
shoot out between silk fibres we set up the holy living room a space of richness
with bed sheets forgotten saris and a stuffed tiger we use the good pillows
under the largest heaviest book we could find the oxford english dictionary the
perfect Guru Granth Sahib the binding of the holy book was ripped so we duct taped
the spine

we thought the book was the size of our fathers' outstretched arms Bimal uses a
chuni tied to the end of a stick to fan the english words I sit behind the book having taken
off my salvar the monks never wear salvars daily we would see the hem of
their kacheras

I read out humamnama one by one little fortunes tumble from my mouth Guru Nanak
says that girls should be able to go to the park shave their legs find love on their
own Pavan nods in agreement she sits obediently with a small child in her lap she
pats her hard we feel love taps from our mothers bunny and a cabbage patch doll
sit with head coverings she slap one then points her finger at the other tells
them to sit pay attention and they do just like we do

I do ardas with one eye open we serve the Guru Granth Sahib our unwanted
apples Bimal serves Pavan and the children smarties we chant vahiguru I close the
book wrap it in sesame street sheets place it on my chuni turbaned head walk
around the corner of the house throw it on the picnic table

after our seva we play ring around the rosy until we all fall down pain in our arms from
holding each other too tightly our backs covered with sweat and dirt we close our eyes to
the sun pretending to be good

From Transnational Politics to National Modernist Poetics

Spanish Civil War Poetry in *New Frontier*

Every so often particular events in world history reverberate through far-flung cultural formations, political organisations, and popular imaginaries. Although such large-scale events are perhaps becoming increasingly frequent, accessible, and fleeting in an era of rapid space-time compression and capitalist globalization, these events make their way into global consciousness in ways that so-called everyday life cannot. Assessing the impact of such an event or moment, as it causes unique reactions in multiple spheres, rests in part on our ability to take stock of not only the immediate circumstances surrounding the event but also the ways in which the dynamism of the moment gets harnessed and redirected. The Spanish Civil War (1936–39) was such an event and moment in world history. By providing a case study of poems written by Canadians about the Spanish Civil War, I show how the poetic fight against fascism departed from mere commentary on the events in Spain to become a catalyst for a metapoetic expression of modernism in Canada. While this is a study of the poetry about this war in a single magazine, it is also a project that aims to get a glimpse of the role it played in shaping the larger Canadian poetic imaginary. Further, this study aims to show how the poetic incorporation of a transnational event into a literary problematic can lead to palpable changes in the field of Canadian literature.

The poetic fight against fascism in *New Frontier*, an English-language periodical published in Toronto from April 1936 to October 1937, was taken up in ten poems by contributors A.M. Stephen, Margaret Day, Leo Kennedy, Dorothy Livesay, and Kenneth Leslie. Building on the scholarship of Nicola Vulpe, James Doyle, Candida Rifkind, and Dean Irvine, I argue that these ten

poems contribute to theorizations of a path for Canadian poetics through the use of metacommentary on poetic production and that they accomplish three different things. First, the poems written by Stephen and Day each critique and recalibrate what they take as traditional poetic practice. While Day evokes British Romanticism in particular, Stephen takes aim at the mythologized construction of Spain in the larger poetic imaginary. Second, the poems of Livesay and Kennedy, read alongside their essays in *New Frontier* on the role of the poet in Canada, are aligned with the evocation of a markedly modernist poetics. Reading Kennedy's poetry in relation to his manifesto "Direction for Canadian Poets" (June 1936) and Livesay's alongside her article "Poet's Progress" (June 1937) invites consideration of the ways in which they were setting a distinctly modernist path for Canadian poetry that not only engages in the political arena but also attempts to realign the poetic arena as political. Finally, Kenneth Leslie's "The Censored Editor" reconsiders the traditional role of truth and beauty in poetry while at the same time enacting a modernist parable. The poem is concerned with loyalty and solidarity, to be sure, but the poem also does the work of conflating literary and editorial production as a mode of engagement with both beauty and politics. Although the Spanish Civil War poems in *New Frontier* approach the topic differently, they all work out a version of a modernist metapoetics in Canada.

While my argument focuses on the poetry about the Spanish Civil War in *New Frontier*, it is important to acknowledge the other ways that the antifascist cause saturated the pages of the magazine. Starting in September 1936, not an issue was published that did not give some sort of comment on the war. The material on Spain came in the form of editorials, short stories, reportage, translations of Spanish literature, letters from Spain, interviews, book reviews, illustrations, as well as poetry. Although the editorial, cultural, and political history of the magazine is complex, the generic and political scope of the material exhibits a popular-front character. The Popular Front emerged in the late 1930s as a broad leftist coalition of political organizations across party lines and political philosophies in opposition to fascist and far-right groups. Writers and politicians saw tactical advantages in coalition building; the conflict in Spain became one of the key rallying points of popular-front politics in the late 1930s.

As part of the transnational politics of the Popular Front, a formation of cultural politics and aesthetic ideologies arose to become what Michael Denning calls the cultural front, which "referred both to the cultural industries and apparatuses—a 'front' or terrain of cultural struggle—and to the

alliance of radical artists and intellectuals who made up the ‘cultural’ part of the Popular Front” (xix). Denning uses this model to explain how common tropes and forms emerged. To account for these unique characteristics Cary Nelson, in *Revolutionary Memory*, offers the model of a “poetry chorus” for conceptualizing leftist poetry in general. He suggests that for literature of the left, “the historical conditions of both production and reception are sometimes fundamentally interactive, reactive, and responsive. A poet who seeks in part to be an instrument in a larger musical composition is not pursuing the same aesthetic as one who thinks only of a solo performance” (7). Canadian poets who published in *New Frontier* diverged from individualist production in their attempts to use poetry as weapon against fascism and complacency. Giving a critical reading of the poetry about the Spanish Civil War in *New Frontier* does not stand in for a comprehensive critical history of the journal as a whole, but it does allow for a reading that gives insight into the tenor of *New Frontier’s* larger literary and cultural politics while also highlighting a moment when transnational politics occasioned a deep reconsideration of Canadian poetics.

Vancouver-based politician, poet and novelist A.M. Stephen’s¹ elegiac poem “Madrid” was published in *New Frontier* in May 1937. “Madrid” communicates a pointed political critique as well as an aesthetic reflexivity that work simultaneously in the poem. The poem addresses the real threat of the “creeping Fascist horde” (19) while simultaneously providing metacommentary on artistic production to engage with the way that Spain had until then been constructed in poetic discourse. In other words, Stephen provides, in the body of his own poem, a critique of an unreflective mythologization of Spain. The poem is, in one sense, a conventional elegy. Formally speaking, it consists of nine quatrains in iambic tetrameter with rhyming second and fourth lines. In another sense, the poem is highly critical of its own form while, at the same time, it makes further developments on the elegiac innovations of earlier war poetry, particularly the poetry of the Great War. Within Stephen’s poem is an implicit critique of exotic constructions of Spain in favour of a socialist second coming. The treatment of Spain in Stephen’s poem shifts in both temporality and in the figuration of the public spaces of Madrid. The poem shifts from four stanzas of an inclusive self-admitted mythologizing of “last night”—“Our Spain, a castle of delight, / We built of visions wrought in air” (9–10)—to five stanzas of earnest physical action in the present moment, where “Comrades in life and death are those / Who, on highroads of romance, / Have left the fragrance of a rose”

(22–24). Stephen suggests that the typified romanticization of Spain in the poem's characterization of the poetic performances of "last night" denies the capacity for solidarity both in politics and poetry. For Stephen, a poetics of solidarity—poetry of the Popular Front—is one that envisions a socialist future opposed to metaphysical meditation on abstract beauty. By providing this metacommentary, Stephen exposes an ideal inasmuch as he envisions a poetics beyond his own poem.

Notably, "Madrid" is an elegy, not for Madrid and "her" people but for the "armies of the workers' dead" (29) who are yet defending Madrid. The scene of Madrid is not overtaken by "Red Death" (18) and the "Fascist horde" (19) as Candida Rifkind suggests ("Labours" 196); rather, the fascists are, in the poem's constructed present moment, as yet only crouching "at her gate" (20). While the poet mourns for those comrades who even in death "Acclaim the Cause that will not die" (36), the anticipation of victory is achieved through the evocation and misappropriation of the famous Spanish Civil War slogan "¡No Pasarán!" or "They Shall Not Pass!" rendered by Stephen as "They shall not fail!" (29). The victory is also evoked through the evocation of a Christian second coming that is morphed into a socialist second coming, with the crucifixion of "those hands that were so brave" (34) upon a swastika, leading to a triumphant emergence of the "flower of liberty" (35) from "the martyr's grave" (36). This final victory rests in the evocation of a social ideal, in this case rebirth, to represent a supposedly tangible and attainable socialist future.

Margaret Day,² who would become a founding member of Montreal's *Preview* group, published a poetic parody in *New Frontier*, "Ode to Spring, 1937," which evokes and recalibrates a tradition of British Romanticism. Day's poem employs a dark, gothic tone that works against her seemingly bucolic title. The main body of the poem explicitly alludes to Blake's "To Spring," "The Tyger," and, by implication, to the introductory poems of *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. In the second stanza of "To Spring" Blake writes, "The hills tell each other, and the list'ning / Vallies hear" (5–6), to which Day responds, "The hills still tell each other / But the listening valleys fear" (11–12). That the hills "still" communicate at once suggests continuity in the project of Romantic poetry and calls for recognition that the mere hailing of "thou with dewy locks" does not guarantee adherence to the precepts of the deity who "lookest down / Thro' the clear windows of the morning" (Blake 1, 1–2). On the contrary, "all our longing eyes" are no longer "turned / Up to thy bright pavillions" (Blake 6–7). Instead, Day accuses the "You" who has "Fled from in vain / God's forehead on the windowpane" (9–10). The

accusatory “you” is likely intended to address multiple targets here, directed at the Catholic clergy who supported Franco and worshipped the unholy trinity of the poem’s first line (“Jackal, cormorant and kite” [1]), and at poets who have retreated from the radical traditions of Blake and other Romantic poets. In drawing her Romantic parody to a close, the end of Day’s poem echoes the final lines of Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind” where he pleads, “Be through my lips to unawakened earth / The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind, / If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?” (68–70). Day’s employment of overwrought diction followed by the morose final lines—“While horror whistles down in Spain / Who can announce Canadian spring?” (15–16)—provides a parodic critique of Canadian writers whose inheritance from the Romantic poets is entirely concerned with the coming of spring and utterly disengaged with, if not unaware of, their revolutionary politics. To suggest, as Nicola Vulpe does, that Day’s “concern is firstly, if not overtly political, humanitarian, and only secondarily aesthetic” is to deny not only the poem’s provenance but also the inseparability, in the work of the popular-front poet, of aesthetic and political projects (42).

Both Stephen’s and Day’s poems have strengths and limitations in their modes of critique which enact, albeit with the aim of displacement, nostalgic poetic forms. Nonetheless, by deriding conventional Canadian post-Confederation poetry in Stephen’s case and calling on the revolutionary traditions of Romantic poets in Day’s case, both poets are able to reposition idealized beauty in the realm of the socio-political discourse of the transnational Popular Front.

Dorothy Livesay and Leo Kennedy were the most prominent writers of Spanish Civil War poetry in *New Frontier* and they are the best known of the five poets who wrote and published on the Spanish conflict in the magazine.³ Kennedy published three poems about the war in the magazine and Livesay four. Aside from being editors of the magazine, they were also essayists who published, also in *New Frontier*, short pieces on the role of the poet. Reading Kennedy’s poetry in relation to his notoriously programmatic manifesto published in the June 1936 issue entitled “Direction for Canadian Poets” and Livesay’s poetry alongside her article “Poet’s Progress,” published in the June 1937 issue, invites consideration of the relationship between what they envisioned as the functions of poetry and of poets in the political arena and their own poetic practice. While the antifascist cause embodied by the defence of the Spanish government provided Livesay and Kennedy with a vast amount of motivation for poetic

production, their participation in that cause was coterminous with a rethinking of a path for Canadian poetry.

That Kennedy took such a hard line on the production of poetry in Canada and then published two Spanish Civil War poems under a pseudonym (“You, Spanish Comrade” and “Memorial to the Defenders”) exposes, for his work, an exception made possible by the Spanish Civil War. While the localized, yet generalized, fight against fascism enabled Livesay to find voice through the production of socialist pastoral poetry, Kennedy was less able to adapt a transnational mode that fit his distinctly Canadian poetic program. By comparing the two pseudonymous poems with “Calling Eagles,” the lone poem bearing Kennedy’s name, we may begin to see a desired albeit questionable adherence to the program proffered in “Direction for Canadian Poets.”

Published just before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, “Direction for Canadian Poets” assesses the general state of poetic production in Canada. Divided into five sections, the literary manifesto begins by stating, “English speaking Canadian poets have never been seriously accepted as interpreters of Canadian *life*. Perhaps that is because they have been content to function as interpreters of Canadian landscape” (21). Kennedy calls for poets to locate their poetry in its social place and states his thesis clearly: “[t]he function of poetry is to interpret the contemporary scene faithfully: *to interpret especially the progressive forces in modern life which alone stand for cultural survival*” (21, original italics). This introductory section focuses on setting his terms broadly. The second section approaches Canadian poetry of the past, lamenting that Canadian poetry has not had figures like Whitman or Poe, just the poetry of “well-meaning if limited individuals [who] suffered from open-road infantilism” such as Carman, Lampman, Scott, and Wilfred Campbell, and to which “several generations of Roberts bears glum witness” (21). The third section deals with the Canadian Authors’ Association’s *Canadian Poetry Magazine* (edited by E.J. Pratt) and their *Poetry Year Books*. The fourth section turns to contemporary poetry, while the final section again reiterates the opening call:

We need poetry that reflects the lives of our people, working, loving, fighting, groping for clarity. We need satire,—fierce, scorching, aimed at the abuses which are destroying our culture and which threaten life itself. Our poets have lacked direction for their talents and energies in the past—I suggest that today it lies right before them. (24)

Kennedy’s call for a new national poetry and poetics would likely have taken a slightly different tenor had it been written after the fighting started in Spain as he would have witnessed an increased production of poetry

close to the kind he advocates albeit less focused on “the lives of our people” (24). Nonetheless, a re-reading of the essay offers the opportunity to trace his adherence to his own programmatic direction for Canadian literature through his writing about the Spanish Civil War.

Both Vulpe and Rifkind suggest that “Calling Eagles,” a modernist poem that employs free verse, breaking with standardized rhymes and metres, is addressed to other writers.⁴ Rifkind proposes that Kennedy’s deployment of difficult poetic strategies in favour of the simpler forms that “characterize the majority of Popular Front verse about the Spanish Civil War” is due to this intended audience (*Comrades* 94). Most of the Spanish Civil War poems in *New Frontier* address other poets, if not directly then implicitly. What makes “Calling Eagles” unique is that it exemplifies its own argument. Among other things, the speaker enunciates historical subject matter while making his call to other poets:

Come where Spain strangles in blood, Ethiopia
Groans at the ironcast heel, Vienna
Numbers the dead, remembers Weissel and Wallisch;
Scream for Brazilian dungeons where Prestes rots
And fascist madmen rattle gaoler’s keys[.] (11–15)

Not only is the speaker asking poets to join him and scream about injustice, he is asking them to do so in chorus, along with the “multitudes” (18). Kennedy positions the speaker on the ground calling upward and in doing so figuratively grounds Spain as a place from which a Canadian poet can perform. It is here that we begin to see the explicit association between “Calling Eagles” and “Direction for Canadian Poets.”

As Vulpe suggests, “Kennedy’s most notable Spanish War poem, ‘Calling Eagles,’ is very much a poetic version of ‘Direction for Canadian Poets’ applied to the present international crisis” (41). Kennedy’s call to poets to “join with the groundlings, multitudes, with hope and passion” (18) in “Calling Eagles” reverberates with his warnings about middle-class poets writing about factory life at the end of “Direction for Canadian Poets”:

Industrial poems cannot be written by middle class poets who have no contact with the subject. The poet whose livelihood is still intact may have trouble conjuring a communicable emotion and indignation out of fifty shabby, unshaven men in a breadline . . . until he has thought the whole thing through and realized that breadlines in a wheat country are illogical and criminal, and that he and his kind may be only some steps removed from a like condition. He must touch life at a thousand points . . . grasp the heroism, joy and terror, the courage under privation and repression, the teeming life-stuff all round him that is also the stuff of great poetry! (24)

Kennedy aims to manufacture a modern poetic sphere engaged not only with social conditions and politics but also with the material conditions of the poetic subject. The most pronounced difference between the poem and the manifesto is that while in “Direction for Canadian Poets” the poetic subject is industrial relations in Canada, in “Calling Eagles” it is the transnational fight against fascism, in the middle of which Kennedy places the speaker of his poem simultaneously in Spain, Ethiopia, and Vienna. “Calling Eagles,” in this sense, is as much a manifesto as “Direction for Canadian Poets” but one aimed at Canadian poets in which Kennedy heralds the creation of a “new state” that is amenable to the transnational conditions of the poetic subject (20).

Additionally, “Direction for Canadian Poets” and “Calling Eagles” are exceptional for bearing Kennedy’s real name. What is he able to accomplish by using his real name in the published versions of these two pieces? Conversely, what is he able to accomplish by writing pseudonymously? In order to approach these questions, it is germane to take a close look at his overall publication history in *New Frontier*.

Patricia Morley notes that most of Kennedy’s “five articles, one review, and eight [sic] poems” in *New Frontier* “did not stand under his own name” and that he “favoured ‘Peter Quinn’ for prose, ‘Arthur Beaton’ for poetry. ‘Leonard Bullen’ was also used” (100). In fact, of the nine poems, only two were published under Kennedy’s real name (“Summons for This Generation” and “Calling Eagles”). His one review, of W.H. Auden’s *Spain*, bears the name of Leonard Bullen. Of the articles, only “Direction for Canadian Poets” appeared under his proper name.

Published under the name Arthur Beaton, Kennedy’s first poem about the Spanish Civil War is an incantatory elegy for Federico García Lorca. “You, Spanish Comrade” opens with a beckoning: “Swing, eagle, high over barricades and plunge / boldly” (1–2). Where, in “Calling Eagles,” the eagle figure stands explicitly for the common poet, “You, Spanish Comrade” addresses a single “fallen” eagle. The second stanza begins by stating, “this struggle is no death in you though fallen” (9). In other words, although Lorca’s voice has been silenced by his fascist murderers, the fight will still be witnessed through a continued return to his poetry and through commemoration. Indeed, Lorca became one of the most deployed figures in poetry about the Spanish Civil War.⁵ The speaker credits Lorca with providing the ground upon which future generations of poets will build: “you build foundations here with bones for granite” (12). It is as though Lorca has passed from poet to muse.

Kennedy's second poem about the Spanish Civil War, "Memorial to the Defenders," was published under the name Leonard Bullen, with a dedication to his friends, Bess and Ben Sniderman. The poem, a Petrarchan sonnet in blank verse with the octave and sestet inverted, is addressed to "You Comrades" and "You Workers" (1, 5). The poem makes use of the same diction and imagery as "You, Spanish Comrade." Again, we have "barricades," splintering, blood, and flesh, as well as "new children," and "newborn men." Rather than proposing a socialist rebirth, as in Stephen's "Madrid," the speaker proposes a monument composed not of iconic figures, but of "The People's Spain" (14) itself, something into which the children will be born.

While successful poems in themselves, "You, Spanish Comrade" and "Memorial to the Defenders" do not completely fit into Kennedy's vision for poetry as laid out in "Direction for Canadian Poets." It is possible that for this reason the poems appeared pseudonymously.⁶ Kennedy had effectively backed himself into a programmatic corner when he published his manifesto. "You, Spanish Comrade" is inadequate in Kennedy's terms because it enumerates the poetic heroism of one man, turning Lorca into an idol. The scene of the poem shifts from the sky, "high over the barricades" (1), to underground where Lorca is given the agency to "build foundations here with bone for granite" (11). The time on the ground, where "men walk upright" (17) and "girls with flowers, new children springing tall" (20), is only figured in the future. Kennedy, as poet, does not do the work of "interpret[ing] the contemporary scene" ("Direction" 21) by "join[ing] with the groundlings" as he does in "Calling Eagles" (18).

"Memorial to the Defenders" stands out among Kennedy's other Spanish Civil War poems in that it does not perform the metapoetic act of referencing poetic production. In other words, it does not situate itself in the same way his other poems situate themselves as participating in the poetic materialization of Spain. The poem focuses on violated bodies and "dispersed flesh" (13) and, again, not on the work of "interpret[ing] the contemporary scene faithfully" ("Direction" 21). The monument in "Memorial to the Defenders" is erected by "newborn men" (12), not through the foundations laid by Lorca in "You, Spanish Comrade" or by "the clean flight of the mind and the sharp perceptions" (23) of the poets in "Calling Eagles." Kennedy did not wish to identify himself as the author of the poetry that did not meet the standards set in "Direction for Canadian Poets."

Dorothy Livesay was the first poet to publish on the subject of Spain in *New Frontier*; four of the ten poems she published there are about the war.

Her article "Poet's Progress," appeared in June 1937 issue, after three of her Spanish poems had already appeared in the magazine. Livesay's "Spain" appeared in the same issue as "Poet's Progress" and their proximity reveals her multifaceted concern with the function of the poet. Both "Spain" and "Poet's Progress" perform at two levels: they are about poets as well as addressed to poets. While the first three of Livesay's poems are anticipatory and expectant, "Spain" makes the call for poetic and social solidarity.

"And Still We Dream" and "Man Asleep" appeared together in the October 1936 issue.⁷ Both poems utilize the same figurative framework of dreaming within natural spaces. "And Still We Dream," unlike "Man Asleep," does not figure sleep in its dreaming. Instead, the dream suspends time or exists in tandem with the temporality of nature where time—"the stir / Of centuries"—is only a "brief wrinkle" for the thrush, the bees, and the mountains (10–11). The speaker urges her comrade to "rise up" and live in social time rather than "Whistling a low bird note" (14), which intimates the detached poet writing about nature. The speaker constructs an opposition between the natural and the social that figures as an anti-pastoral call to arms through pastoral imagery. While deriding the reposeful figure of the pastoral, the poems take rhetorical situations from the pastoral tradition to create a socialist pastoral poetry that ignites action and fuses nature and society.

In the companion poem, "Man Asleep," the simple opposition between the social and the natural begins to proliferate. Here, both nature and society are split into a double dialectic, a further development from the opposition set up in "And Still We Dream." On the one hand, there remains a passive dreamer in the mountains where visibility and clarity of the social, present in the images of the towns, recede "at the march of evening" (3). Here, with the construction of a false sense of ease, nature—poised against the social—is the active subject, smoothing the dreamer's brow, relaxing "the stiff bone" (5), and cooling the blood. While these are images of relaxation, they are also images of death and decay. This mimics the dialectical opposition between nature and society in "And Still We Dream." As the poem continues, though, Livesay constructs a second dialectical opposition, this time in Spain: the sleeper's "brothers raise the dust / Over Madrid, gird the impassive hills, / Cast off mandragora with lightning thrust" (7–9). In Spain it is men who become the active subjects through fighting fascism. The poem ends with a return to the dialectic of the sleeper and a tentative future synthesis of the social and the natural: "your bones shall spring to life like steel / Clamp down on victory, behold the sun!" (17–18). The sleeper's bones do not spring

to life like the crocus, but like steel, the product of society and, more specifically, labour. It is only through coordination and combination—the formation of an alloy—of the natural with social labour that the sun can be felt in its productive potential.

According to Dean Irvine, “[c]ontrary to the socialist romanticism of ‘And Still We Dream’ and ‘Man Asleep,’ ‘In Preparation’ presents a romanticized portrait of lovers undercut by its wartime context” (82). Not only do the first six lines of “In Preparation” work to present a romanticized portrait of lovers, but they are lovers dependent on nature for epistemological certainty. In other words, Livesay constructs love as extant in nature and subordinate to it, only to reveal in the last two lines the urgent necessity to “Look fearlessly at these searchlight suns, / Unblinking at the sound of gun . . .” (7–8). With this shift, Livesay positions the verification of love not in (or because of) natural phenomena but as corroboration through the social. The “searchlight suns” and the “sound of guns” (7–8), in this sense, are the products of social conflict that stand in for conventional uses of a romanticised nature that articulate and illuminate love.

Kennedy who published his manifesto on the production of poetry in Canada *before* writing his war poems, subsequently concealing his authorship of the poetry that did not meet the standards he had set. However, Livesay’s programmatic aesthetic—traceable through her first three Spanish Civil War poems—is articulated by the simultaneous publication of “Spain” and her popular-front proposal, “Poet’s Progress,” which does not limit itself to interpreting the Canadian scene. Here Livesay outlines what she sees as the three functions of the poet and the two functions of the audience. First, the poet must understand a wider conceptual notion of the individual. Livesay’s retort to critics’ accusation of a “collectivist complex” in the modernist poetics of the 1930s does not construct the individual poet as an ideal, autonomous, Cartesian subject who takes his or her own thinking to be the primary site of existence; rather, the “poet’s individual mark appears not in his thought content, but in his style, form and technique” (23). Second, Livesay states that the poet must be engaged in “pure ideas” which she equates with “facing the issue of humanity itself, of human destiny” (23). Finally, the poet must be the “conveyor of emotional values” which, for Livesay, are not abstract but rooted in historical particularity (23). These three functions of the poet are positioned in association with the two functions of that poet’s audience: “The three are related together in such a fashion as to create in the hearer a sensation of identity with others, and to release in him an individual

creative comprehension” (23–24). By including the functions of the reader or “hearer” in her program for poets, Livesay works to break down conceptual barriers between production and reception, conflating the agency of the poet and the reader. “These concepts of social solidarity and aesthetic response,” Irvine suggests, “make plain the sociopolitical character and cultural function of her progressive poetry: it is at once collectivist and individualist” (92). This can be seen, I would add, in the poetic companion piece to “Poet’s Progress”—“Spain”—where she both positions herself as an individual writer *and* constructs a common cause.

Livesay begins “Spain” by positioning both nature and society as active subjects. The first stanza is rife with action:

When the bare branch responds to leaf and light,
Remember them! It is for this they fight.
It is for hills uncoiling and the green thrust
Of spring, that they lie choked with battle dust. (1–4)

Rifkind reads this opening stanza as describing “the idyllic Canadian setting as that for which the Spanish people have been fighting” (*Comrades* 92). I am less willing to assert a Canadian setting. Rifkind’s reading is of a revised version of the poem dating from the late 1960s in which the hills are “haze-swept” instead of “uncoiling” and the “green thrust / Of spring” becomes the “green thrust / Of pine.” With the retrospective revisions nature becomes less active and increasingly precise: the ubiquitous “spring” becomes the particular “pine.” Perhaps Rifkind is reading something of Canada in the “pine,” though pine trees certainly grow in Spain. The version published in *New Frontier* is less about counterpoising Canada and Spain in an effort to make internationalist connections than it is about transnationalism as universal affiliation between society and nature where “they fight” for the maintenance of spring’s activity.

The second stanza addresses “You who hold beauty at your finger tips” (5). It is difficult to determine just who the addressee is here. I suggest a double reading focused on the materiality of holding an object of beauty in one’s hands. Given the double project of “Poet’s Progress,” where Livesay outlines the three functions of the poet as well as the two functions of the audience, I read the second stanza as being addressed to those two subjectivities: the poet holding an expectant pen and the reader holding the leaf of poetry. Livesay asks the addressee to take up Beauty as a weapon of solidarity: “Hold it, because the splintering gunshot rips / Between your comrades’ eyes: hold it, across / Their bodies’ barricade of blood and loss” (6–8).

The addressee of the third and final stanza, I believe, is changed. On first glance, it may seem that Livesay repositions the natural and the social in opposition. But the accusatory address to “You who live quietly in sunlit space” does not take issue with the sun’s agency but, instead, recalls the generational and classed critiques of her earlier 1930s poetry. This image is specifically, as Rifkind suggests, “reminiscent of the middle-class subjects of Livesay’s Third Period poem ‘A Girl Sees It!’ who gaze out of their comfortable homes at class struggle on the streets below” (*Comrades* 92). The poem ends with a comment on the relationship between parents and children of the middle class, a relationship to which Livesay herself could speak directly. The bourgeois addressee in “sunlit space” is thus spoken to from the location of the “sons” who “struggle” and do the work of social illumination. The final lines enact a typical trope of war poetry that lays blame on the old for sending the young to battle.

I suggest that the co-publication of “Spain” and “Poet’s Progress” is also a co-theorization. While she writes about the necessities of individual personality, “pure ideas,” and conveyance of emotional value, Livesay emphasizes the need for these traits to work together and not in opposition. Although developed in her earlier poems, it is not until she publishes “Spain” that she fuses, first, the opposition between nature and society, and second, the poet and reader. In this resolution, what could be read as her previous sentimentality in the earlier poems is abandoned for a popular-front synthesis.⁸ But the synthesis is not left without problematization of the writerly relationship in her poem. Livesay identifies, at the close of her poem, the bourgeois addressee who functions as one who, in “Poet’s Progress,” “still cling[s] to the more static conception of society” (24). While the poem is manifestary, Livesay intimates that it can only enter into an unconventional relationship with the reader who has shed bourgeois inheritance and is actually involved in the popular-front struggle.

Of all the Spanish Civil War poems published in *New Frontier*, Kenneth Leslie’s⁹ “The Censored Editor” is the most anomalous and uncharacteristic in terms of *New Frontier*’s editorial habits. The lengthy poem, about an editor betraying the democratically elected Republican government, is concerned with loyalty and solidarity, but the poem also works to conflate writerly and editorial production as a mode of engagement with both aesthetics and politics. Livesay, in her retrospective article on Canadian poetry and the Spanish Civil War, suggests that “The Censored Editor” is the

“most ambitious of any poems written in Canada about Spain” (16). It is the longest poem and also the last-published Canadian poem about Spain in *New Frontier*. The poem is a socialist parable informed by Biblical allusion that sets the scene of Inés, a supporter of the Spanish Republic, hiding amongst mountain rocks, watching and narrating the scene of her son, the “scribbler” Guido, betraying the government to a young Fascist soldier. Specifically, it is a parable that re-enacts Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac. Inés is prepared to sacrifice her son because she has ultimate faith in Spain’s socialist project. She means to stop the “little stream of treachery [that] has run / out of these hills, a stream her flying knife / must dry up at its source” (20–22).

Towards the end of the poem Inés sings out, the rocks causing her voice to echo and accumulate. Her “voice / is many voices” (163–64), highlighting her solidarity with the Spanish people and confusing the two men as to the origins of the lyrics. She finally instructs the men to “Go, tell this fable to your blind instructor” (189) and then provides her own parable about climbers in the Pyrenees:

A rockface in the Pyrenees. Five climbers.
 Five dizzy lives held by a fingernail.
 That moment on the trail when every eye
 must focus on the trail. One puffing fool
 flings out his arm to point the distant view.
 The balance breaks. And so well roped together
 down go the five like plummets. All for one
 who was a two-fold enemy and traitor,
 betraying beauty and its living hosts.

‘Beauty was underfoot there in the rock.’ (190–200)

Vulpe notes that, “breaking with Romanticism, Leslie also maintains that beauty is not ideal; it is concrete and immediate. Beauty, and hence truth, are not as the Romantics proposed in ‘the distant view,’ but ‘*underfoot there in the rock*’” (41). Leslie establishes the ground for beauty and truth in materiality, in beauty’s “living hosts,” the bodies working in unison and climbing the “rockface” not through a break with or rejection of Romanticism, as such, but through a radicalization of the Romantic, specifically Keatsian, treatment of beauty—“‘Beauty is truth’ was said and truly said” (183). The last line of the poem—*Beauty was underfoot there in the rock*—serves a double function, providing the moral of the tale of a climber who upsets the collective balance with a gesture akin to a Fascist salute, while also referencing the scene that dominates the poem: the mother figure hiding amongst the rocks and committed to truth and to the Republic.

While some of the other Spanish Civil War poems in *New Frontier* speak directly to the production of poetry, this poem includes a meditation on editorial integrity. Leslie, an editor himself, positions editorship as something demanding veracity, resolve, and faith instead of “cleverly balanced articles” (65). Vulpe suggests that “the poem is not about Spain but a discussion of the intellectual’s political and moral responsibilities conveniently set in Spain where such questions are now, dramatically, a matter of life and death” (40). I suggest that the poem is about many things, Spain included. If the poem tells us one thing it is that the political and moral responsibilities of the intellectual are to be firmly located in the struggles of real people and not in abstract space. The materiality of Spain comes into play not simply through geographic or cultural descriptions that contain a flimsy authenticity, but through the coalescence of Spain and political resolve in the Canadian poetic imaginary. The same issues that Leslie raises in the context of Spain are ubiquitous within the emergent formation of popular-front aesthetics in the Canadian poetic imaginary before and during the Spanish Civil War. In other words, in writing about Spain through socialist parable, Leslie shows the fact that a political poetics can be grounded in Spain but must be heard from both Spain and elsewhere. Leslie’s critique of the distant view acts as a compression of the political ideal of the Spanish republic into the transnational affiliation of humanity within socialist precepts.

Indeed, the fact that the antifascism of the late-1930s acted as a catalyst for so many Canadian poets, of which I have mentioned only a few, speaks to the continued need to create alternative genealogies of Canadian literary production through paying close critical attention to historical moments in which political crises mould the Canadian poetic imaginary and enunciations of a national poetics. In the case of the Spanish Civil War, we see an articulation of a modernist practice in *New Frontier* that has deep connections with both transnational politics and transnational modernist production. The innovation in Canadian poetry brought forth in the poetic response to the Spanish Civil War in the pages of *New Frontier*—articulations of metapoetic modernist, pastoral, and parabolic poetry—remains a signal moment in the development of modernist practice in Canada, but it is also at this moment that Canadian poetry develops a unique voice that resonates with simultaneous poetic production around the globe. In other words, though the emergence of Canadian modernism was experienced through a form of uneven temporal development when compared to the emergence of a more broad transnational modernism, this may be the moment when a

broad movement of Canadian modernist production breaks free of the uneven development by responding to a world historical event at the same time as more established articulations of transnational modernism.

NOTES

- 1 Alexander Maitland Stephen was a poet and novelist who, after his return from service in the First World War, settled in Vancouver. His associations with the Vancouver Poetry Society, Canadian Authors' Association, League of Western Writers, Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the League Against War and Fascism, and the Canadian League for Peace and Democracy made him an active participant in the political and literary life of 1930s Canada. He wrote two novels, four volumes of poetry, two volumes of plays, and edited two anthologies of Canadian verse. The Alexander Stephen fonds are held at the University of British Columbia.
- 2 Margaret Day's role in Canadian literature is not widely known. She was a schoolteacher who had lived in London and studied voice at the Royal College of Music in the early 1930s. Through her experience of the Depression in Montreal she became radicalized, prompting a trip to Russia. She met Dr. Norman Bethune at her Marxist study group and took him as a lover prior to his leaving for Spain. She would go on to marry Canadian painter Philip Surrey and become a founding member of Montreal's *Preview* group of writers, although she left the group after the third issue. The Philip and Margaret Surrey fonds are held at Library and Archives Canada (MG 30 D368). See Patricia Whitney's "First Person Feminine: Margaret Day Surrey" in *Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews* 31 (1992): 86–92.
- 3 Because Livesay and Kennedy are well known figures within the field of Canadian poetry, I have not provided their biographical information.
- 4 Candida Rifkind suggests that "Calling Eagles" was "first published in *Canadian Poetry Magazine* and then in *New Frontier*" (*Comrades* 94). "Calling Eagles" was in fact reprinted in *Canadian Poetry Magazine* in October, four months after it appeared in *New Frontier*.
- 5 For other examples of elegies to Lorca see poems by Dorothy Livesay, George Woodcock, Louis Dudek, Eldon Greir and Mark Frutlin in Vulpe's anthology *Sealed in Struggle*.
- 6 Patricia Morley states that "[o]bviously, [Kennedy] feared that putting his signature to the work would cost him his position with N.W. Ayer" (100). I cannot see any politically apparent minefields in the pseudonymous poems beyond those that appear in "Calling Eagles." In fact, "Calling Eagles" does the hazardous work of naming names.
- 7 These poems appear under the heading "Two Poems." They are printed down the right side of the page, with "And Still We Dream" above "Man Asleep."
- 8 Livesay was critiqued at the time for her sentimentality in an article submitted by Vernon van Sickle to *New Frontier*, entitled "Dorothy Livesay and A.A. [Audrey Alexandra] Brown." For a detailed discussion of this see Irvine's *Editing Modernity: Women and Little-Magazine Cultures in Canada, 1916–1956* (68–69).
- 9 Kenneth Leslie was a Nova Scotian who published six books of poetry. He won the Governor General's Award in 1938 for *By Stubborn Stars and Other Poems*. Leslie moved to New York and in 1938 he began to edit and publish a monthly magazine on religion and politics called *The Protestant Digest*. In 1949 he was accused of "un-American" activities and was listed in *Life* magazine as a communist sympathiser. He returned to Nova Scotia where he died in 1974. The Kenneth Leslie fonds are held at Nova Scotia Archives and

Records Management (MG 1, Vol. 2190-2247) and a separate collection can be found at Dalhousie University Archives and Special Collections (MS-2-232). See Burris Devanney's "Kenneth Leslie: A Biographical Introduction" in *Canadian Poetry: Studies/Documents/Reviews* 5 (1979): 83-104.

WORKS CITED

- Blake, William. "To Spring." *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature: Romantic Poetry and Prose*. Ed. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling. New York: Oxford UP, 1973. 14. Print.
- Day, Margaret. "Ode to Spring, 1937." *New Frontier* 2.3 (1937): 15. Print.
- Denning, Michael. *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Verso, 1996. Print.
- Devanney, Burris. "Kenneth Leslie: A Biographical Introduction." *Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews* 5 (1979): 83-104. Print.
- Doyle, James. *Progressive Heritage: The Evolution of a Politically Radical Literary Tradition in Canada*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2002. Print.
- Irvine, Dean. *Editing Modernity: Women and Little-Magazine Cultures in Canada, 1916-1956*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2008. Print.
- Kennedy, Leo. "Direction for Canadian Poets." *New Frontier* 1.2 (1936): 21-24. Print.
- . "Calling Eagles." *New Frontier* 2.2 (1937): 14. Print.
- . [Leonard Bullen, pseud.]. "Memorial to the Defenders." *New Frontier* 1.10 (1937): 15. Print.
- . [Arthur Beaton, pseud.]. "You, Spanish Comrade." *New Frontier* 1.7 (1936): 23. Print.
- Leslie, Kenneth. "The Censored Editor." *New Frontier* 2.3 (1937): 10-11. Print.
- Livesay, Dorothy. "And Still We Dream." *New Frontier* 1.6 (1936): 5. Print.
- . "Canadian Poetry and the Spanish Civil War." *CV/II* 2.2 (1976): 12-16. Print.
- . "In Preparation." *New Frontier* 1.10 (1937): 7. Print.
- . "Man Asleep." *New Frontier* 1.6 (1936): 5. Print.
- . "Poet's Progress." *New Frontier* 2.3 (1937): 23-24. Print.
- . "Spain." *Marxist Quarterly* 18 (1966): 2. Print.
- . "Spain." *New Frontier* 2.2 (1937): 16. Print.
- Lyon, Janet. *Manifestos: Provocations of the Modern*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1999. Print.
- Morley, Patricia. *As Though Life Mattered: Leo Kennedy's Story*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1994. Print.
- Nelson, Cary. *Revolutionary Memory: Recovering the Poetry of the American Left*. New York: Routledge, 2001. Print.
- Rifkind, Candida. *Comrades and Critics: Women, Literature, and the Left in 1930s Canada*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2009. Print.
- . "Labours of Modernity: The Literary Left in English Canada, 1929-1939." Diss. York University, 2003. Print.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "Ode to the West Wind." *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature: Romantic Poetry and Prose*. Ed. Harold Bloom and Lionel Trilling. New York: Oxford UP, 1973. 447. Print.
- Stephen, A.M. "Madrid." *New Frontier* 2.1 (1937): 9. Print.
- Vulpe, Nicola, ed., with Maha Albari. *Sealed in Struggle: Canadian Poetry & the Spanish Civil War: An Anthology*. La Laguna, Tenerife: Center for Canadian Studies, Universidad de la Laguna, 1995. Print.
- Whitney, Patricia. "First Person Feminine: Margaret Day Surrey." *Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews* 31 (1992): 86-92. Print.

Keys to Success

Control:

Be Buddha cubicled. Extend
consciousness as far as these four
lamine-grey walls. Always strike at the point
behind the computer screen
for maximum impact. This career
path is ergonomically fitted to
your sitting form. Imagine a plumb line dangling
from the base of the skull, down through storeys,
penetrating sewers and subway tunnels,
touching the untouched earth.
Just to fathom this, to know how far down
sympathy can go. Reel it back now;
lunch is over. This is control.

Alter:

Be company guppy Monday, water cooler shark
Tuesday. Become human resource
putty. Privilege plasticity, and relocate
at the drop of a post-it note.
Downsize your I, and multifunction
as an all-in-one. Above all, alternately sacrifice
complacency and comfort on the company alter.

Delete:

Memorize the abridged *Art of War*
and take a katana to any fat in your system.
Decapitate your non-work selves
with devastating keystrokes. Eastern philosophy,
even superficially grasped, may be a salve.
Cancer, you will learn, is but a waste
of company resources, so when in doubt
delete, delete, delete.

Conclusion:

This program of self-actualization
through overtime was devised
by the executives at Golden Thread
central command. When you have mastered
each skill, the three pinstriped Fates
will join in holding down your three keys,
and your long apprenticeship
will be finally complete.

Book Policies and Copyright in Canada and Quebec

Defending National Cultures

Most of the books that Canadians read are of foreign origin. Despite the existence of Canadian publishers, the book-publishing industry in Canada continues to consist overwhelmingly of importation, exclusive agency, and branch-plant publishing.¹ In 2006, imports, exclusive agencies, and branch-plant publications together accounted for approximately 78% (\$2.16 billion) of the total value of books sold in Canada (\$2.76 billion); Canadian publishers' own titles made up the remaining 22% (\$596 million) of domestic sales (see Table 1). These figures, compiled by Statistics Canada, represent the whole country; the view from the province of Quebec is somewhat different. There, imports and branch-plant publications accounted for approximately 55% (\$383 million) of the total value of books sold in 2006 (\$699 million), while Québécois publishers' own titles took the other 45% (\$317 million) (see Table 2). Statistics must be approached with caution, of course: book sales do not neatly equate with reading or cultural importance, the differentiation between "local" and "foreign" is complex, and the Quebec data, collected by the Observatoire de la culture et des communications du Québec (OCCQ), cannot simply be combined with those of Statistics Canada, because different principles underlie them—the OCCQ classifies books from other Canadian provinces as imports, for example. Nevertheless, it is safe to state short of evidence to the contrary that foreign books predominate in the Canadian market overall and enjoy a lesser but still major presence in Quebec in particular, where local publishing has achieved more marked results.

Table 1. Book Sales in Canada in 2006

	<i>Sales in Millions</i>	<i>Share of Can. Market</i>
Books Published in Canada*	\$1,502	54%
By Canadian Publishers	\$766	
Own Titles	\$596	22%
Educational	\$249	
Children's Books	\$52	
Other Trade, All Formats	\$202	
Scholarly, Reference, Professional, Technical	\$93	
Exclusive Agencies	\$170	6%
Educational	\$84	
Children's Books	\$30	
Other Trade, All Formats	\$46	
Scholarly, Reference, Professional, Technical	\$9	
By Foreign-Controlled Firms Operating in Canada	\$737	
Own Titles	\$348	13%
Educational	\$203	
Children's Books	x	
Other Trade, All Formats	\$84	
Scholarly, Reference, Professional, Technical	x	
Exclusive Agencies	\$389	14%
Educational	\$130	
Children's Books	\$92	
Other Trade, All Formats	\$144	
Scholarly, Reference, Professional, Technical	\$23	
Books Imported into Canada	\$1,255	46%
Printed books and similar printed matter n.e.s.	\$628	
Rack-size paperback books	\$165	
Hardbound books n.e.s.	\$167	
Art and pictorial books	\$14	
Technical, scientific, and professional books	\$221	
Liturgical books	\$22	
Children's picture books	\$31	
Children's drawing or colouring books	\$7	
Total	\$2,757	100%

Data represent all languages and all provinces (including Quebec). Figures may appear not to add up due to rounding.

* Surveyed publishers, both French and English, representing 95% of industry revenues.

x Suppressed for reasons of confidentiality.

n.e.s.—not elsewhere specified

Sources: Statistics Canada, Service Industries Division, *Book Publishers, 2006*, catalogue no. 87F0004X (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2009), tables 2-2 (p. 11), 10-2 (p. 19), 11-2 (p. 20). Statistics Canada, Imports and Exports (International Trade Statistics), Canadian International Merchandise Trade database, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/trade-commerce/data-donnee-eng.htm> (accessed 29 April 2009).

Table 2. Book Sales in Quebec in 2006

	<i>Sales in Millions</i>	<i>Share of Qc. Market</i>
Books Published in Quebec	\$401	57%
By Québécois Publishers	\$317	45%
Educational	\$79	
Other	\$238	
By Foreign-Controlled Firms Operating in Quebec	\$84	12%
Educational	\$51	
Other	\$33	
Books Imported into Quebec*	\$299	43%
Educational	\$7	1%
Other	\$292	42%
Total	\$699	100%

Data represent books in all languages. Figures may not add up due to rounding.

* Including books from other Canadian provinces.

Source: Observatoire de la culture et des communications du Québec, *Statistiques en bref* 33 (December 2007).

The primary sources of these foreign books in Canada are, as they always have been, the United States for books in English and France for books in French. From time to time, Canadians have viewed American and French books as vectors of acculturation, tools of imperialism, and dangerous threats to Canadian or Québécois national culture. Although the rhetoric of these views may sometimes swell toward excessive nationalism, they should not simply be dismissed: the economic ground that gives rise to them merits scrutiny. It is true that local trade-book publishing, in constant rivalry with foreign firms, has developed slowly on the Canadian terrain, achieving the characteristic autonomy of the specialist publisher only after 1920 in Quebec and after 1960 in Ontario and the other provinces. Assuredly, Canada's configuration as a massive importer and a small original producer of books has much to do with its colonial past, and one need only look to Australia for confirmation of the idea that a society of immigrant settlers tends to nourish itself first and foremost on literature from elsewhere. Like Canada, Australia continued to be deluged with books from abroad notwithstanding its evolution into a self-governing state: between the First and Second World Wars, for example, barely a tenth of all books sold in Australia were published there (Lyons 20). But to accept that a colonial history necessarily precludes originality in publishing would be to efface the actual operations of cultural and economic power, not to mention the telling differences among colonial

situations. Through the twentieth century, the overwhelming majority of Australia's imported books came from London, and the "mighty Paternoster Row Machine" grappled Australian bookselling to itself with hoops of steel (Nile and Walker 7). This was never the case for Canada, despite its subjection to the British crown. The question therefore merits closer scrutiny: why and how has Canada been such an importer of books?

In order to explain the foreign versus the domestic book in Canada, it is necessary to understand the forces that have structured the dynamics of the national book trade. The purpose of this paper is to describe the twentieth-century emergence of independent trade-book publishing in central Canada as a function of government policy, within an inherited culture and economy of importation. The *History of the Book in Canada / Histoire du livre et de l'imprimé au Canada (HBiC/HLIC)* has assembled a wealth of information on this topic; this paper will present an interpretive summary. The conditions that permitted the prevalence of the foreign book in English Canada and Quebec were different in each case. Whereas the United States dynamically exploited the law of copyright to protect its own industry and wrest the English-Canadian market away from Britain, cultural-linguistic affinities were sufficient for France to dominate Quebec as long as international copyright was not disturbed. Canadian governments at the federal and provincial levels eventually found means of intervening. Although their nationalist motivations were similar, their policies to nurture and protect English-Canadian publishing on the one hand and Québécois publishing on the other have been different. The two separate industries that have developed are now growing in some instances toward international influence of their own, but their survival depends upon the policies under which they have flourished.²

The Foreign Book in Canada

The trend of printers and publishers in the United States supplying most of the books sold to the English-Canadian market began after the American Revolution and continued throughout the twentieth century. In 1927, despite the nationalism prompted by the First World War, Canada imported a total of \$14 million in books and printed matter; of this, \$12 million (85%) was from the United States. By contrast, Canadian exports in the same category totalled only \$1 million, less than a tenth of imports (Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics 91, 231). The situation was no different in the 1950s, when 10% of the English-language books sold in Canada were produced there

and 85% were imported from the United States (Wolfe 542). Canadian publishing increased noticeably in the 1960s: in 1969, 35% of all books sold in Canada were manufactured there, while 65% were imported from abroad. Nevertheless, foreign books continued to prevail (Ontario 123).³

Until about 1970, the dominant figure in the Canadian literary economy was not the specialist publisher but the *publisher-agent*, the local supplier of a foreign publisher's books. The Canadian publisher-agent was dependent on but not totally controlled by its foreign principals, dealing with several at once to sell one, some, or all of their books in Canada. From its beginnings until the 1960s, McClelland and Stewart was chiefly a publisher-agent. A *branch*, by contrast, was owned by and sold only the books of its parent company, as Macmillan of Canada did when it was founded in Toronto in 1905; with the passage of time, however, Macmillan of Canada began selling other foreign publishers' books too, thus adapting to the role of publisher-agent. Successful publisher-agents dabbled in original Canadian publishing on the side but confessed it to be unprofitable (Gray 58). It was a luxury, pursued for reasons of prestige and financed by success in other fields, such as textbooks: if Macmillan published original fiction by Morley Callaghan in the 1920s, for example, it was the sale of 100,000 copies of its Canadian Readers in the same decade that allowed it to do so (Parker, "Trade and Regional" 170; Clark, "Rise and Fall" 227). In general, the reign of the publisher-agent explains how it was that many hundreds of thousands of books could be bought by Canadian readers every year but original literary publishing remain rare: the heart of the *agency system* lay not in the investing in new writing by local authors but in the diffusion of foreign books to the Canadian market. The agency system took its immediate shape from the Canadian Copyright Act of 1900, which introduced the necessary measures for an English-Canadian firm to acquire and enforce a monopoly on the importation of a work (Parker, "Agency System" 163-64). The ultimate reason for the agency system and for the wider predominance of American books in modern Canada, however, was rooted in older conditions of the Canadian book trade.

Canada was caught in a disjunction between British and American policy on copyright, a disjunction that reached back to the American Revolution and persisted until the United States signed the Berne Convention in 1888. Whereas British copyright became increasingly universal in principle and international in scope, American copyright long held on to elements of national protectionism. As part of the British Empire but also the North American continent, and with a large anglophone population, Canada was

caught in the wake of both. If there is one instrument of the external policy of foreign states that has most affected trade and culture in English-Canadian books, it is surely the law of copyright.

Copyright law stunted the growth of Canadian publishing in three ways. First, British law prevented the Canadian industry from ever enjoying a period of unauthorized reprinting, the one exception being Québécois reprinting during the Nazi occupation of France. All parts of the American book trade flourished after the American Revolution, because local printers were liberated from the restrictions of British copyright (St. Clair 382-83). This liberty, in turn, fostered an accessible literary culture characterized by inexpensive books, widespread reading, decentralized publishing, and a practical mode of authorship that valued not only original creation but also emulation and adaptation (McGill 1-8, 149). These cheap books circulated in British North America. They largely satisfied the anglophone reading public, as books from France did the francophone; but in English Canada the reaction against imports came early. Almost from the beginning English-Canadian printers, prospering on government documents and newspapers, deplored Canada's captivity to the American book. When in 1867 Confederation ushered in a new sense of nationhood, they attempted to set up a local reprint industry. The Belford Brothers of Toronto were perhaps the boldest, notoriously reprinting Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* before the American edition had been released and selling their copies not only in Canada but also by mail across the United States. In 1876, however, the Scottish author Samuel Smiles, prompted by his American publisher, successfully sued the Belfords for piracy. The case of *Smiles v. Belford* established that Canadians could not reprint British copyright works without permission, even if the authors were American (MacLaren, "Copyright" 14-63).⁴ French authors were also protected in Canada, by virtue of British treaties with France dating back to 1851. In 1886 Britain drew its empire into the Berne Convention, establishing the rule of international copyright in Canada, which continues to this day (Seville 51, 114-18).

Second, nineteenth-century British law explicitly allowed American "piracies" to be imported into Canada. Colonial authorities wanted the colonists to read British authors, but books published in London were expensive. Unauthorized American reprints of the works of British authors were far cheaper. When the British Copyright Act of 1842 explicitly banned these from the empire, colonies such as Nova Scotia protested that the effect would be to drive the colonists to read only American authors. The British

government responded with the Foreign Reprints Act of 1847, which lifted the ban. Under the 1847 Act, an import duty was to be levied on the imports for the benefit of the British copyright owner. Effective collection of this duty, however, proved difficult. The net result was a commercial pattern of Canadians importing the cheap American edition without hindrance. The Foreign Reprints Act lapsed in 1895, but the pattern had entrenched itself by then, and the upheavals suffered by the British book trade during the First World War only further enabled American publishers to lay claim to Canada.

Third, British and American law denied copyright to original Canadian editions. Thomas Chandler Haliburton's *The Clockmaker*, first published by Joseph Howe in Halifax in 1836, was reprinted without permission in London, Philadelphia, and Boston. The reprinting made the fame of the author, prompting comparisons to Charles Dickens, but it destroyed the investment of his Nova Scotian publisher. For his later works, the author dealt directly with foreign publishers, who commanded effective copyrights (Parker, *Clockmaker* xxviii-xxxii, xlviii-xlix, 777-82). William Kirby's *Le chien d'or / The Golden Dog: A Legend of Quebec* (1877) suffered a similar fate, bringing the Canadian author renown but little revenue (Cambron and Gerson 123-24). The vulnerability of Canadian editions to reprinting continued into the twentieth century, for although Britain extended copyright to Canadian editions in 1886, the American Copyright Act of 1891 did not. The latter granted copyright to foreign authors but included strict formalities: to be eligible for American copyright, a book had to be printed from type set in the United States and two copies had to be deposited at the Library of Congress on or before the date of first publication. Like Haliburton's *The Clockmaker*, Ralph Connor's *Black Rock*, first published in Toronto and London in 1898, failed to secure American copyright and was reprinted across the United States (MacLaren, "Magnification"). The lesson for Canadians was simple: do not publish books at home. Publication in Canada alone secured no copyright in the United States until 1962, when Canada signed the Universal Copyright Convention, and problems persisted until the United States finally entered the Berne Convention in 1988. L.M. Montgomery, Morley Callaghan, Sinclair Ross, and other Canadian writers of the earlier twentieth century could not advance their careers as authors without finding a publisher in the United States.

The profound affinity that English Canadians have to American culture stems partly from this lasting dependence on American books. Until the 1960s, distribution was the highest niche that a Canadian firm could

safely occupy in the hierarchy of the book trade, and the primary form of Canadian “publishing” of general literature was to import the American edition. Canadians were not unaware of the obstacles posed by copyright to domestic publishing (Nair), but they were unable to remove them, because these were the intended effects of American and British policies aimed at securing the largest possible markets for their own publishers.

In Quebec until the 1920s, it was the imported book from France in general, but also from Belgium in the category of religion, that dominated the market. Contrary to what one might assume, this domination was first and foremost the work of local tradespeople. In effect, it appears that French publishers were hardly interested in the Canadian book trade, contenting themselves with responding to booksellers’ orders without prospecting further.⁵ It must be kept in mind that the market for French-language books was very small. Quebec numbered only 1,650,000 inhabitants in 1900, including thousands of anglophones. Moreover, despite the massive influx of Roman Catholic teaching orders in the nineteenth century, the francophone population showed a certain backwardness in its efforts at literacy.⁶ The result of these particular sociodemographic conditions was that French firms generally neglected Quebec in favour of other export markets such as the Antilles or South America.

By contrast, Québécois tradespeople were anxious to import books from Europe in order to compensate for the insufficiency of local production. The immediate objective was to respond to the needs of institutions and, more broadly, to those of the whole population; the larger stakes were the preservation of French culture in America. This was the high task tackled by booksellers such as Édouard-Raymond Fabre, the great friend of Louis-Joseph Papineau, and Octave Crémazie, the celebrated author of “Le Drapeau de Carillon,” whose commerce was coupled with unequivocal patriotism. These booksellers did not hesitate to cross the Atlantic in order to conclude trade agreements: Fabre for example dealt with the Bossanges in Paris, and at the beginning of the twentieth century Joseph-Pierre Garneau visited the firms of Mame and Casterman. Thus bookselling, and by extension the whole book trade, formed around the imported book. Booksellers who also acted as suppliers enjoyed the greatest success. Selling not only to institutions and individuals for final consumption but also to retailers for resale, these *libraires-grossistes* (wholesalers) achieved significant control over local supply. They did not acquire exclusive agencies to the same extent

as their English-Canadian counterparts: the 1900 Act, designed to function in accord with British copyright, was of little relevance to French works (Michon, "Book Publishing" 199). Nevertheless, the biggest *libraires-gros-sistes*, such as Garneau (in Quebec City), Beauchemin, and Granger Frères (both in Montreal), positioned themselves as the main importers and were therefore the dominant players in the Quebec book trade from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s.

Local interests therefore, responding to economic and ideological pressures, were at the origin of the importation of French books into Quebec—the other factor, of course, being the paucity of local publishing. In the absence not only of sufficient readers but also (as the author Jean Narrache [pseudonym of Émile Coderre] would complain) of competent authors, publishing activity had great difficulty in establishing itself. Furthermore, writers, nourished on French culture, had the tendency to dismiss local production as the work of amateurs. It was this amateurism that the journalist Jules Fournier was still denouncing in 1905-06 when he debated the existence of a French-Canadian literature with the French critic, Charles ab der Halden (Beaudet 117-31). In short, unfavourable social and cultural conditions explain the feebleness of Québécois publishing in this period. The availability of the foreign book was perhaps no help, but this was not orchestrated by interests abroad as was the case in English Canada.

Political Intervention

The situation in Quebec changed after the First World War. The population, from then on predominantly urban,⁷ continued to grow and efforts at improving schooling rates began to bear fruit. A mass reading public emerged, as the growing success of novels and popular magazines at this time attests (Goulet and Landry). But it was above all the particular measures implemented by the provincial government of Quebec that permitted local publishing to take flight. True, the desire of the provincial government to support cultural initiatives may be traced to the beginning of the nineteenth century, when French-Canadian culture faced the threat of assimilation. In the realm of the book, this support manifested itself most notably from 1876, the year in which Abbé Henri-Raymond Casgrain launched the first series of school prize books written and autographed by French-Canadian authors (Robidoux 213-16). Casgrain was the government-appointed editor and published the series with funds allocated from the provincial secretary, while the Department of Public Instruction oversaw

the distribution of the books to schools. Through this series, authors such as Philippe Aubert de Gaspé and Patrice Lacombe became known to thousands of readers, the total number of books given out in the first decade reaching an estimated 175,000 (Landry 86).

Without losing sight of such cases, it is nevertheless clear that intervention by the provincial government intensified from 1920 on. The Liberal government of Louis-Alexandre Taschereau, prompted by French-Canadian nationalism, undertook to provide Quebec with an artistic and intellectual elite. The task of planning the envisioned cultural and educational development fell to Athanase David, the provincial secretary (Harvey). Authors were among the first to benefit from the generosity of the government, which took the form of literary prizes, subsidies to authors' associations, money for publicity, and above all book purchases (Vincent, "Book Policy" 46-48). In committing itself to buy part of the print run of certain titles (the authors were obliged to submit a request to the provincial secretary) in order then to distribute them to libraries, to institutions, and even to foreign countries, the Department of the Provincial Secretary freed authors from the financial risks inherent to publication. This system, which continued until the 1960s, benefitted the publisher as much as the author, allowing the former to cultivate an existence beyond the activity of printing or bookselling. Still, it would be criticized for operating selectively, at the entire discretion of the provincial secretary.

The Department of Public Instruction also put in place a measure that had a direct impact on the development of publishing. The Choquette Act of 1925 stipulated that half of the money allocated for the purchase of school prize books had to be spent on books published in Canada.⁸ In other words, the act aimed to support local production by securing annual sales in the lucrative schoolbook market. This measure bore fruit. The many series of school prize books launched by the *libraires-grossistes* such as Beauchemin as well as by newcomers to the publishing game such as Albert Lévesque, who was one of the first specialist publishers in Quebec, are evidence of its success.

The first Québécois firms devoted to publishing appeared from the 1920s on. Right away, they adopted a nationalist discourse to promote their books. However, they did not strive so much to restrict the French book (as the clergy, who mistrusted it, may have desired) as to convince readers to support French-Canadian culture, threatened by assimilation. The relative tolerance with regard to imported books lasted until the 1960s.

The Second World War reignited nationalist sentiment in English Canada. In response, both federal and provincial governments began to investigate ways to establish Canadian culture against the tide of Americanization. They were aided by a generally prosperous postwar economy. Led by Alberta in 1946, various provinces established their own arts boards. The greater financial power of the federal government was initially withheld from such initiatives, perhaps because the British North America Act made no mention of the arts as a federal responsibility and expressly gave all authority over matters of education to the provinces. But this changed with the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (1949-51), chaired by Vincent Massey. The commission was formed to address the specific issues of public policy in radio and television, but its report, published in 1951, made crucial recommendations for the whole sphere of Canadian culture (Litt 37-38). Indeed, English Canada traces much of its present cultural profile to the Massey Report's nationalist call for state sponsorship of the arts.

The Massey Report did not itself propose a book policy. Its recommendations did, however, expand the possibilities of Canadian print culture. It defended the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, which commissioned original works for radio and later television. It proposed that the federal government expand Canadian universities and found a national library, recommendations that were soon followed. Most importantly, it demanded a federal body to nurture the arts, and this was born as the Canada Council for the Arts in 1957 (Litt 39; Latham). Once in place, the Council initiated many effective programs. It took over the administration of the Governor General's Literary Awards in 1959 and has since then steadily increased the categories of prizes and the amount of money attached to each (Luneau and Panofsky 118). The Writer-in-Residence program, created in 1965, has provided well-paid, temporary appointments for poets, novelists, and authors of non-fiction at universities and libraries across the country (Earle). Collectively, these consequences of the Massey Report substantially increased the economic opportunities for Canadians to write and work with books despite the continuing predominance of American editions.

Direct investment in book publishing became possible when American copyright law changed to extend national treatment to Canadian editions. This occurred in 1962, when Canada ratified the Universal Copyright Convention (UCC) (UNESCO, "Universal Copyright Convention"). The United States had adopted the UCC in 1954 as an alternative to the stricter

Berne Convention. Under the UCC, the United States dropped most of its formalities: independent Canadian editions now secured American copyright as if they had been published in the United States (except if the author was an American resident, in which case the formalities still applied) (Curry 145, 147). This greatly lightened the threat of American reprinting, largely securing the American market for books published in Canada alone. Serious investment in English-Canadian book publishing could at last begin.

The investment came first through private enterprise and then through public policy. Original English-Canadian publishing initially flourished in the form of the small press—the independent publisher of books or magazines containing experimental literature or representing marginalized social groups. Eight hundred small presses are known to have existed in Canada between 1918 and 1980, and almost all of them appeared after 1960. Generally they were founded for artistic or ideological motives, and many were short-lived. Some survived, however, maturing into commercially successful publishers, such as Coach House Press, House of Anansi Press, Tundra Books, and Talonbooks (McKnight 311). Government funding for publishers evolved after the small press had demonstrated that independent Canadian publishing was now practical.

In 1970, two well-known Toronto publisher-agents, Gage and Ryerson, were bought by American competitors. Ryerson had a prestigious record in original literary publishing and the sale raised a public outcry against the foreign control of Canadian culture. The Ontario government reacted by striking an inquiry, the Ontario Royal Commission on Book Publishing. Immediately another Toronto firm, McClelland and Stewart, which since 1963 had boldly shifted the balance of its operations away from exclusive agency toward original publishing, announced that it too was on the verge of bankruptcy. The insolvency of this firm raised particular alarm because of its accomplishment in publishing new Canadian writers, such as Leonard Cohen and Margaret Laurence (MacSkimming 129-39), and because of its unique series of quality paperbacks, the New Canadian Library. The New Canadian Library, which had been launched in 1958 in collaboration with Malcolm Ross, an English professor at Queen's University, was central to the teaching of Canadian literature: though not the first, it was the most successful venture to republish Canadian writing from the past, much of which had first appeared abroad and was long out of print. The New Canadian Library was the foundation upon which the teaching of Canadian literature at schools and universities was rising (Friskney 3-5, 65, 87). In order to save

McClelland and Stewart, the Ontario government followed the advice of the Royal Commission and in 1971 lent this company a million dollars on generous terms. This unprecedented public intervention marked a turning point for Canadian publishing: henceforth it would be regarded not as an individual luxury but as a cultural industry. Similar loans to other Canadian firms followed (Litt 41; MacSkimming 147-49).

Over the 1970s, Canadian book policy evolved from these emergency one-time loans into sophisticated granting programs. At the federal level, the Canada Council tried different forms of financial assistance beginning in 1972, including grants for specific publications, a book-purchase program inspired by that of Quebec, co-publishing ventures, publicity campaigns (such as National Book Week), translation funding, funding for children's literature, and a promotion and distribution program. The provinces instituted similar measures, such as British Columbia's book-purchase programs for libraries; apart from Quebec, however, the vast majority of provincial subsidies were offered by Ontario (Litt 43-44). Most of these initiatives operated on the concept of assessing and succouring cultural value without regard to the market; some commentators criticized them for keeping publishers alive but not making them more competitive. In response, the Canadian Book Publishing Development Program (CBPDP) of 1979 introduced funding strategies that were tied to financial performance, such as giving larger grants to companies with higher sales levels. In 1986, this program was reborn as the Book Publishing Industry Development Plan (BPIDP), which increased available funding for general operations but stiffened the financial criteria to be met by publishers applying for grants. In 1993, these criteria thickened to include a rising sales minimum, which a company had to exceed annually to be eligible for a BPIDP grant, and other numerical thresholds relating to unsold inventory, productivity, and debt (Lorimer 21-23). Then, in 1995, the Liberal government of Jean Chrétien abruptly reduced the budget of the BPIDP and accompanying subsidies for distribution and marketing by a stunning 55% (Lorimer 24), and in the wake of this cutback at least one publisher has decried the vestigial program as dysfunctional (Lecker). Thus, while government subsidization of Canadian-owned book publishers has proliferated, the cultural and industrial rationales now informing it exist in tension: the English-Canadian book is by no means secure from the powerful neo-liberal view that the best grant would be no grant at all.

What remains of the subsidization of English-Canadian publishing now occurs in the context of the global copyright regime. Canadian publishers

market and distribute their books internationally, but they also risk being swallowed up by foreign competitors. For example, May Cutler, the owner of Tundra Books, a Montreal children's publisher, attended European book fairs to arrange for the sale of her editions in foreign countries and established a branch office in New York in order to distribute them directly to the United States. In 1995, however, she sold her company to McClelland and Stewart, and in 2000 McClelland and Stewart was partly donated to the University of Toronto and partly sold off to the multinational publisher, Random House (in turn controlled by the German media conglomerate, Bertelsmann AG); Random House took over key aspects of the Canadian firm's operation (Macskimming, 276-79, 374-75; Pouliot, Saltman, and Edwards 224). Such a case suggests that Canada will continue to be a place where a national culture struggles to assert itself within a language community and a structure of trade that are fundamentally international.

In Quebec too, the Second World War ushered in major changes to the world of the book. The war interrupted publishing in France and prompted exceptional regulations in Canada, suddenly making Quebec the main supplier of French books for the world. Permitted by federal licence to reprint French copyright works, Québécois publishers experienced a meteoric rise (Michon, *Histoire de l'édition littéraire au Québec*, 2: 23-322). The resumption of publishing in post-war France, however, precipitated their rapid decline. A number of them attempted to convert themselves into distributors of French books, such as André Dussault, co-owner of Éditions Variétés during the war and founder of Librairies Dussault afterwards. But those who managed to survive were rare, especially since the small Québécois market soon saw the arrival of new competition. At the beginning of the 1950s, the French firms Flammarion and Hachette opened bookstores in Quebec with the goal of managing their own distribution (Brisson, "World of Bookselling" 397). Their presence had no immediate consequences, but by the end of the 1960s, when the distribution system had been irremediably compromised and when the development of education had substantially increased the demand for books, they were striving to occupy the market.

At the end of the 1950s, publishing and bookselling in Quebec were in crisis. The election of a new provincial government headed by Jean Lesage, however, aroused much hope. This Liberal government, which intended to take Quebec out of an era of socio-religious conservatism—"la grande

noirceur”—was the motor of the Quiet Revolution. From the outset, it announced that it would listen to the cultural sector: in 1961 the Department of Cultural Affairs was created to oversee, among other things, aid to publishing and writing. It launched a host of programs from 1962 on (now administered by the Société de développement des entreprises culturelles [SODEC]); these, combined with those of the Canada Council, allowed Québécois publishing to catch its breath and then to prosper (Faure). Whereas the Société des éditeurs canadiens du livre français included only 29 companies in 1959–60 (Vincent, “Professionnels” 331), there were 70 registered publishers in 1983, and 113 in 1998 (Ménard 139–40). Among the ones to leave their mark on the 1960s and 1970s were les Éditions du Jour, le CLF, Parti Pris, and l’Hexagone.

Booksellers, by contrast, continued to struggle to escape the slump. At the start of the 1960s, institutions such as libraries, schools, and colleges were still supplied by the *libraires-grossistes* if not directly by educational publishers. Deprived of these reliable sales, small booksellers had trouble staying afloat. Trade-book publishers feared that the weakness of the bookselling network would eventually compromise their existence. They denounced this situation in a memorandum presented to the provincial government in 1962, demanding better regulation of the book trade (Conseil supérieur du livre). The government’s response was disappointing: although it did pass an act in 1965 for the accreditation of bookstores, which broke the stranglehold of the *libraires-grossistes*, it did not prevent institutions from doing business directly with the publishers (Vincent, “Conseil supérieur”). This policy was subsequently revised many times, but in the absence of any real political will to intervene in commerce, the problem persisted until the passage of Bill 51 in 1979.

After the disappearance of the *libraires-grossistes* at the end of the 1960s, new commercial practices emerged. *Distribution exclusive*—exclusive distribution on the French model—imposed itself. A number of Québécois publishers attempted to form distribution companies, some successfully (such as Pierre L’Espérance’s Messageries ADP from 1961 on), others less so (Jacques Hébert’s Messageries du Jour, which had to close its doors in the 1970s). Some French publishers decided to do business with Québécois companies—Éditions Robert Laffont dealt with Messageries du Jour, for example, and Les Presses de la Cité and Librairie Larousse also entrusted their distribution to local firms—but many others preferred to open their own branches in Quebec. In 1968, Hachette announced the opening of a second bookstore in Montreal and broke off its contract with a local company in

order to distribute its works itself. Flammarion followed suit in 1970, founding the distributor, Socadis, which Gallimard joined in 1972. Quebeckers reacted with alarm. Intellectuals, artists, and book-trade professionals united to denounce this “cultural imperialism” (Pontaut, Bellefeuille, et al.), targeting especially the actions of “*la pieuvre verte*,” Hachette. The French book would henceforth be perceived as a threat—a veritable instrument of cultural assimilation.

Despite the outcry about the Hachette Affair, a strict regulation of book commerce did not occur until ten years had passed and a nationalist party, the Parti québécois, had come to power. Bill 51 saved the bookselling network. Passed in 1979, implemented in 1980, and still in force today, it obliges public libraries to buy from bookstores in their region. Consequently, the number of Quebec booksellers has grown since 1980 (Ménard 36), in stark contrast to English Canada, where the hegemony of one—Chapters-Indigo—is incontestable. The new law has checked the growth of foreign companies in Quebec’s bookselling sector by specifically denying them access to institutional sales. However, it has not prevented their continuing to control a large part of the total book distribution in Quebec, as the examples of Socadis and Dimédia make clear. In sum, the provincial government has long supported publishing, but only belatedly has it implemented effective measures to impose limits on the presence of foreign interests in the realm of the book. The necessity of this intervention has not been questioned since.

Conclusion

Publishing and bookselling must be governed by intelligent policy if books are to be responsive to local experience. Books are international by default. Migration, curiosity, the quest for markets, and the rise and fall of empires generally make them so, and the recent emergence of a global copyright regime has increased the incentives for exportation and corporate takeovers. But the example of a mid-sized country such as Canada shows that state intervention is crucial to achieving a desirable equilibrium between exposure to the wealth of the world’s culture on the one hand and self-knowledge and sovereignty on the other. The imported book dominated nineteenth-century Canada: Quebec counted on the French book to ensure the survival of its language and culture in an increasingly anglophone federation, while English Canada opened itself to American books, including American editions of British authors. In the twentieth century, surges of nationalism against Americanization on the one hand and *canadianisation* followed by

francisation on the other have resulted in various forms of state intervention, which have had contrasting effects. In the long historical view, literary enterprise has developed and specialist publishing has undeniably increased in both cases. But a closer analysis of the contemporary moment points to stark differences. As Tables 1 and 2 show, Quebec has achieved near parity between the market share of regional and foreign publishers; English Canada has not. The decisive difference is Quebec's regulation of bookselling. English Canada has contented itself with granting programs that, although they support culturally autonomous expression in important ways, are being hollowed out by drastic budget cuts, despite not yet having produced balance between domestic and foreign control of the books that Canadians read. In Quebec broad stability exists for the spectrum of roles involved in the production of local literature; in English Canada, independent bookselling risks vanishing altogether. As this crucial link to Canadian readers deteriorates, local publishing will lose what little market share it now possesses and grow increasingly dependent on shrinking government grants. A decisive change of policy on the example of Quebec may be in order to defend the possibility of independent publishing in Canada and the diverse forms of consciousness and responsibility that such independence enables.

NOTES

A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the conference, Réseaux et circulation internationale du livre: Diplomatie culturelle et propagande 1880-1980, Lausanne, Switzerland, 13-15 November 2008. The proceedings of this conference, including a version of this paper in French, will be published by Nouveau Monde Éditions in 2010. Ultimately, the paper springs from the authors' involvement in *History of the Book in Canada / Histoire du livre et de l'imprimé au Canada*, directed by Patricia Lockhart Fleming and Yvan Lamonde and funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

- 1 *Exclusive agencies* are foreign-published books of which a Canadian publisher has negotiated to be the sole local supplier; for reasons explained below, exclusive agency is more common in English Canada than French Canada. *Branch-plant publications* are books published in Canada by a foreign-controlled firm.
- 2 Government and religious publishing, newspapers, and textbooks all flourished in Canada before the twentieth century. By definition less exposed to foreign competition, they have a somewhat different history from that of trade books, or "general literature," the focus of this paper. See Gallichan; Brodeur; Distad; Clark, "Reckless Extravagance"; Clark, "Publishing of School Books"; and Aubin.
- 3 For a full statistical description of twentieth-century Canadian book importation, see Brisson, "International Sources."

- 4 It is important to note that the ruling in *Routledge v. Low* (1868), L.R. 3 H.L. (English and Irish Appeal Cases), 100, permitted American authors to secure British copyright by publishing in London.
- 5 On this subject, Philippe Prévost even speaks of a French book “slump” (*mévente*) in Canada (81-82).
- 6 Michel Verrette argues that this backwardness, which placed Quebec behind most European countries but still ahead of Belgium and Italy, must be analyzed in light of the more recent industrial development of the province (141-42).
- 7 “D'environ 39,9 pour cent en 1901, le taux d'urbanisation atteint 63 pour cent en 1931. Cette année-là, le Québec compte 1 060 649 ruraux et 1 813 606 citadins” (Hamelin and Montminy 23).
- 8 According to the amendment to article 2931 of the School Code, “les commissions scolaires doivent employer à l'achat des livres canadiens la moitié du montant affecté à l'achat des prix” (Farley 8-9, qtd. in Lemieux 90-91).

WORKS CITED

- Aubin, Paul. “School-Book Publishing in Quebec.” Fleming and Lamonde 2: 340-42. Print.
- Beaudet, Marie-Andrée. *Charles ab der Halden: Portrait d'un inconnu*. Montreal: l'Hexagone, 1999. Print.
- Brisson, Frédéric. “International Sources of Supply.” Fleming and Lamonde 3: 389-93. Print.
- . “The World of Bookselling.” Fleming and Lamonde 3: 393-401. Print.
- Brodeur, Raymond. “Religious Books.” Fleming and Lamonde 1: 262-66. Print.
- Cambron, Micheline, and Carole Gerson. “Literary Authorship.” Fleming and Lamonde 2: 119-34. Print.
- Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics (later Statistics Canada). External Trade Branch. *Trade of Canada (Imports for Consumption and Exports) Calendar Year 1927*. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1928. Print.
- Canada. Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences. *Report*. Ottawa: King's Printer, 1951. Print.
- Canada. Statistics Canada. Service Industries Division. *Book Publishers, 2006*. Catalogue no. 87F0004X. Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2009, 6. Print.
- Clark, Penney. “The Publishing of School Books in English.” Fleming and Lamonde 2: 335-40. Print.
- . “‘Reckless Extravagance and Utter Incompetence’: George Ross and the Toronto Textbook Ring, 1883-1907.” *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada / Cahiers de la Société bibliographique du Canada* 46 (2008): 185-236. Print.
- . “The Rise and Fall of Textbook Publishing in English Canada.” Fleming and Lamonde 3: 226-32. Print.
- Conseil supérieur du livre. “Mémoire sur la crise de la librairie au Canada français au début de 1963.” P-319. Fonds Conseil supérieur du livre. Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Montreal. Print.
- Curry, W.E. “The Impact of the U.S. Manufacturing Provisions.” *Royal Commission on Book Publishing: Background Papers*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1972. 143-53. Print.

- Distad, Merrill. "Newspapers and Magazines." Fleming and Lamonde 2: 293-303. Print.
- Earle, Nancy. "The Canada Council for the Arts Writer-in-Residence Program." Fleming and Lamonde 3: 115-16. Print.
- Farley, Paul-Émile. *Livres d'enfants*. Montreal: Les Clercs de St-Viateur, 1929. Print.
- Faure, Sylvie. "Les éditions Leméac (1957-1988), une illustration du rapport entre l'état et l'édition." 2 vols. Diss. U de Sherbrooke, 1992. Print.
- Fleming, Patricia Lockhart, and Yvan Lamonde, gen. eds. *History of the Book in Canada*. 3 vols. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004-07. Print.
- Friskney, Janet B. *New Canadian Library: The Ross-McClelland Years, 1952-1978*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007. Print.
- Gallichan, Gilles. "Official Publications." Fleming and Lamonde 1: 309-20. Print.
- Goulet, Marc-André, and François Landry. "L'édition populaire: Édouard Garand." Michon, *Histoire de l'édition littéraire au Québec*, 1: 313-36. Print.
- Gray, John Morgan. "Book Publishing." *Writing in Canada: Proceedings of the Canadian Writers' Conference, Queen's University, 28-31 July 1955*. Ed. George Whalley. Toronto: Macmillan, 1956. 53-65. Print.
- Hamelin, Jean, and Jean-Paul Montminy. "Québec 1896-1929: une deuxième phase d'industrialisation." *Idéologies au Canada français*. Ed. Fernand Dumont, Jean Hamelin, et Jean-Paul Montminy. Vol. 2, 1900-1929. Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1973. 15-28. Print.
- Harvey, Fernand. "La politique culturelle d'Athanase David, 1919-1936." *Cahiers des dix 57* (2003): 31-83. Print.
- Landry, François. "Prize Books in Quebec." Fleming and Lamonde 3: 86-88. Print.
- Latham, Sheila. "CBC Radio and Anglophone Authors." Fleming and Lamonde 3: 154-56. Print.
- Lecker, Robert. "Would You Publish This Book? Material Production, Canadian Criticism, and *The Theatre of Form*." *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne* 25.1 (2000): 15-36. Print.
- Lemieux, Louise. *Pleins feux sur la littérature de jeunesse au Canada français*. Montreal: Leméac, 1972. Print.
- Litt, Paul. "The State and the Book." Fleming and Lamonde 3: 34-44. Print.
- Lorimer, Rowland. "Book Publishing." *The Cultural Industries in Canada: Problems, Policies and Prospects*. Toronto: Lorimer, 1996. 3-34. Print.
- Luneau, Marie-Pier, and Ruth Panofsky. "Celebrating Authorship: Prizes and Distinctions." Fleming and Lamonde 3: 116-22. Print.
- Lyons, Martyn. "Britain's Largest Export Market." Lyons and Arnold 19-26. Print.
- Lyons, Martyn, and John Arnold, eds. *A History of the Book in Australia*. Vol. 2, 1891-1945: *A National Culture in a Colonised Market*. St. Lucia: U of Queensland P, 2001. Print.
- MacLaren, Eli. "Copyright and the Prevention of Literary Publishing in English Canada, 1867-1920." Diss. U of Toronto, 2007. Print.
- . "The Magnification of Ralph Connor: *Black Rock* and the North American Copyright Divide." *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 101 (2007): 507-31. Print.
- MacSkimming, Roy. *The Perilous Trade: Book Publishing in Canada, 1946-2006*. Toronto: McClelland, 2007. Print.
- McGill, Meredith. *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting 1834-1853*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2003. Print.
- McKnight, David. "Small Press Publishing." Fleming and Lamonde 3: 308-18. Print.

- Ménard, Marc. *Les chiffres des mots: Portrait économique du livre au Québec*. Culture et économie. Montreal: SODEC, 2001. Print.
- Michon, Jacques. "Book Publishing in Quebec." Fleming and Lamonde 3: 199-206. Print.
- , ed. *Histoire de l'édition littéraire au Québec au XX^e siècle*. 2 vols. Montreal: Fides, 1999; 2006. Print.
- Nair, Meera. "The Copyright Act of 1889: A Canadian Declaration of Independence." *Canadian Historical Review* 90.1 (2009): 1-28. Print.
- Narrache, Jean. Letter to Albert Lévesque. 19 Apr. 1935. MSS-061. Fonds de la Société des écrivains canadiens. Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Montreal. Print.
- Nile, Richard, and David Walker. "The 'Paternoster Row Machine' and the Australian Book Trade, 1890-1945." In Lyons and Arnold 3-18. Print.
- Ontario. Royal Commission on Book Publishing. *Canadian Publishers & Canadian Publishing*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1972. Print.
- Parker, George L. "The Agency System and Branch-Plant Publishing." Fleming and Lamonde 3: 163-68. Print.
- , ed. *The Clockmaker: Series One, Two, and Three*. By Thomas Chandler Haliburton. 1836-40. Ottawa: Carleton UP, 1995. Print.
- . "Trade and Regional Publishing in Central Canada." Fleming and Lamonde 3: 168-78.
- Pontaut, Alain, Pierre de Bellefeuille, et al. *La bataille du livre au Québec: Oui à la culture française, non au colonialisme culturel*. Montreal: Leméac, 1972. Print.
- Pouliot, Suzanne, Judith Saltman, and Gail Edwards. "Publishing for Children." Fleming and Lamonde 3: 216-26. Print.
- Prévost, Philippe. *La France et le Canada d'une après guerre à l'autre (1918-1944)*. Saint-Boniface: Blé, 1994. Print.
- Robidoux, Réjean. "Fortunes et infortunes de l'abbé Casgrain." *Mouvement littéraire de Québec, 1860*. Archives des lettres canadiennes 1. Spec. issue of *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa / University of Ottawa Quarterly* Apr.-June 1961: 209-29. Print.
- Seville, Catherine. *The Internationalisation of Copyright Law: Books, Buccaneers and the Black Flag in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. Print.
- St. Clair, William. *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. Print.
- UNESCO. "Universal Copyright Convention, with Appendix Declaration relating to Article XVII and Resolution concerning Article XI. Geneva, 6 September 1952." Web. 15 Apr. 2008.
- Verrette, Michel. *L'alphabétisation au Québec 1660-1900: En marche vers la modernité culturelle*. Québec: Septentrion, 2002. Print.
- Vincent, Josée. "Book Policy in Quebec." Fleming and Lamonde 3: 45-51. Print.
- . "Le Conseil supérieur du livre, du rapport Bouchard à la loi 51: Pour une politique du livre au Québec." *Présence francophone* 45 (1994): 173-91. Print.
- . "Les professionnels du livre à la conquête de leur marché: Les associations professionnelles dans le champ littéraire au Québec (1921-1963)." Diss. U de Sherbrooke, 2002. Print.
- Wolfe, J.N. "The Market for Books in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 24 (1958): 541-53. Print.

Books are Invertebrates

Originating in the germ of an idea, a book gradually accretes pages. In its early stages, a book is a worm: if severed, both parts regenerate. Without a spine, it is extremely vulnerable to predators—notably vicious inner critics with filed teeth. Profoundly unimpressed friends also manage to cull many a larval book from the nurturing shallows of authors' minds. So many meet premature death, in fact, that the spawning ponds of literature are macabre—desk drawers choked with decaying and festering early drafts. Ecologists link the prolific behaviour of mature works—sparking dreams and mating with other thoughts in the minds of readers oblivious to their roles as mere hosts for parasitical concepts—directly to the terrible odds against their offspring.

There is a huge culling at the next stage, as the pupal manuscript begins the attempt to develop an exoskeleton. Without this, it will surely revert to dust having touched so few readers' minds that it has no chance for successful propagation.

Thus, the manuscript leaves its draft-strewn swamp of origin cocooned in a covering letter, manila paper and stamps, and swims through the treacherous tributaries and sorting machines of the international postal system to far away publishing houses. Biologists have been fascinated for years with the complexity and unerring accuracy of literary migratory patterns—thousands of completely unsolicited manuscripts continually squirm through the mail slots of glutton publishing houses—hardly ever do the manuscripts travel to welding shops or casinos by mistake.

Once through the slot, the adolescent manuscript begins trying to mate with every mind it encounters, almost always to find its immature advances rejected, told, "In a word: ick." Some books are more resilient than others—a great many die quick, excruciatingly painful deaths at this point.

Those most suited to prevailing environmental conditions attract an editor. This person has the power to help the book achieve its desperate, immediate goal: mass reproduction. A novel, say, that has achieved all this (the Hard-Covered Poetry Book being critically endangered—most of those spotted are very old, of uncertain virility) then begins its adult life as a stud book. The book may peak anytime from immediately after first encrustation to centuries later. Then again, it may never attain anything that could be called a “peak”: it is hard to predict in the ecological gene pool lottery of conceptual life what will thrive.

Shadows of Indian Title

The Territorial Underpinnings of “The Height of Land”

Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.

—Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 7

Duncan Campbell Scott’s poetry has been increasingly read in the light—or, one might say, shadow—of his influential career in the Department of Indian Affairs, where he worked from 1879 to 1932. Many of Scott’s northern and “Indian” poems are read as imaginative offshoots of the inspection and treaty-making trips that shaped his encounters with Aboriginal peoples and their lands.¹ The influence of these encounters on Scott’s “paradigmatic poem of northern Ontario” (Keith 129), however, has yet to be fully explored. Although “The Height of Land” (1916) was not composed until 1915 (Ware 14), the poem is set on the southern boundary of Treaty 9, which Scott helped to negotiate in the summers of 1905 and 1906.² This “powerful tributary to [Canada’s] northern myth” (Dragland 233) is an intensely lyrical engagement with the elusive meaning of life and poetry. Yet it is also an expression of *territory*: that is, a “designation of claim over land, of *jurisdiction*” (New 21). “The Height of Land” surveys and orders the northern landscape in ways that recall the appropriation and governance of land—the “struggle over geography”—that Scott’s work as a treaty commissioner epitomized.

The earliest discussions of the poem through to those of the early 1990s overlook this dimension of “The Height of Land,” deeming its geographical setting more or less “incidental” to the reverberations of thought and instinct that the poem explores (Keith 129). As Tracy Ware, quoting George Bornstein, reminds us, in the post-Romantic lyric tradition that served

as Scott's "point of departure," "title and setting often simply indicate the place in which an act of mind occurs, and the act itself is the true subject of the poem" (22). Indeed, Scott's poet frequently transcends his physical surroundings to "deeply brood," not on the geography that he so keenly describes elsewhere in the poem, but, rather, on "the incomprehensibility of life" in the most metaphysical of senses (Scott, "Height" 78; Ware 21). Such far-reaching themes as the "impermanence" of the universe (15), "the limitations of language" (15), "the disjunction between man and nature" (18), and the simultaneous allure and inadequacy of both "progressivist optimism" and "primitivist nostalgia" (20) preoccupy the poet and, understandably, have dominated the attention of his critics. "The Height of Land" remains "a journey through the mind of the poet" (Mezei 28).

Its geographical setting has, however, come to play an increasingly prominent role in determining how "The Height of Land" fits into the English-Canadian canon. The poem's masterful assimilation of baseland and hinterland visions into "one large geographical possibility," for instance, provides D.M.R. Bentley with his "phenomenological ground for Canadian poetry" (*Moose* 4). Don McKay, in his introduction to *Open Wide a Wilderness*,³ offers "the image of Duncan Campbell Scott" standing "at a portage on the height of land" as an icon of Canadian nature poetry, reading the poem as an emblematic expression of a distinctly modern, Canadian engagement with wilderness (2-3). Behind McKay lies Stan Dragland's important study of Scott and Treaty 9, which roots "The Height of Land" "in the actual geography of the last phase of the 1906 [treaty] trip—the journey up the Pic River from Heron Bay, over the height of land, to Long Lake Post" (234). Despite these interventions, the poem's setting has yet to receive the close attention it deserves, particularly in the wake of postcolonial and ecocritical discussions that draw attention to the myriad ways in which art is embedded not just in space and place, but in territory. Bentley's "geographical possibility" is ecological, but not political. And while McKay and Dragland are each attuned both to the unnerving presence of Indigenous peoples and spirits in "The Height of Land," and to the history of treaty negotiations that undergirds the poem, neither critic considers it as an articulation of the territorial impetus of the treaty.

Yet Dragland's hesitation on the point of whether "The Height of Land" might be considered one of the "Indian" poems (252) is a particularly fertile moment in his book, one that merits further discussion. "The Height of Land" is interesting precisely because it blurs the categorical distinction between the "Indian" poems and the apparently more benign lyric and

nature poetry that characterizes Scott's work. Its setting holds more than a canoe route, intricately described; more, too, than a northern aesthetic that anticipates the theosophical landscapes of Lawren Harris.⁴ It is also a contact zone across which colonial and Aboriginal worldviews quietly, but nonetheless significantly, shift and collide, the poet a stranger precariously poised in a landscape not fully his own. In 1906, Scott's encounter with the height of land was fraught with the task of transferring political control from its Ojibwa and Cree inhabitants to the Canadian government. His 1916 poem redefines this space as desirable poetic territory, a spiritual resource to be occupied and ordered imaginatively. From the poet's cartographic sense of north and south, to the intimations of beginnings and endings that vacillate through the poem and the unsettling Aboriginal spirit of place that haunts its setting, "The Height of Land" is shaped by a colonial desire to reinvent Ontario's north.

Dreams of a "Lonely North"

Scott's poetic appropriation of space begins with the confident arrival marked by the poem's first line: "Here is the height of land." The survey that follows brings into focus a landscape that can be readily identified as the Precambrian shield of northwestern Ontario, where "The watershed on either hand / Goes down to Hudson Bay / Or Lake Superior" (1-4). The poet and his crew

. . . have come up through the spreading lakes
From level to level,—
Pitching our tents sometimes over a revel
Of roses that nodded all night,
.
Sometimes mid sheaves
Of bracken and dwarf-cornel, and again
On a wide blueberry plain
Brushed with the shimmer of a bluebird's wing. (25-35)

Layers of intricate topographical description anchor the poet's metaphysical flights in the distinctive terrain of the boreal forest. Spruce, poplar, and cedar make up its woods (19, 37, 107). Roses, bracken, dwarf-cornel, blueberries, ferns, and mosses blanket the forest floor (28, 33, 34, 120). From the "rocky islet . . . / With one lone poplar and a single nest / Of white-throat-sparrows that took no rest / But sang in dreams or woke to sing" (36-39), to the smouldering bush-fire and "lakelet foul with weedy growths / . . . Where the paddle stirred unutterable stench" (100-103), Scott evokes a sustained encounter with a wilderness of complex beauty and texture.

These intimate details of the region's geography diversify a much wider picture that Scott also paints of a landscape that is sensed rather than directly observed:

Upon one hand
The lonely north enlaced with lakes and streams,
And the enormous targe of Hudson Bay,
Glimmering all night
In the cold arctic light;
On the other hand
The crowded southern land
With all the welter of the lives of men. (41-48)

Beyond the immediate scene of the camp, with its low-burning fires and encircling spruces, the poem conjures Hudson Bay looming, austere and cold, at the upper edge of the country, while crowds bustle in the cities and towns clustered along its southern border.

Far from providing “only the background” for the poet’s “sustained meditation” (Keith 130), this geographical setting embeds it in a politically significant sense of space. Like the details of the canoe route, the wider vision that “both links and divides the north and south” (Bentley, *Moose* 4) fulfills the treaty’s goals of appropriation and unification. That Scott’s height of land separates not only watersheds but also peoples and qualities of experience recalls its role as treaty boundary. But at the same time that it “partitions Canadian space into two antithetical zones” (4), it also furnishes the poet with the apparently panoptic “view” that allows him to link the “lonely” north and “crowded” south in a single cartographic image. The poet’s easy survey of the province from its northernmost to its southernmost reaches,⁵ with the height of land stretching like a seam between them, embodies the dream of unity that Scott articulated in his 1906 essay on Treaty 9, “The Last of the Indian Treaties.” In this essay, Scott imagined Canada as “a patch-work blanket” of treaties and surrenders: “A map colored to define their boundaries would show the province of Ontario clouded with them,” he wrote, and “as far north as the confines of the new provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta the patches lie edge to edge” (83; see fig. 1). As the official means by which the Crown secured rights to Aboriginal lands, these agreements were integral to the creation of “civilized Canada” as Scott understood it (83). He continues:

Until lately, however, the map would have shown a large portion of the province of Ontario uncovered by the treaty blanket. Extending north of the watershed that divides the streams flowing into Lakes Huron and Superior from those flowing into Hudson Bay, it reached James Bay on the north and the long curled ribbon of

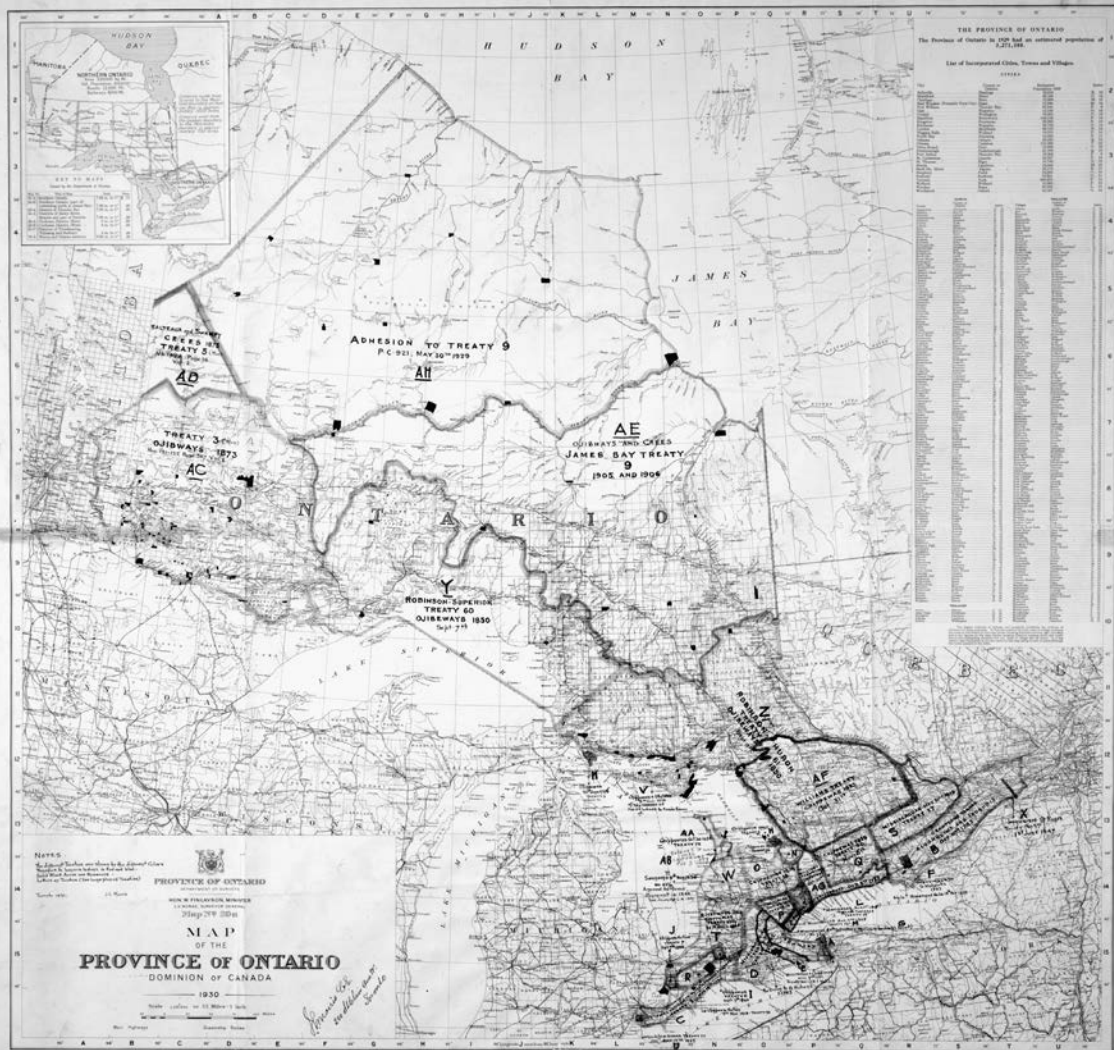


Fig. 1. Many of the spatial patterns of “The Height of Land”—particularly its cartographic sense of the province, and the “lonely north” that is at once distinguished from, and connected to, the “crowded south”—anticipate James Morris’s 1931 map of Ontario treaties, which shows the “patchwork” effect of these territorial agreements. Courtesy of the Archives of Ontario.

the Albany River, and comprised an area of 90,000 square miles, twice as large as the State of New York. (83)

Weaving together the concerns of the poet and the map-maker, the metaphor of the “patch-work blanket” casts the government’s appropriation of Aboriginal lands as a constitutive activity. Something is being added to the land rather than taken away from it, and a certain uneasiness surrounds what has been left “uncovered” and thus subject to what Scott would later refer to as “overshadowing Indian title” (“Indian” [1914] 188).

“The Height of Land” admits few vestiges of Indian title. Without going so far as to use the word “vacant” (the epithet that describes the “North” of Scott’s 1889 poem, “Ottawa: Before Dawn”), its sweeping view of the north presents a stark and apparently unoccupied geography that contrasts sharply with the concentration of people that distinguishes the south. Like the expanse of white space on Morris’ map, Scott’s “lonely north” arguably creates one of those “socially empty” spaces that are among the cartographer’s most powerful fictions (Harley 284, 303). The dearth of human habitation lends an aura of legitimacy to the poet’s presence in—and literary appropriation of—the landscape. Far from the southern crowds, he assumes visual and poetic command over the area with such apparent ease that, even if his tent temporarily “capture[s]” a revel of unsuspecting roses (Scott, “Height” 30), he appears to be no more of an invader than the bluebird or the sparrow that inhabit its woods. That the “Indian guides” fall asleep before the poet properly begins his solitary meditation completes the trope of loneliness upon which his appropriation depends.

Scott’s “lonely north” is only partly an illusion, however. Compared with the southern parts of the province, the wilderness that extends north of Lake Superior is, even now, only sparsely populated. A canoeist can still follow many of its intricate networks of rivers and lakes for days in succession “without seeing a living [human] thing,” as Scott did in the summers of 1905 and 1906 (“Last” 90), and relatively little modern resource development extends “beyond its southern fringes” (Wightman 109). Moreover, the “lonely north” also reflects the territorial shift that Treaty 9 sought to create by allocating 524 square miles of reserves for the Ojibwa and Cree who had once held title to the whole ninety thousand square miles of shield and forest. Scott became aware of the need for a treaty in 1899, when, on an inspection trip to New Brunswick House, he encountered people from farther north who were concerned about the increasing numbers of prospectors and developers on their lands.⁶ The Cree and Ojibwa asked for the Crown’s

protection, which Treaty 9 pledged to deliver by safeguarding hunting, fishing, and trapping rights throughout the region, and allocating reserves that would ensure “a secure and permanent interest in the land” (Canada 11). At the same time, by stating that these same peoples would “cede, release, surrender and yield up . . . for ever, all their rights, titles and privileges whatsoever, to the lands” outside their reserves (19), the treaty also promoted the government’s interests in a “territory [that] contains much arable land, many million feet of pulpwood, untold wealth of minerals, and unharnessed water-powers sufficient to do the work of half the continent” (Scott, “Last” 83).⁷ Framing Aboriginal title as “indeterminate possession” and the wilderness as “waste” and “unproductive,” the treaty text reinterprets the relationship between hunter-gatherers and their territory as a vague occupation of inefficiently used lands (11). It then circumscribes these lands in accordance with colonial ideas about how they ought to be worked and owned, promising to secure Aboriginal property only by limiting it. Treaty 9 thus redefined and opened up space that, like the *terra nullius* of the map, provided developers, settlers, and, arguably, poets with scope for dreams. It is into this space that Scott’s poet moves, exploring northern Ontario as a poetic and spiritual resource.

Scott’s own poetic and spiritual exploration of this region took place not in solitude, however, but in the company of two influential friends: the literary critic, Pelham Edgar, and the painter, Edmund Morris, who accompanied the treaty party in 1906. These men undoubtedly helped to inspire the “poetic explosion” that signalled Scott’s renewed creative interest in a landscape that, in their absence the summer before, he could only describe as “desolate beyond compare, loneliness seven times distilled—a country never to be the glad home of any happy people” (Dragland 30; Scott qtd. in Titley 70). “The Height of Land” stands in a similar relation to this landscape as did Scott on that second journey, reading with Edgar from *The Oxford Book of English Verse* as Morris sketched portraits of people they encountered along the way (see Campbell 120). Insofar as it makes the Precambrian Shield resonate with the diction of a greater Romantic lyric,⁸ and the English language carry tones of a “long Ojibwa cadence” (Scott, “Height” 7), the poem pays homage to the beauty that the collision of “old” and “new” world elements can produce.

If “The Height of Land” recasts the “desolate” wilderness as a place conducive to deep poetic insight, where the poet can “hear / The thrill of life beat up the planet’s margin / And break in the clear susurrus of deep joy / That echoes and reechoes in [his] being” (148-51), it does so by bringing

European poetic conventions into contact with the “lonely north.” Scott’s “Something” that comes “by flashes / Deeper than peace” (50-52) resembles the “sense sublime / Of something far more deeply interfused” that “rolls through all things” in Wordsworth’s “Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey” (95-102), his “ancient disturber of solitude” (64) recalling the “presence that disturbs” Wordsworth’s speaker “with the joy / Of elevated thoughts” (94-5). These and other echoes⁹ extend another “patchwork blanket”—not political so much as poetic—over the “uncovered” aesthetic terrain of northern Ontario.

Beginnings and Endings

Scott’s appropriation of space in “The Height of Land” is predicated not only on the trope of vacancy, but also on a sense of primeval beginnings. “Here” on a hydrological point of origins, where “the soul seems to hear / The gathering of waters at their sources,” the poet discerns the “Something” that “comes by flashes / Deeper than peace,—a spell / Golden and inappellable / That gives the inarticulate part / Of our strange being one moment of release / That seems more native than the touch of time” (66, 50-55). Scott’s choice of the word “native” prompts Dragland’s speculation that this “release” entails a kind of spiritual “homecoming, a momentary return to origins” (249). On the one hand, these “origins” are universal: Scott appeals to a core essence of the human spirit that has no bearings in the mapped world. On the other, when considered alongside his articulation of a “lonely north,” the speaker’s discovery of a primitive spiritual “home” verges on a mythopoeic appropriation of a pre-colonial past¹⁰ through which he can identify more closely with the land.

The poet remains associated with beginnings, but a consciousness of endings hangs over all things Indigenous in this poem—a contrast that further underscores the connection between “The Height of Land” and the import of the treaty as Scott understood it. The poem opens at the close of the day, and the Ojibwa guides are weary (6-7). Their voices are “long” and “mournful” as Potan “declares the ills of life” and Chees-que-ne-ne “makes a . . . sound / Of acquiescence” (7-11). Cloaked in tones of melancholy and resignation, their conversation anticipates the images of impermanence that follow it:

The fires burn low
 With just sufficient glow
 To light the flakes of ash that play
 At being moths, and flutter away
 To fall in the dark and die as ashes. (11-15)

Although the “Indian guides” are not, here, directly associated with the dying fires, a reader familiar with “The Last of the Indian Treaties” will recall its infamous simile: “[t]he Indian nature now seems like a fire that is waning, that is smouldering and dying away in ashes” (82). The echo is eerie, and while in the poem the link is only suggestive, the proximity of the guides to the waning fire involves each in the other’s atmosphere of decline. Once again we find the poem operating on two levels: one that transcends the immediate scene, catching Scott’s sense of a *fin-de-siècle* moment in Western culture, and another that resonates with his perceptions of the diminishing influence of Aboriginal peoples in a territory that was in the process of being claimed by Canada.

The connection that Scott draws between the “Indian guides” and the surrounding environment reinforces the territorial nature of this transition. The nocturnal landscape, about to yield to the new day, is heavily marked with signs of change. If the Ojibwa voices are weary, the wind is “wearier” still (7); the onset of night is conveyed by a collective fatigue that is deepened by the blending of Ojibwa voices with the landscape (and by the rhyme that links “wearier” with “Lake Superior” [4]). Even the spruces “have retired a little space,” and eventually the reader finds that “the Indian guides are dead asleep” and silence descends on the scene (19, 22). I am not the first to note that the metaphorical equation of sleep and death, here, has a sinister effect: it is an “ominous . . . way of sweeping the Indians off the stage of the poem, a way that resonates uncomfortably with the cultural pattern of, in Leslie Monkman’s phrase, ‘Death of the Indian’ (Dragland 252). Although, as I will presently argue, this death-like sleep does not entirely deprive the setting of Aboriginal significance, the fact that it occurs before the poet begins his meditation suggests that their removal from the scene is necessary if he is to experience his own spiritual “homecoming” in their territory. If “The Height of Land” does not relegate Aboriginal peoples entirely to the past, as did “Indian Place Names” in 1905, it recalls Scott’s elegiac representations of Aboriginal peoples as a “waning race” (Scott, *Selected* 37, 133).¹¹

For Scott, as for many of his generation, Treaty 9’s articulation of new ways of governing and inhabiting northwestern Ontario heralded the end, not just of Ojibwa and Cree dominion in the vast region, but of their existence as separate peoples. During Scott’s tenure in the Department of Indian Affairs, the goal of Indian policy was the complete “absorption” of Aboriginal peoples “into the general population” and the erasure of any “lingering traces of native custom and tradition” (Scott, “Indian” 212). Along with “teachers,

missionaries, and traders,” Scott considered “treaties” as among the main influences that would eventually bring about “the merging of the Indian race with the whites” (“Last” 92). According to Armand Garnet Ruffo, an Ojibwa poet whose first collection of poems, *Opening in the Sky*, is named for his great-great grandfather who signed Treaty 9, this “destiny” underwrote Scott’s presentation of the treaty to the Aboriginal peoples (25). Ruffo’s “Poem for Duncan Campbell Scott” underscores the quiet antagonism and posturing that characterized treaty negotiations with this “black coat and tie” who came “from Ottawa way, Odawa country, / . . . to talk treaty annuity and destiny, / to make the inevitable less painful” (25).

Scott’s administrative work was motivated by the hope that, eventually, all boundaries, territorial and racial, would be dissolved between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada. His poetry conveys a similar desire. The mixed-race individuals that populate Scott’s “Indian” poems are widely read as symbolic sites of the cultural dissolution that Scott anticipated.¹² “The Height of Land” is another of these sites, and, like the “Indian” poems, it blends the realities with the fictions of contact. Moving through spatialized patterns of order and chaos, or “peace” and “welter,” upon which the binary of north and south is based, to the unity that is symbolized by the rainbow (92), the metaphysical impetus of “The Height of Land” is toward a condition in which “oppositions” can be at least “temporarily stilled” (Johnston 261). The “ideals” that the poet seeks are premised upon a sense of things “interpenetrat[ing],” “mingl[ing],” and “merg[ing]” (Scott, “Height” 74-91). When he wonders whether the poet of the future will stand “With the deep fathomed, with the firmament charted,” and “With life as simple as a sheep-boy’s song,” these ideals assume the form of a knowable, mappable space—a space as easily apprehended as his earlier, schematic vision of north and south (138-39).

Shadows of Indian Title

Ultimately there is nothing “simple,” however, about either the poet’s state of mind or the setting that alternately inspires (49-92) and stifles (93-113) his ideals. In contrast with Wordsworth’s retreat from the “fretful stir” and “fever of the world” (52-3) into the familiar landscape above Tintern Abbey, Scott’s longing for restorative peace cannot be fulfilled by a setting that remains haunted by its Aboriginal history. As Bentley observes of the “Indian” poems, although Scott strives for “a harmonious union of alterities,” frequently, “what he terms the ‘Uncouth,’ the ‘pagan,’ and the ‘savage’ are not conducive or amenable to harmony but, rather, haunting spectres

that manifest themselves in alarming, threatening, and even deadly ways” (“Shadows” 753). If “The Height of Land” is not one of Scott’s “Indian” poems, it has much to reveal about the colonized spaces that produced them. Bentley does not address the Indigenous “spectres” in this poem, but they are there, muddying the clarity of its beauty.

The setting of “The Height of Land” is more intimately bound up with Aboriginal meaning than might at first be supposed. As has been suggested, the moment when the “Indian guides” fall asleep helps the poet to establish a division between the physical circumstances of the poem—its wilderness setting, the canoe trip, and whatever practical purposes have brought him here—and the philosophical meditation that follows. It has been remarked that “[t]hat the Indians . . . fall asleep and disappear from the poem implies that the guidance Scott sought from them was of a geographical rather than a philosophical nature” (Ware 15). But to characterize their slumber as a disappearance “from the poem” is to obscure the extent to which these figures remain associated with the land even after they fall asleep. At the very least, they imbue the setting with a colonial significance marked by the relationship between white traveler and Aboriginal guide. They are present in the “We” that anchors the speaker’s recollections of the journey “up through the spreading lakes” to the height of land (25). Embraced by Scott’s collective pronoun, the guides establish the poet as a foreigner unfamiliar with the route he is travelling, and dependent upon the knowledge of people with a deeper connection to the land than he possesses. As Scott recalled, during the treaty trips, “[o]ur crew of half-breeds and Indians numbered not less than twelve and sometimes seventeen” (“Last” 84). The quiet, retiring presence that characterizes the guides in his poem may not do documentary justice to their actual role and numbers on the treaty trips (although it may well reflect the exhausting physical labour they performed). Nonetheless, Scott preserves the role that Aboriginal and Métis peoples played in the reinscription of territory by generations of non-Aboriginal explorers, surveyors, and, indeed, poets, subtly reminding us that “The Height of Land” would not have been possible without them.

Moreover, the poem’s most powerful metaphysical elements suggest a lingering connection between the land and its Aboriginal inhabitants. In his solitary meditation, the poet feels the presence of two apparently separate powers, both of which are touched “with a tinge of the indigenous” (Dragland 252). First, there is the “spell” that brings him in touch with his primitive essence (Scott, “Height” 51-55). Second—and even more resonant with a sense

of looming Indigenous power—there is the “ancient disturber of solitude” (63, 93) who, while reminiscent of Wordsworthian inspiration, is also closely associated, if not identical, with the “region spirit” that appears at line 68. In its first appearance, the “ancient disturber” may simply signify the wind, “Breath[ing] a pervasive sigh” through a landscape that has become animated again after a period of silence and stillness: “Now are there sounds walking in the wood, / And all the spruces shiver and tremble, / And the stars move a little in their courses” (64, 60-62). Like the “spell,” the “ancient disturber of solitude” turns the poet’s mind to origins: it is in his presence that “the soul seems to hear / The gathering of the waters at their sources” (65-66). But later on, when he “Stirs his ancestral potion in the gloom,” the “ancient disturber” brings the universal essence to which Scott appeals into contact with the land and its Aboriginal heritage (94). In his more haunting form, in fact, the “ancient disturber” strongly resembles the “lonely spirit” of the Albany that Scott describes in “The Last of the Indian Treaties”: “It is ever-present, but at night it grows in power. Something is heard and yet not heard: it rises, and dwells, and passes mysteriously, like a suspiration immense and mournful, like the sound of wings, dim and enormous, folded down with weariness” (90). The similarities between this indefinable yet “ever-present” “Something” that “haunts” the river in “The Last of the Indian Treaties,” and the “ancient disturber of solitude” that breathes his “pervasive sigh” through “The Height of Land”—not to mention the “mournful” and “weary” atmosphere that the poem also captures—suggest that the spiritual essence that inhabits his poem may, like the spirit of the Albany River, also derive from “sorcerers” and “wendigos” (“Last” 90). Scott’s “lonely north” thus comes to be characterized by a diffuse Aboriginal spirit of place that, without negating the land’s apparent loneliness, certainly qualifies its apparent vacancy.

Not unlike the “aerial pulse” of a conjurer’s drum that Scott recalls hearing, from time to time, along the treaty route (“Last” 90), and that would “throb” more threateningly in his 1926 poem, “Powassan’s Drum” (*Selected* 66), this spirit has a pervasive presence that is indistinctly but nonetheless powerfully felt at various points in “The Height of Land.” Although less nightmarish than those of “Powassan’s Drum,” the Aboriginal elements that haunt “The Height of Land” are, in Dragland’s words, “extremely ambiguous” (251). They are particularly unsettling as they merge with a landscape aesthetic that stands in marked contrast to the poem’s idealized visions. “Stir[ring] his ancestral potion in the gloom,” the “ancient disturber of solitude” interrupts the poet’s meditation on the “perfect beauty” that arises from the interpenetration of

“deed and thought,” and brings him back to earth—not to the peaceful scene of the sleeping campsite, but to a “dark wood . . . stifled with the pungent fume / Of charred earth burnt to the bone / That takes the place of air” (85-98). Here the “disturber” becomes more than just a “slightly disquieting undertone”; he is an “alien element,” trickster-like as he “prods the poet out of conventional epiphany” (Dragland 250, McKay 5). The “ancient disturber of solitude” effectively shatters the poet’s thoughts, clouding the previously “clear” air with smoke that brings back memories of a hideous landscape:

Then sudden I remember when and where,—
The last weird lakelet foul with weedy growths
And slimy viscid things the spirit loathes,
Skin of vile water over viler mud
Where the paddle stirred unutterable stenches,
And the canoes seemed heavy with fear,
Not to be urged toward the fatal shore
Where a bush fire, smouldering, with sudden roar
Leaped on a cedar and smothered it with light
And terror. (99-108)

Unique among the topographical descriptions that anchor this poem in the northern boreal wilderness, this terrain repels the speaker. The memory of it replaces his placid dreaming with a “terror” that—as the “foul” and “weedy” lake, with its “Skin” of water and “unutterable stench,” suggests—derives not from the sublime appearance of the fire so much as from an intensely earthly (even bodily) experience of decay and destruction.

Scott’s “weird lakelet” is a poetic rendering of the “marshy stream” that the treaty party paddled through on August 7, 1906; the bush fire was encountered later, on the return journey along this same route (Dragland 236). In the poem, both swamp and fire perform a metaphoric function as well as a mimetic one that resonates with the Indian Policy of Scott’s time. Pervaded by gloom and smoky devastation, the scene as a whole catches something of the “Indian nature” that Scott felt was “smouldering and dying away in ashes” as Aboriginal title was extinguished in the region. The elegiac passage that follows brings the poem back around to the atmosphere of endings with which it began: “How strange the stars have grown,” the poet muses, “the presage of extinction grows on their crests / And they are beautied with impermanence” (114-16). Could there be a link between the impermanence of stars and the impermanence of races and cultures? If this turn upward, toward the stars, pulls him out of his disturbing recollections of the swamp and the bush fire, it also amplifies their portent of

ruin. The “strange” stars with their “presage of extinction” mingle with his recollections of the “weird lakelet” and its “fatal shore” to produce a sense of something dramatic coming to a close. That the stars are “beautied with impermanence,” and will “survive the race of men,” does not entirely allay the feelings of foreboding that the previous passage builds into the poem. Awakened by the “ancient disturber of solitude,” and thus connected—at least in a loose, suggestive way—with the land’s Aboriginal history and spirit, these feelings encompass both metaphysical questions about the meaning and transience of life, and a vision of the north and its peoples. Is the bush fire’s stifling smoke destined to become “the fading smoke” that, in “Indian Place-Names,” augurs the eventual disappearance of the Aboriginal from the land (*Selected* 37)? If such a reading is plausible, then the “blush sunrise” to which the poet looks in the final lines of the poem (129) heralds the emergence of a new spirit and a new poetry of the north that has its source, not only in the “evolutionary optimism and questing heterodoxy” that has been identified here and elsewhere in the work of the Confederation Poets (Bentley, *Confederation* 239; see also “Deep”), but also in the transformation of Aboriginal lands into Canadian territory.

The sense of beginnings to which Scott appeals assumes a cartographic form, once again, as his poet imagines “the lulled earth” turning “the rich lands and the inundant oceans / To the flushed color” of the sunrise, and hears “The thrill of life beat up the planet’s margin” (146-50). Yet—despite the “clear susurrus of deep joy / That echoes and reechoes in [his] being”—this is a poem that, as Ware has convincingly argued, ultimately registers “man’s failure to comprehend” (17). Plagued by questions, the poet “is unable to maintain the sense of a benevolent and ordered universe,” and the “region spirit” remains a haunting but elusive presence that disturbs the harmony of his thoughts (15, 18). Critics have begun to suspect that the disharmony of this poem is connected to its Indigenous elements.¹³ It surely also has something to do with Scott’s sense of the north as contested territory.¹⁴ The product of oral agreements that honoured the interests of *First Nations* as well as the emerging one, Treaty 9 created a space of overlapping voices and incomplete erasures. That the Ojibwa and Cree have successfully appealed to the treaty as a promise of their continuing rights to and uses of the land highlights the fragility of Scott’s ideals.¹⁵ Indeed, the dramatic shift in tone that distinguishes the “sudden roar” (106) of rekindling flames of the bush fire from the waning fires of its first verse paragraph suggests a threat that would not be so easily extinguished.

Perhaps needless to say, Aboriginal articulations of territory, both literary and legal, sharpen and complicate the sense of “region spirit” to which Scott could only gesture.¹⁶ Among them Ruffo’s poem, “Descent,” provides a compelling counterpoint to “The Height of Land.” Ruffo offers another nocturnal image of the northern boreal forest that, like Scott’s, brings us from water and pines to the “curve of earth”:

sky
 descends
 behind
 crust moon
spreads raven night.
and you poised on snowshoes
draw in the length
of lake between the pines
as you would
a breath
to notice your presence carved
into the curve of earth. (17)

Read against the profound sense of belonging that Ruffo evokes, as breath brings body and land into easy communion, Scott’s poetic ascent seems more troubled. If he animates the land with his fleeting presence, he also remains at odds with it, a foreigner unable fully to grasp the meaning of its mysterious and ominous spirit. A reading of the territorial underpinnings of “The Height of Land” opens the possibility that both the poet’s successes and failures reflect his official, colonial relationship to the north. The land may be ripe for re-imagining, but something of its spirit and history resists the poetic and national appropriation that is taking place.

NOTES

I am grateful to D.M.R. Bentley, I.S. MacLaren, Jenny Kerber, Eric Adams, and my anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on drafts of this paper.

- 1 See Dragland; Salem-Wiseman; Groening; and Bentley, “Shadows.”
- 2 For Scott’s role in the history, negotiation, and terms of Treaty 9, see Titley 60-74, and Dragland 20-66.
- 3 While this is the most recent anthology to feature the poem, it can also be found in Bennett and Brown’s *New Anthology of Canadian Literature in English* and Gerson and Davies’ *Canadian Poetry From the Beginnings Through the First World War*, though not in Sugars and Moss’ volume 1 of *Canadian Literature in English*.
- 4 See Bentley, *Moose* 5.
- 5 In 1912, Ontario’s northern boundary moved from the Albany River to the shore of Hudson Bay; Treaty 9 covered the new provincial territory by the end of the decade (Wightman 109).

- 6 See Titley, Dragland, and Macklem.
- 7 Hunting and fishing would be subject to federal laws and further restricted as “settlement, mining, lumbering, trading or other purposes” dictated (Canada 20); for erosions of Aboriginal treaty rights, see Titley, Dragland, and Wightman 211.
- 8 See Ware.
- 9 On the influence of Maurice Maeterlinck, for instance, see Bentley, “Deep.”
- 10 For an elaboration of mythopoetic elements in Canadian poetry, see Frye 181, and for their postcolonial implications, see Devereux.
- 11 For a discussion of this frequent trope in Scott’s poetry, see Groening.
- 12 See Salem-Wiseman, and Bentley, “Shadows.”
- 13 McKay suggests, for instance, that by calling one of his guides Chees-que-ne-ne (“in fact, a shaman”), “Scott may have been welcoming into his epiphanic poem the very element that would disrupt its basic assumptions, disturbing the aesthetic solitude of its protagonist” (6).
- 14 See Wightman 26-7, 52-4, 96-101; also Macklem. Conflict certainly characterizes the language of “conquest” and “cultural genocide” with which, in 1977, the Chiefs of Grand Council Treaty 9 described non-Aboriginal incursions into this territory (3). More recently, the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation at Big Trout Lake was engaged in a fierce dispute with the Platinex mining company over access to traditional lands protected by the treaty.
- 15 Recognizing the partiality of the government commissioners’ views of the treaty, the Supreme Court of Canada has since stipulated that its “terms are to be interpreted in a manner sensitive to Aboriginal expectations” (Macklem 100). K.I. First Nation’s recent victory confirms the strength of Aboriginal voices.
- 16 Compared with these, Scott’s uneasiness might be read as a symptom of the “relationship . . . of estrangement” that northern Ontario Aboriginal peoples have attributed to the government’s resource-based understanding of nature, wherein the land has become “spiritually disconnected fr[om] human beings” (qtd. in Ontario Supreme Court).

WORKS CITED

- Bentley, D.M.R. “A Deep Influx of Spirit: Maurice Maeterlinck and Duncan Campbell Scott.” Canadian Poetry. Web. 11 Mar. 2010.
- . *The Confederation Group of Canadian Poets, 1880-1897*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2004. Print.
- . *The Gay]Grey Moose: Essays on the Ecologies and Mythologies of Canadian Poetry*. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1992. Print.
- . “Shadows in the Soul: Racial Haunting in the Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott.” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 75.2 (2006): 752-770. Print.
- Campbell, Sandra. “A Fortunate Friendship: Duncan Campbell Scott and Pelham Edgar.” *Stich* 113-126. Print.
- Canada. *The James Bay Treaty: Treaty No. 9 (Made in 1905 and 1906 and Adhesions Made in 1929 and 1930)*. 1931. Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1964. *Indian and Northern Affairs Canada*. Web. PDF file.
- Chiefs of Grand Council Treaty #9. *A Declaration of Nishnawbe-Aski (The People and the Land)*. Delivered to Ontario Premier William Davis and his Cabinet. Toronto: 1977. Print.
- Devereux, Cecily. “The Search for a Livable Past: Frye, Crawford, and the Healing Link.” *ReCalling Early Canada: Reading the Political in Literary and Cultural Production*. Ed. Jennifer Blair et al. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 2005. 281-300. Print.

- Dragland, Stan. *Floating Voice: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Literature of Treaty 9*. Concord: Anansi, 1994. Print.
- Frye, Northrop. *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*. Concord: Anansi, 1995. Print.
- Groening, Laura Smyth. *Listening to Old Woman Speak: Natives and alterNatives in Canadian Literature*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2004. Print.
- Harley, J.B. "Maps, Knowledge, and Power." *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design, and Use of Past Environments*. Ed. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988. 277-312. Print.
- Johnston, Gordon. "Duncan Campbell Scott (1862-1947)." *Canadian Writers and Their Works: Poetry Series*. Ed. Robert Lecker et al. Downsview: ECW, 1983. Print.
- Keith, W.J. *Literary Images of Ontario*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1992. Print.
- Macklem, Patrick. "The Impact of Treaty 9 on Natural Resource Development in Northern Ontario." *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada: Essays on Law, Equity, and Respect for Difference*. Ed. Michael Asch. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 1997. 97-134. Print.
- McKay, Don. Introduction: "Great Flint Singing." *Open Wide a Wilderness: Canadian Nature Poems*. Ed. Nancy Holmes. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2009. 1-31. Print.
- Mezei, Kathy. "From Lifeless Pools to the Circle of Affection: The Significance of Space in the Poetry of D. C. Scott." Stich 23-35. Print.
- Morris, James L. *Map Showing Indian Treaties in Ontario*. 1931. [base] *Map of the province of Ontario*. Dominion of Canada. Map No. 20a. Ontario: Department of Surveys, 1930. Print.
- New, W.H. *Land Sliding: Imagining Space, Presence, and Power in Canadian Writing*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1997. Print.
- Ontario Supreme Court. *Platinex Inc. v. Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation* (2007): O.J. No. 1841 par. 119 (S.C.). *Quicklaw*. Web. 21 Oct. 2009.
- Ritchie, Leslie, ed. *Addresses, Essays, Reviews*. Duncan Campbell Scott. Vol 1. Introd. Stan Dragland. London: Canadian Poetry, 2000. Print.
- Ruffo, Armand Garnet. *Opening in the Sky*. Penticton: Theytus, 1994. Print.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage, 1994. Print.
- Salem-Wiseman, Lisa. "'Verily, the White Man's Ways Were the Best': Duncan Campbell Scott, Native Culture, and Assimilation." *Studies in Canadian Literature* 21.2 (1996): 120-42. Print.
- Scott, Duncan Campbell. "The Height of Land." *Canadian Poetry*. Web. 11 Mar. 2010.
- . "Indian Affairs, 1867-1912." Ritchie 186-215. Print.
- . "The Last of the Indian Treaties." Ritchie 82-93. Print.
- . "Ottawa: Before Dawn." *Songs of the Great Dominion*. Ed. W.D. Lighthall. London: Scott, 1889. 314. Print.
- . *Selected Poems of Duncan Campbell Scott*. Toronto: Ryerson, 1951. Print.
- Stich, K.P. *The Duncan Campbell Scott Symposium*. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 1980. Print.
- Titley, Brian. *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada*. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 1986. Print.
- Ware, Tracy. "D.C. Scott's 'The Height of Land' and the Greater Romantic Lyric." *Canadian Literature* 111 (1986): 10-25. Print.
- Wightman, Robert W. and Nancy M. *The Land Between: Northwestern Ontario Resource Development, 1800 to 1990s*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1997. Print.
- Wordsworth, William. "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798." *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 6th ed. Vol. 2. Ed. M.H. Abrams. London: 1993. 136-40. Print.

Hermaphrodite

Once I was just like any other
orchid, all sticky liquid and sweet
scent, but the bees were unreliable.
Capricious wind, I'd curse, lethargic birds.
I never knew—would a bear brush
against my anther, a goat graze
my stigma with its gorgeous horns? I got to
thinking—cross-pollination?
Inefficient, surely, and I hated that helpless
feeling, always stuck in one place.
Seemed I'd been languishing on a rotting tree
trunk all my life. It was drought
season, the forest so dry my petals shrivelled
impending death. And then the night I dreamt
extinction, woke suddenly, and—I don't know—
popped my cap. There I was—stunned,
shivering, my delicate bits exposed. Next thing
I knew my rod was rising, curving,
forward, then down past my rostellum. It felt
strange, perverse even, as though
I were spitting on my heritage, contradicting eons
of resilience and hardy mutations,
but I'd gone that far, so bent my stipe back up,
around and then—ta—da!—inserted
my pollinia into my own cavity. Some say I'm a sexual
contortionist, others, an exhibitionist.
Some say mating with one's self takes self-absorption
to a new level. Really? I thought
my elegant little dance was a sensible pulling back
from the brink of non-existence.
I thought: defy gravity? Why not an audacious rotation?

Introduction: Generous and Grounded Connections

Laura Moss

In 2009, *Canadian Literature* marked its 50th year of publication. To celebrate, the University of British Columbia and the Faculty of Arts (led by Laurie Ricou) held a *Canadian Literature* Gala. Along with public lectures by Stephen Galloway, Thomas King, and Roch Carrier, we hosted book launches for Sherrill Grace's *On the Art of Being Canadian* and *From a Speaking Place: Writings from the First Fifty Years of Canadian Literature*, edited by W.H. New, Réjean Beaudoin, Susan Fisher, Iain Higgins, Eva-Marie Kröller, and Laurie Ricou; a literary tour of Vancouver in the brilliant sunshine on board a yellow school bus; a film screening of *A Shine of Rainbows* and a discussion with the director, Vic Sarin; and an art auction in support of the *Canadian Literature* 50th Anniversary Tuition Awards (with work donated by Margaret Atwood, Vivian Bevis, Stephanie Bolster, Sally Clark, Leonard Cohen, Thomas King, Roy Kiyooka, Patrick Lane, Dennis Lee, Joni Mitchell, W.H. New, Joe Rosenblatt, Tony Urquhart, and Aritha Van Herk, among others). We also hosted a two-day academic workshop on the future of Canadian literature (both the field and the journal).

In an early brainstorming session on possibilities for the academic part of the Gala celebrations, Margery Fee and I sat in my office trying to conceive of a format that could mark the past fifty years while thinking forward to challenges in the field in the future. With an emphasis on the future, we knew it was important to foreground the work of emerging scholars and graduate students but we also wanted to have many established scholars contributing to the discussion as well. When Margery suggested a workshop with five-minute "interventions," I frankly thought she was a bit zany. Who

would pay their own way to fly across the country to deliver a five-minute paper? Besides, who would come on a weekday in the middle of term? However, since we both liked the concept of pointed brevity, since a SSHRC deadline was looming, and since we regularly ask our own students to do two-page response papers, we thought we'd give it a try and ask our colleagues to do the same. Make a point and share the floor. We looked left and right at my bookshelves, compiled a list of people who had written work on those shelves, and set off inviting people. Noting that the object of the workshop was to create space for a community of Canadian literature specialists to consider a diverse range of perspectives on where the field of Canadian literature should go in the future, we asked people to think about what the next fifty years of Canadian literature might look like and to ponder the significant obstacles we might face in getting there. Several wonderful people had to decline our invitation, but to our surprise, the response was overwhelmingly positive. People were keen to recognize and mark the contributions of the journal to the field and to consider where it (journal and field) might go from here. That began the road to an event that was most clearly marked by intellectual generosity. As one participant said to me, it wasn't about his own five minutes of comments, it was about listening to thirty-four other people's minutes and then talking with them about their ideas. In the end, people from twenty-one universities came to Vancouver and passionately demonstrated how un-trite it is to ask what is at stake in what we do. We are grateful to all our colleagues from across the country for their generous contributions to our workshop and to the auction, both central events in the celebration of the journal's 50th Anniversary. The response among Canada's artists, academics, and writers—and their support of students in the field—was heartening.

The written interventions compiled here showcase some of the round-the-room conversations we had in October, but they are incomplete. The sessions were ninety minutes long, with five or six interventions presented in each, and an hour of discussion. We can't capture those conversations here, or the ones we shared around the sushi, salmon, tea, or cookies. For instance, a good deal of time was spent noting very practical ways to combat funding cuts to the arts and culture, and to universities, other time was spent discussing the logistics of an academic life, and still other time was passed in conversations about new works of fiction and poetry. Not all interveners opted to submit their interventions for publication here either: David Chariandy spoke of the concept of being "post-race," Jeff Derksen focused on the dangers of neoliberalism, Sneja Gunew commented on cosmopolitanism,

Julia Emberley deconstructed promotional material for Canadian Girl dolls, Judy Brown modelled the value of slowing down in the classroom, Richard Cavell noted the presence and absence of Marshall McLuhan in the journal, Glenn Deer talked about the politics of reviewing, and Manina Jones highlighted the need for close readings. And here we do not have the keynote addresses beautifully delivered by Aritha van Herk, Reingard Nischik, or W.H. New, or the important research being done by the graduate students at the workshop: Matthew Hiebert (on George Woodcock), Margo Gouley (on Isabella Valancy Crawford), Brenna Clarke Gray (on Douglas Coupland), Paul Huebener (on time), Kathryn Grafton (on reading publics), Cristina Ivanovici (on European Atwoods), Allison Hargreaves (on indigenous reconciliation), David Gaertner (on limits of reconciliation), and Samuel Martin (on Alistair MacLeod and Wayne Johnston). Eight students were selected, first by their home universities and then by our adjudication panel, to receive travel awards to present fifteen-minute papers on their doctoral research at the workshop. Their contributions to the event were invaluable. So, these interventions should be read as important segments of the myriad conversations that occurred in a glass-walled room surrounded by cedars on the unceded Musqueam territory of the UBC campus in the fall of 2009.

The interventions here begin with Herb Wyile's speculation on the effects on the future of Canadian literature of what he articulates as the current neoliberal hegemony operating in Canada. He urges us to always be aware of the material conditions in which art is produced and studied. Carrie Dawson suggests that a "socially-engaged environmentally conscious tradition of Canadian literary criticism might begin by asking 'how does your garden grow?'" instead of Northrop Frye's "Where is here?" and Alison Calder rebels against the notion of being "post-prairie" or post-place as she argues the need to ground our analyses in specific locations and histories. Rita Wong notes that "cultural diversity extends beyond the realm of the human into biodiversity" as she provocatively asks "What might a watershed moment in Canadian literature look like?"—evoking real watersheds on her way to answering the question. Several interventions push against theoretical orthodoxies. Susie O'Brien points out how in Canada postcolonial criticism and ecocriticism are often set up, unproductively, as at odds and suggests the need to rethink their key points of intersection in order to address overlapping issues like "environmental racism" or rural poverty, while Sophie McCall observes the possible productive conversations

that could arise out of considering theories of diaspora in connection with Métis writers and writing about “sovereignties in motion” and “participatory citizenship.” Deena Rymhs argues the advantages of cosmopolitanism as a lens for reading indigenous works. Daniel Coleman calls for a recognition of the epistemic justice that comes out of the politics of respect, and Susan Gingell appeals to indigenous epistemologies to provide multiple “sound identities” within literature. Finally, Deanna Reder outlines a key element of Cree epistemology: the understanding of the pursuit of knowledge as an unending continuous intergenerational exercise.

In several interventions there is also an interest in the effects of technology on publishing and on the shapes and forms of what is produced. Ian Rae and Larissa Lai both contemplate the potentials of digital poetics, digital journals, and new modes of circulation of texts and ideas. Christl Verduyn wonders about the accessibility of digital archives, about what can be lost and what might be found, and cautions us to work now to keep them accessible in fifty years. Lily Cho looks back at the colonial archive to read the “archive-as-subject” that informs contemporary debates about diaspora and citizenship. Christopher Lee reads a Chinese film and the troublesome implications of figuring Canada as a blank slate from an international perspective.

Thinking of a multiplicity of perspectives within Canada, Roxanne Rimstead considers linguistic divides and class bias in contemporary utopian literature. Winfried Siemerling and Marie Vautier both highlight the real problems and the possible solutions for the challenges of working within a bilingual nation and with literature and criticism that performs in both French and English. Finally, Lorraine York, Linda Hutcheon, and John Ball each promote the concept of critical generosity and the need for a civil exchange of ideas among scholars, readers, and critics whether in a classroom, a book review, or a reader’s report. There is a clear determination in many of the interventions to take stock of what roles we might play in creating journals that harness cooperative collegiality, take their roles as sites of mentorship sincerely, and innovatively rethink structures of communication.

Three words keep reappearing in the interventions here: “grounded,” “generosity,” and “connections.” It seems relevant that in our gathering we made no giant proclamations about the future of Canadian writing, created no lists of key works or authors, damned no forms of writing as old-fashioned, and came away with no group manifesto. Instead, there was a quiet call for generously connecting ideas and people, and for

taking seriously the places they inhabit and the art they produce. And yet there was a sense of urgency in the air as well. While we did not need to argue the existence, or the significance, of Canadian literature as our predecessors had to do in some of the fifty years before we met, many of us felt that the engaged study of such literature is threatened in the current economic climate with federal and provincial governments hellbent on cutting culture funding and programs that support the arts at home and abroad, with small publishing houses being taken over by multinational organizations with few ties to local needs and local markets, and with a national university system that is being shifted away from the humanities in favour of the more profitable forms of education. I came away from the workshop with a renewed sense that being ethically grounded—as advocates of culture in the framework of neoliberalism and globalization—is the public role literary critics play today.

Who knows which of these interventions will seem quaint and which will be read as prescient in 2060? If an earthquake decimates Vancouver, will the journal even survive? Less hyperbolically, if print journals go to complete open access on the internet, will literary journals like *Canadian Literature* be able to afford to continue? Will there be libraries to hold them? If English departments are folded into general Arts or “culture” programs, will there still be courses on CanLit? How flexible might Canadian nationalism be in fifty years? As the very concept of nationhood is being repeatedly called into question, how long can a journal based on the assumption of a “national literature” be sustained in a postnational, transnational, and/or global framework? What kinds of global citizens will Canadian writers and critics be in the next decades? Will other languages move into the national sphere more predominantly? If Quebec separates, how bilingual will the rest of Canada remain? These are just a few of the questions I’d like to ask of the future.

Many of the recurring topics and keywords in cultural conversations and literary output over the last fifty years in Canada—*environmentalism, nationalism, feminism, First Nations self-government, Quebec sovereignty, sexual rights, civil rights, protection for Canadian culture, technology, historical revisionism, memory, trauma, migration, institutions, citizenship, postcolonialism, postmodernism, formal innovation, magic realism, globalization, cosmopolitanism, racism, terrorism, community, human rights, biopolitics*—will likely continue to be of interest. The ways in which writers, poets, playwrights, computer programmers, and critics engage these topics, and many more, is sure to change. That is what makes the future both exciting and intimidating.

I end with three hopes: first, that critics of the future have enough distance and generosity to read the literature and the theoretical debates of the turn of the twenty-first century with respect (because I know that the next generation will soon come upon us and dismiss our ways as outmoded—too social, not enough art? too textual, not enough society?—as they did in the 1920s, 40s, 60s, and we seemed to do in the 90s) and I know that there is a lot to learn from past debates, texts, and contexts. Second, I hope that there continues to be strong public support for arts and culture in Canada—whether that takes the shape of government programs or private patronage we'll soon see. And third, and most importantly, I hope that such a thing as Canadian literature (the field and the journal, I have no doubts about the art itself) continues to exist because if this nation's literatures are folded into a global study of contemporary writing, I worry about the long social, political, cultural, and literary history that could be lost in the process. I anticipate that literature and its study will remain grounded in this place and connected to the troubled and triumphant history of its people and policies, but I also trust that it will change as demographics shift, as ideas develop, and as we move forward as writers, thinkers, and citizens.

Neoliberalism and the Future of Canadian Literature

Herb Wyile

To ask where the field of Canadian literature should be going in the next fifty years implies a greater deal of choice and agency than the future might offer. Indeed, it may be more appropriate to reframe that question more pessimistically as “what is going to happen to Canadian literature?” We are poised, I think, at a significant historical juncture, as in the present financial crisis we are experiencing the consequences of decades of increasingly rampant neoliberal ideology, and how we contend with that legacy will profoundly shape the next half-century, including the future of Canadian literature.

Over the last three or four decades we have undergone a major ideological reprogramming in which corporate autonomy and hegemony, the diminution of the role of the state, the minimization of commitment to social welfare,

and the primacy of a deregulated market have moved from being fringe notions to being, as David Harvey argues, “hegemonic as a mode of discourse” (3). The key question is whether the present global financial turbulence, which has precipitated a profound challenge to this neoliberal hegemony, will amount to a true crisis of capitalism or merely a temporary check on its fortunes. This is a pressing question for scholars and teachers of Canadian literature because the outcome is going to shape what we do in at least three key ways:

1. It will shape what we have to teach and to research, since what can be considered as Canadian literature is grounded in particular material conditions—publishing infrastructure and financial support among other things. Over the last three decades those conditions have been reshaped by increasing corporatization and commodification in the publishing industry, and a reframing of attitudes towards subsidizing literary production, with an arguably deleterious effect on the variety and scope of Canadian literature. Thus one crucial future question is what Canadian literature will there be to study? Here, at least, digitization and electronic publishing offer not just the prospect of a salvage operation but the genuine possibility of revitalizing the study of Canadian literature.
2. It will shape Canadian literature in that Canadian literature has always responded to some degree to its broader social, political and economic conditions. Just as we see a growing preoccupation with transnationalism, globalization, and neoliberalism in late twentieth-century Canadian literature, over the ensuing decades the impact of neoliberalism and the reverberations of the current crisis are bound to be reflected in the work of Canadian writers in various ways.
3. Finally, it will shape where and how we research, teach, and write about Canadian literature. Neoliberal thinking has certainly played a huge role in reframing views of academia and more specifically the humanities. It has contributed to the increasing push towards a commodified, even privatized model of education; the erosion of funding for the social sciences and humanities; and the increasing reliance on the private sector for educational funding, with all its attendant compromises. Over the past fifty years the study of Canadian literature has been established, institutionalized, and greatly expanded, and one of the priorities of the next fifty years is likely to be fighting the erosion of the kind of institutional support that made that expansion possible in the first place.

Where is Canadian literature headed? I’m tempted to say it’s headed for a cage match with a bulky and mean-spirited opponent, but that would be

hyperbolic. But what is required in the future is a concentrated effort to articulate and defend its values in much more compelling ways than the cultural nationalist arguments that have predominated in the last fifty years.

WORK CITED

Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.

How Does Our Garden Grow?

Carrie Dawson

Towards the end of his “Conclusion” to the *Literary History of Canada* Northrop Frye argues that E.J. Pratt’s poem “The Truant” exemplifies “the poetry of the future, when physical nature has retreated to outer space and only individual and society are left as effective factors in the imagination” (250). He’s not altogether wrong. Writing fifty years after Frye, Dionne Brand begins *Inventory* (2006) with an apocalyptic vision of the world as seen from space: a city resembles “an orange slick blister” and its houses are “engorged with oil and wheat, / rubber and metals” (15). Though sickly, physical nature persists in Brand’s poem, and yet, her speaker, who charges herself with the awesome task of taking stock of the violence, injustice, and environmental damage to which she bears witness, says, “Let us not invoke the natural world” (42). But she goes on to do so on nearly every page. As a result, it might be argued that what she means is “[l]et us not invoke the natural world” as a Frygian nightmare or a peaceable pastoral, a dream premised on what Frye called “the recovery of innocence in nature” (249). For instance, Brand writes:

this composition that nature makes, the theories
of hummingbirds and beavers,
agoutis
and armadillos, morrocoys and one-inch pandas,
all different, don’t be mistaken, they’re not simple

not simple as the ways to kill them, far more
complicated
but let’s leave nature for a while
how can we, yes, let’s not essentialize the only
essential thing, it doesn’t work, it fails often,
fails, fails whom (96)

I cite *Inventory* because I believe that Brand's insistence that we "leave nature" and instead take stock of the myriad differences collapsed under the banner of "nature" might help us shape a scholarly practice attentive to the relationship between questions of social and environmental justice in this country (for a development of this argument see Lousley). Read at a time when our farming industry is increasingly reliant on precariously employed and otherwise marginalized migrant labourers, the poem's concluding juxtaposition of the meditative pleasure of tending one's own garden with the "backbreaking, arthritic" work of a farm worker for whom standing upright "is perfect and gardens an eyesore" (99) is another trenchant reminder to consider whom we fail when we dismiss the non-human world as backdrop, essentialize it as balm, or dehistoricize it as sanctuary.

Towards the end of his "Conclusion" Frye argues that "new conditions give the old ones a new importance, as what vanishes in one form reappears in another" (250). With my brief invocation of *Inventory*, I mean to suggest that Frye's argument holds true for his notion of the "bush garden," but I also want to argue that it is equally true of the "garrison mentality." In light of recent policy changes that restrict the number of refugee claimants, that make it more difficult for temporary workers to get Permanent Residency, that are hostile to family class migrants, and, more generally, that demonstrate a state ideology focused less on the development of citizens than on the short-term contracting of cheap labour, it is important to foster a scholarly practice that critically scrutinizes the latest expressions of the garrison mentality in this country. Interestingly, much of the growing body of scholarly work that does so invokes Frye by asking—in one form or another—the question at the heart of his 1963 Massey lecture, "What good is the study of literature?" (qtd. Brydon 990). Essentially, Frye's answer was affect: literature, he said, "invites us to feel" (qtd. Goldman 811). These days, scholars such as Sarah Ahmed and Gayatri Spivak get cited more often than Northrop Frye, but the popularity of affect theory suggests that affect is still the answer. For example, Diana Brydon's essay on *Inventory* reads the poem as an argument for "affective citizenship" (991). While I share Brydon's sense that the poem "redefines the role of emotion and affect in political life" (1002), I am most interested in its call for a situated or grounded affect, its cultivation of a way of thinking that is self-conscious (as perhaps Frye's was not) about the deployment of the non-human world as an imaginative resource that creates affect. Unlike Frye's frequently "phobic, psychosocial response to extensive, 'unfamiliar,' and undomesticated space" (Bentley 62), Brand's suggestion that

we “leave nature for a while,” does not call for a turning away from the non-human world, but it does call upon its readers to take stock of the impact they have on their own lived environments: “the suburbs, the outskirts are inevitable,” and “the electrical yards, the unsociable funereal parking lots / with transparent children and their killing play” are “here,” she argues (47). Fifty years after Frye, her declaration that “that ravaged world is here” (47), might be understood as a warning to forego the familiar “Where is here?” in favour of a carefully grounded materialist practice wherein the appeal to generalized structures of feeling goes hand in hand with an examination of particular structures of being.

And so, by looking back to Frye and forward with Brand, I suggest that a socially-engaged environmentally-conscious tradition of Canadian literary criticism might begin by asking, “How does our garden grow?” This question is, of course, adapted from “Mary, Mary Quite Contrary,” an English nursery rhyme that is often said to be about Mary Tudor, a staunch Catholic sometimes remembered as “Bloody Mary” for her execution of Protestant dissidents in the mid-sixteenth century: to see the nursery rhyme as pertaining to her reign is to see its gardens as the growing graveyards where Protestants were buried and to recognize its “silver bells” and “cockle shells” as instruments of torture. More generally, and, for my purposes, more importantly, it is also to understand “How does our garden grow?” as a profoundly social question. And so, by crudely yoking Mary Tudor, Northrop Frye, and Dionne Brand I mean to suggest the garden/garrison as conjoined tropes that might be usefully re-deployed in the service of a scholarly practice that is attentive to the connections and disjunctions between issues of social and environmental justice in this country. Put differently, to the extent that the question “How does our garden grow?” reminds us that we cannot get beyond “Where is here?” without first considering “Who is we?” and “What is ours?,” I hope that it might help us cultivate an environmentally-oriented scholarship that “leave(s) nature” so as not to essentialize the many “essential thing(s)” of which it is composed.

WORKS CITED

- Bentley, D.M.R., “Jumping to Conclusions: Northrop Frye on Canadian Literature.” *Northrop Frye: New Directions from Old*. Ed. David Rampton. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 2009. 55-79. Print.
- Brand, Dionne. *Inventory*. Toronto: McClelland, 2006. Print.
- Brydon, Diana. “Dionne Brand’s Global Intimacies: Practicing Affective Citizenship.” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 76.3 (2007): 990-1006. Print.
- Frye, Northrop. “Conclusion to a *Literary History of Canada*.” *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*. Toronto: Anansi, 1971. 213-51. Print.

- Goldman, Marlene. "Introduction: Literature, Imagination, Ethics." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 76.3 (2007): 809-20. Print.
- Lousley, Cheryl. "Witness to the Body Count: Planetary Ethics in Dionne Brand's *Inventory*." *Canadian Poetry* 63 (2008): 37-58. Print.
-

What Happened to Regionalism?

Alison Calder

My question in this brief intervention is actually not just "what happened to regionalism?" but, more basically, "what happened to place and location in Canadian literary studies?" and, sadly, "what happened to my field?"

I'd like to start with a couple of snapshots:

1) Every few years, I attend a semi-regularly scheduled interdisciplinary prairie studies conference. There is a lot of really interesting new work presented in architecture, environmental studies, film studies, visual art, and history. It is increasingly dismal in terms of literary scholarship. There is next to no Aboriginal content, presence, or even acknowledgment that such a thing might be desirable. Very little of what can be called globalization, transnational, or diasporic studies turns up. Basically, the forum becomes a recirculation of literary and critical clichés. I go home depressed, wondering, "where is everybody?"

2) A few years ago, an anthology of new poetry by mostly younger writers with some connection to the prairie provinces was published. I found its title provocative: *Post-Prairie*.

I get the editors' point, but I also find the "post-prairie" idea a little alarming. It is gaining some currency, meshing nicely with general ideas that we are post-place, that we're in a globalized cyber-world where place is irrelevant, and that thinking about the prairies is just not cool. If what is meant by "post-prairie" is that a certain kind of rurally-based, vernacular poetry about farmyards and grain elevators is no longer being written so much, then okay, we are post-prairie. But if we recognize that "prairie" is an ideological construction that was imported at a particular moment by European colonizers, that conceives of land and economic systems and Aboriginal people in particular ways, and that as a conception and a practice continues to have devastating effects on people and environments, then no, we are not

post-prairie at all. And I think that literary analysis that attends to representations of specific places, or that connects itself to specific places, can help us to develop ideas about what is going on in the places where we live—what forces are acting on us, and how we might respond to them.

My point is that I see a tendency in some cases to sever location from literary analysis. This severing leads to significant problems. In terms of the prairie conference, we end up with meetings shaped so that critical discussions bear little relation to the actual prairie setting. We also end up with scholars who are doing important, relevant work on topics that might relate to the prairies, but who don't situate their work in a local or regional context, and who therefore aren't there.

The impetus behind a lot of globalization or transnational studies is a desire to resist homogenizing forces. But by thinking in generalized rather than local or specific terms, this scholarship sabotages its own agenda. In his presentation, Herb Wylie urged us to keep an eye on large structures, and to this I say yes, absolutely. And keep an eye on them as they happen in different ways in specific locations. One of the things that neoliberalism seeks to do is to iron out nuance, to insist that the world is the same for everybody. Specific places introduce nuance, because of their unique makeup. Places—regions or otherwise defined—are both porous and unique. A place is not stable; it is always in flux. Postmodern conceptions of place suggest that it is composed of simultaneously intersecting complementary and competing forces that shift constantly depending on an individual's relation to them. That relation to place, what place *means*, is determined by race, class, gender, and a host of other factors. These factors combine uniquely in particular locations.

I was struck yesterday by Sophie McCall's remarks about the disconnection between the concerns of transnational or diasporic literary studies and Aboriginal literary studies. I'm not able to work out my thoughts on this yet, as there are significant differences to be considered, but there is some connection between what she is saying, and my sense of what's going on with the analysis of place in local or regional contexts. If one aim of literary and cultural studies is to develop ways of thinking about the world that are present and helpful, then grounding our analysis in specific places—and seeing our analysis in the context of specific places—needs to be part of the picture. We don't live generally, we live specifically, and in that specificity, I think, we may have power.

WORKS CITED

Post-Prairie: An Anthology of New Poetry. Ed. Jon Paul Fiorintino and Robert Kroetsch
Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2005. Print.

Watersheds

Rita Wong

I would like to thank the Coast Salish peoples whose unceded territories we are on and in particular, the Musqueam. Not far from here is the only surviving wild salmon stream in Metro Vancouver, and its survival is due to the efforts of the Musqueam Ecosystem Conservation Society, which organizes monthly clean ups and offers public education tours about the stream.

I speak situated as a non-indigenous person who is looking for ways to act as an ally, knowing that my own survival is intimately connected to the survival of indigenous peoples and their cultures. Through dialogue and thoughtful action we may shift away from the colonial norms that have been violently imposed upon this land toward a sense of interrelation and interdependence, not only with humans but with the plants and animals and minerals to which we owe our lives. That is, “cultural diversity” extends beyond the realm of the human into “biodiversity” if we are careful listeners and learners.

I am an urban creature, one who has grown up in cities and loves them, but sometimes, the concrete streets and sidewalks feel like a heavy coat of English smothering the land. Sometimes, as I walk the streets I love, I’ll see weeds crack through pavement, and they’ll make me think of indigenous languages, trying to survive, to return balance to the earth so that she might breathe. What would happen if English cracked a little more, here and there, and more indigenous languages grew into it? Decolonizing and reindigenizing, respecting the cultures of this land, means paying attention to the language, not only of humans, though that is what we’ve been trained to focus on, but also the languages and cultures of the land. There is much unlearning and relearning that needs to happen, as pointed out in essays like Jeannette Armstrong’s “Land Speaking.”

When pavement blocks the flow of water to the earth below, water slowly seeps through, in cracks, with erosion. The ground I think is so solid, is also full of groundwater, moving at a pace so slow that it may seem imperceptible, but moving nonetheless.

Underneath the concrete is earthy life, stony life, fluid life.

Writers, scholars, academics, we make our homes in watersheds, not just cities. If I start to map my life, my career, my communities, and my impact in

terms of the watersheds I've lived in, I would start to perceive differently, and through that shift, perhaps to act differently as well. I might say Bow River instead of Calgary, I might say Fraser River instead of Vancouver. I might notice how one person's bottled water means another person's dried-up aquifer. I might notice, how close in salinity I am to ocean water, as Basia Irland puts it, how "each of us is a walking ocean, sloshing down the hallway with damp saline innards held together by a paper-thin epidermis" (x).

This summer, I received a map of Canada's watersheds. Instead of ten provinces and three territories, I saw five watersheds, draining to the Pacific Ocean, the Arctic Ocean, Hudson's Bay, the Atlantic Ocean, and the Gulf of Mexico. Instead of seeing the usual lines that people have drawn, I saw the massive flow of water across the north part of the continent. You and I are part of that flow. We are roughly 70% water, and we are part of the hydrological cycle, not separate from it. Some of the water that is in our bodies may have previously circulated in dinosaurs millions of years ago, or jostled around with fish in lakes and rivers, or been processed by our local sewage treatment plant. Water connects us to places, people and creatures we have not seen, life that is far away from us, and life that came long before us.

Each watershed has many critical issues that affect us all; these include the destruction of fish habitat, pollution, the body burden that resides in our fleshy tissues, everything from brominated flame retardants to anti-depressants to plastics and a wide array of human medications accumulating in the watery environments that make up 70% of this planet's surface. With the realization that our individual actions accumulate, there is a growing movement to find ways to change our cumulative impact.

At the same time, we cannot ignore that industry has a much larger impact on the environment than individuals. And when I think of threats to watershed health, one of biggest ones that comes to mind is the Tar Sands in Northern Alberta.

I come from Alberta, the land of oil and water, as Warren Cariou's film calls it. In the Alberta Tar Sands, making one barrel of oil poisons roughly four barrels of water. The waste water held in huge tailings ponds are so toxic they immediately killed hundreds of migrating ducks who flew into the ponds. The wide-open ponds are the size of a city, and as they leak, they continue to kill humans and non-humans. The cancer rates of nearby indigenous communities have skyrocketed because of the pollution.

What might a watershed moment in Canadian literature look like? It would, I think, take up the challenge to respond to the crisis posed by the

Tar Sands. Moreover, and I'm only speculating, but for me, it would involve a reframing of our identities in relation to water, as a crucial part of the land. The earth is over 70% water, and as Alanna Mitchell points out, it is "the ocean that contains the switch of life. Not land, nor the atmosphere. The ocean. And that switch can be flipped off" (5) as it has been during the five previous mass extinctions that have occurred on this planet. Living in the midst of what many have suggested is the sixth mass extinction, I think we are living in watershed times, in the sense that the species which has caused this situation, are the ones with the responsibility to respond to it.

A number of thinkers like Vandana Shiva have talked about moving from empire to earth community, and held out the possibility of a great turning in the dominant paradigms and systems by which we live. Literature has a role in such a watershed possibility, and it is only a possibility, nothing more, nothing less, that I see at this moment. Let me clarify that I do not see literature as an "instrument" toward some larger hope for humanity, but rather that the current ecological crisis in which we find ourselves invites creative responses. It calls forth from us resources and knowledges we may not have known we had.

What might a watershed moment feel like? I don't know what I haven't yet experienced, but for starters, it would involve a wide network of critical and creative projects that take up the challenge to restore damaged ecosystems, and to regenerate life in ways that make the lakes and rivers safe enough to drink from, welcoming enough that the abundance of fish, amphibians, birds, mammals and many creatures that previously lived there would flourish. It might also involve respecting the etymology of the name "Canada," which is said to come from the Huron-Iroquoian word for village.

I think the word "kanata," is a reminder to hear and value the original language(s) of the lands on which we live, the languages which are a gift from the land that humans can in turn reciprocate with gifts, be they poisoned and/or regenerative.

WORKS CITED

- Armstrong, Jeannette. "Land Speaking." *Speaking for the Generations: Native Writers on Writing*. Ed. Simon Ortiz. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1998. 175-94. Print.
- Cariou, Warren and Neil McArthur, dirs. *Land of Oil and Water*. 2009 Film.
- Irland, Basia. *Water Library*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2007. Print.
- Mitchell, Alana. *Sea Sick: The Global Ocean in Crisis*. Toronto: McClelland, 2009. Print.
- "Musqueam Ecosystem Conservation Society. "Welcome." Musqueam Ecosystem Conservation Society, 2010. Web. 23 Mar. 2010.
- Shiva, Vandana. *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace*. Cambridge: South End, 2005. Print.

Canadian Literary Environments

Susie O'Brien

As someone who works on the perimeter of Canadian literary studies, in postcolonial and environmental cultural studies, it's probably fair to say that I'm less a robust participant than an eavesdropper in critical conversations about Canadian literature. From this perspective, I'd like to share my impressions of what are to me the two most interesting conversations, which I'll call here the "Is-Canada-postcolonial?" conversation and the "Literature, Environment, and Culture" conversation, and the strangely impermeable boundary that I've observed between them. As virtually everyone working in Canadian literature will know, "Is Canada Postcolonial?" is the name of the 2003 collection edited by Laura Moss, based on the enormously successful conference she organized at the University of Manitoba in 2000. I'm using the title as an umbrella for a cluster of themes, including race, gender, sexuality, diaspora, and nationalism, that predominate in Canadian literary studies. The Literature, Environment and Culture conversation, which I'm guessing is a bit less familiar to participants in this forum, is located primarily in the listserv run by ALECC (Association for Literature, Environment and Culture in Canada), founded in 2005 by Canadian members of ASLE (Association for Studies of Literature and the Environment).

One of the main sparks for this intervention is a surprisingly testy thread that occurred on the listserv in response to a question posted by Emily Johansen, a PhD student at the time, about cosmopolitanism and rural places. The question went as follows: "I'm in the midst of writing a dissertation on cosmopolitanism and place, and am trying to find some examples of postcolonial rural fiction" (Johansen, 10 Apr. 2007). In reply to a question, she went on to note in a subsequent posting that "most cosmopolitan theory . . . enforces a binary between the rural and the urban where the rural is taken to be the site of an almost premodern singularity and, therefore according to a lot of cosmopolitan theory, is something to be ignored or further relegated to the periphery" (Johansen, 12 Apr. 2009). Among the responses she received were the following comments: "Can I be honest? The theoretical postmodern style you write in (margins, binaries, 'premodern singularity,' 'relegated to the periphery') . . . obscures some things for me as regards what you are actually exploring" (Belyea). The same poster went on to ask (in a humorous vein

that's lost out of context), "How can those livin' in them good ole' rural areas be further "relegated" to a "periphery"? Where the hell are they going to go? Outerspace?" (Belyea). And: "Is living on this particular "periphery" necessarily bad? More of us should move there maybe. For instance, in ecocritical terms, the impact of 2+ centuries of people moving to ever-growing cities has contributed to ecological destruction. Maybe 'premodern singularity' isn't necessarily a 'bad' thing in this case?" (Belyea). Another poster ventured (in an otherwise nuanced response): "I actually think it's a bit wrong-headed to come to rural or agrarian studies armed with urban-bred theories and practices of any kind. They strike me somehow as the 'wrong tools' to bring to bear on the rural" (Milne). I'm taking these comments out of context, at the risk of unfairly reducing what was a respectful, thoughtful exchange, in order to highlight a surprising degree of defensiveness on the part of ALECC posters. Even taking into account the dodgy background of the term "cosmopolitanism," the reaction is interesting in its hostility to what's characterized as interchangeably elite and metropolitan theories including postcolonialism.

So . . . what do the poco-metro types have to say about the ALECC group? The answer: not much. This is not to say that a journal like *Canadian Literature*, beginning with Laurie Ricou's tenure as editor, hasn't published some terrific ecocritical work over the years, but the environment still too often enters the conversation as an adjunct to the apparently richer, more progressive (more urban?) debates about postcolonial Canada: that is to say, it gets mentioned in the context of lists of things we should be concerned about, but is not often engaged.

One important exception to this pattern is Indigenous studies, where it is taken as a given that Canadian environmental issues are postcolonial issues. It's impossible to talk about the environment in a meaningful way without addressing the history of colonialism, including the connection between colonialism and not just environmental destruction but also the conservation and environmental movements, and the ongoing urgency of Indigenous land rights.

The subjects are connected in other ways as well. Only by thinking *together* the sometimes divisive politics of environmental racism (in which environmental risks are borne disproportionately by poor minorities), and rural poverty (often stereotyped provocatively or dismissively as primarily a white issue) does it become possible to consider how rural and urban, visible and invisible minorities, get sidelined in mainstream environmentalist discourse.¹

There's an additional reason why Canadianists of the poco and eco persuasions need to talk to one another, and it has to do with the sometimes uneasy

blend of academic/theoretical and advocacy work that both do. By advocacy, I don't just mean that Canadianists take an overtly political stance to their subject matter, but that they seek to promote certain kinds of writing (*Canadian Literature* publishes "original poems from Canadian citizens" ["Submissions"]); ALECC "aim[s] to . . . "raise the profile of nature writing, environmental literature and other arts" ["About"]) and, implicitly or explicitly, to influence policy. The latter aim finds its clearest expression in eloquent calls to protect the humanities and the arts, which have undergone significant funding cuts in the last few years (for example see Szeman et al). Such arguments in defence of the always-endangered life of the imagination generally ignore the parallel assaults that have been launched against science by the Harper Tories and other conservative governments around the world ("Scientists Warn").

One valuable consequence of opening up lines of conversation between Canadianists of different stripes, including environmental historians, social scientists, geographers, and biologists might be a recognition that our interests are not all that different. What feels like an increasingly difficult struggle to promote free intellectual inquiry, framed by problems of health and justice rather than profit, would undoubtedly be easier if we engaged in it together.

NOTE

- 1 Since I first delivered this piece, another thread on the ALECC listserv has focused on the problem of the rural, which tends to be off the radar of mainstream (i.e. mostly urban-based) environmentalists (Rhenisch et al).

WORKS CITED

- "About ALECC." ALECC (Association for Literature, Environment and Culture in Canada). Web. 1 Nov. 2009.
- Belyea, Andy. "Postcolonial Rural Fiction." ALECC listserv. ALECC, 11 Apr. 2007. Web. 31 Oct. 2009.
- Johansen, Emily. "Postcolonial Rural Fiction." ALECC listserv. ALECC, 10 Apr. 2007. Web. 31 Oct. 2009.
- . "Postcolonial Rural Fiction." ALECC listserv. ALECC, 11 Apr. 2007. Web. 31 Oct. 2009.
- Milne, Anne. "Rural Cosmopolitanism." ALECC, 16 Apr. 2007. Web. 31 Oct. 2009.
- Moss, Laura, ed. *Is Canada Postcolonial? Unsettling Canadian Literature*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2003. Print.
- "Submissions." *Canadian Literature*. Web. 1 Nov. 2009.
- Rhenisch, Harold, Essandi [Cate Sandilands], Luanne Armstrong, Tom Berryman, Anne Milne. "Deadline Extended for 'Teaching the Earth' issue of the Journal *Transformations*" ALECC listserv. ALECC, 6-8 October. Web. 30th Oct. 2009.
- "Scientists Warn of Serious Implications of Cuts to Granting Councils." *CAUT Bulletin* 56 (May 2009). Web. 1 Nov. 2009.
- Szeman, Imre, Sherry Simon, Lorraine York, Greg Elmer, Larissa Lai, Jody Berland, Reader's Forum, *English Studies in Canada* 33.3 (2007): 1-30. Print.

Diasporas, Indigenous Sovereignties, and Métis Writing in Canada

Sophie McCall

For the past several years, a growing split has become increasingly evident in critical studies of diasporic and Aboriginal literatures in North America: while most critics of diasporic literatures engage with questions of migrancy in an era of transnational corporatization, the majority of critics of Aboriginal literatures have turned to the language of sovereignty and nationhood in an era of land claims, self-government agreements, and modern-day treaties. On the surface, this gap may seem appropriate. Theories of diaspora may be best suited to address immigrant experiences of displacement, while sovereignty, nationhood, and cultural autonomy are key terms to address current trends in Native politics. Many Aboriginal literary critics, such as Lee Maracle (1996), Craig Womack (1999), and Lisa Brooks (2006), directly link their arguments for “intellectual sovereignty” to current political negotiations over land and governance. Meanwhile, in the work of critics engaged with studies of diaspora—such as James Clifford (1997), Diana Brydon (2000), and Lily Cho (2006)—the language of nation is an unresolved tension, as these critics attempt to grapple with complex transnational formations of identity, labour, technology, and security. It is possible, as Brydon has argued, that “concepts of diaspora reach their limits in the claims to indigeneity” (23), especially in light of current decolonization movements in Aboriginal communities.

However, I submit that a diasporic-Indigenous-sovereigntist critical approach may be best suited to address Métis writing, which paradoxically enacts national (i.e., the Métis nation) and diasporic (i.e., Métis-sage) identifications. For example, the work of Gregory Scofield, a Métis poet and writer whose ancestry can be traced back five generations to the Red River Settlement, and whose father, he recently discovered, was Polish-Jewish and German, underlines the necessity to articulate a flexible critical framework that explores both diasporic and national imaginings. In his work, nation and diaspora cannot be understood as binary opposites, but rather should be viewed as interdependent and mutually constitutive. There are compelling reasons to bring into conversation discussions of diaspora, Aboriginal literary nationalism, and Métis subjectivity. Theories of diaspora may offer some vital insights into the history of displacement of Aboriginal peoples in Canada (i.e., the creation of reserves, the forced relocation

of Aboriginal communities, and the scattering of Aboriginal communities and families through residential schools and foster care). By countering the tendency to look at specific diasporas separately, and to hierarchize them according to unspecified criteria, which Cho warns against, we have an opportunity to build coalitions between disparate minority histories and to produce a model for relational history writing. Diaspora may also help address experiences of mixed-race, urban, or off-reserve Native people, who may or may not maintain strong ties to a sovereigntist nation based on a defined territory. We might garner a better understanding of sovereignties-in-motion, or confederacies, and develop new ways of conceptualizing Native nationalisms that address the wide range of relationships that Aboriginal people have to their ancestral territories.

By the same token, theories of Aboriginal nationhood have much to contribute to conversations about diaspora. Indigenous sovereigntist perspectives may help articulate community-based processes of participatory citizenship. Diasporic and Indigenous-sovereigntist standpoints share the desire to challenge settler nationalisms and expose the exclusions that have produced Canadian citizenship, even as they grapple with the often devastating effects of a highly mobile, neoliberal, global capitalism. And theories of diaspora in conjunction with theories of Indigenous sovereignties potentially acknowledge the underlying maps of Native North America and how First Nations territories traverse the 49th parallel.

WORKS CITED

- Brooks, Lisa. "Afterword: At the Gathering Place." *American Indian Literary Nationalism*. Ed. Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, and Robert Warrior. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2006. 225-252. Print.
- Brydon, Diana. "It's Time for a New Set of Questions." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 71 (2000): 14-25. Print.
- Cho, Lily. "The Turn to Diaspora." *Topia* 17 (2006): 11-29. Print.
- Clifford, James. "Diasporas." *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997. 244-277. Print.
- Maracle, Lee. *I am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism*. 2nd ed. Vancouver: Press Gang, 1996. Print.
- Scofield, Gregory. *The Gathering: Stones from the Medicine Wheel*. Vancouver: Polestar, 1993. Print.
- . *I Knew Two Métis Women*. Vancouver: Polestar, 1999. Print.
- . *Native Canadiana: Songs from the Urban Rez*. Vancouver: Polestar, 1996. Print.
- . *Singing Home the Bones*. Vancouver: Raincoast, 2005. Print.
- . *Thunder Through My Veins: Memories of a Métis Childhood*. Toronto: HarperFlamingo, 1999. Print.
- Womack, Craig. *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999. Print.

A Different Cosmopolitanism: Indigeneity and Translocality

Deena Rymhs

My talk joins recent reappraisals of cosmopolitanism and its currency for capturing the multiple allegiances of subaltern subjects. In entering this field of discussion and its various articulations of cosmopolitanism, I ask what Indigenous histories, practices, and imaginaries might contribute to our understanding of this term. Cosmopolitanism's association, for some, with a "postracial" social order might seem immediately troubling to those who work in Indigenous studies. Seen by a few critics as continuing the legacy of liberalism, universalism, and imperialism, cosmopolitanism is a term steeped in a particular elite, Western intellectual culture. Its "cultivated detachment from restrictive forms of identity" (Anderson 72) and its separation from the "parochialisms emanating from extreme allegiances to nation, race, and ethnos," as Amanda Anderson describes this term (72), may overlook the realities and continued struggles of Indigenous groups in Canada—their overdetermination by "race" and "blood," their reliance upon parochial political organizations like band structures, their day-to-day confinement to segregated, hinterland spaces away from and within the metropole, and their embracing of difference as a source of empowerment. Given these discordant realities, cosmopolitanism might be seen, Anderson herself admits, as a term "invested in its own cultural capital" (92).

Yet, cosmopolitanism is a much-argued term, one that can capture the overlapping allegiances that characterize Indigenous political mobilization and routes of identity. Pointing out a "long-standing tradition of intertribal exchange," Lisa Brooks emphasizes the intertribal political networks that were historically important for formulating a language of Indigenous rights (253). Tol Foster argues that Indigenous tribes are intrinsically cosmopolitan (a constellation of identities that he sees emblemized in the iteration, "all my relations"). Craig Womack makes a further case that, contrary to many common assumptions, Indigenous sovereignty "is not an isolated position," since, as he puts it, "tribal governments exist in complex relationships with municipal, state, and federal powers that demand constant movement between and across borders. Sovereignty (by definition, government-to-government relations) has a profound cosmopolitanism at its core," Womack

concludes (37). These critics underline the cosmopolitan possibilities of tribal positionings while they also push beyond an isolationist view of sovereignty that detractors of Indigenous nationalism so often emphasize in their rejection of this stance.

Nestór García Canclini's notion of the "translocal" speaks to the movements across these inter-, intra-, extra- latitudes, emphasizing how the local still bears relevance in an age of global imaginaries and state hegemonies. This term encourages an exploration of neglected interactions and local-to-local relations of groups on the periphery—rather than seeing, to give one example, the histories of Indigenous groups largely in terms of their relationship with Euro-Canadian/Euro-American governments, and rather than positioning Euro-Canadian/Euro-American settler cultures as axiomatic to post-contact expressions of Indigeneity.

WORKS CITED

- Anderson, Amanda. *The Way We Argue Now: A Study in the Cultures of Theory*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006. Print.
- Brooks, Lisa. "Digging at the Roots: Locating an Ethical, Native Criticism." Womack, Justice, and Teuton 234-264. Print.
- Foster, Tol. "Of One Blood: An Argument for Relations and Regionality in Native American Literary Studies." Womack, Justice, and Teuton 265-302. Print.
- García Canclini, Nestór. *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995. Print.
- Womack, Craig, Daniel Heath Justice, and Christopher B. Teuton, eds. *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective*. Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 2008. Print.
- Womack, Craig. "A Single Decade: Book-Length Native Literary Criticism between 1986 and 1997." Womack, Justice, and Teuton 3-104. Print.

Epistemic Justice, CanLit, and the Politics of Respect

Daniel Coleman

At the end of his renowned essay, "The Politics of Recognition," Charles Taylor offered a challenge that has gone largely unanswered since the hot debates of the culture wars of the late 1980s and early 1990s. "Here is another severe problem with much of the politics of multiculturalism," wrote Taylor: "The peremptory demand for favourable judgements of worth [in different cultures] is paradoxically—perhaps

tragically—homogenizing. For it implies that we already have the standards to make such judgements. The standards we have, however, are those of North Atlantic civilization. And so the judgements implicitly and unconsciously will cram the others into our categories” (125). Critics have justly noted that Taylor’s use of “we” and “them” here falls into the trap of the politics of recognition, wherein white, Anglo-Canadians understand themselves to be the “we” who do the recognizing while those from other backgrounds are cast in the role of “them” who seek this recognition.¹ It’s an important and valid criticism, but I fear it has made us too readily throw out the baby with the bathwater.

For Taylor’s challenge contains within it a call for epistemic justice,² and I do not think “we”—this time referring to us collectively as students of the Canadian literatures—have taken it as seriously or as far as we could. We may have made some strides in de-colonizing the canon of CanLit insofar as Indigenous, Queer, African, ecocritical, and Asian Canadian literatures are more and more commonly part of our curricula, but we have yet to de-centre the epistemological canons Canadians have imbibed from the larger disciplinary norms of what Taylor calls “North Atlantic” literary theory and cultural studies. Rather than reading *away from* our Continentally-derived theories, we tend to read *towards* them. So we read the works of Thomas King or Eden Robinson as examples of postmodernism, or we read the diasporic writings of M.G. Vassanji or Dionne Brand in reference to Freud’s theory of melancholia or Derrida on haunting, and by so doing we read these texts into the post-Enlightenment frameworks we already know.

“From a Salish perspective,” writes Lee Maracle, “study ought to move us beyond the relentless reproduction of our cultural bias. . . . The spiritual objective of study is to transform the way we see, to broaden the field of vision” (70). One particularly powerful set of tools for dismantling what Mik’maq scholar Marie Battiste has called the “cognitive prisons” (xvii) of our colonial inheritance is now burgeoning throughout Canada in what James Youngblood (Sákéj) Henderson has called the Indigenous cultural “resonance.” A new generation of Indigenous scholars, writers, and cultural producers are articulating—in English, as well as Indigenous languages—a profoundly non-Enlightenment worldview. To be able to learn from and have our minds transformed by their work, we need to move from a politics of recognition that assumes we already know the value of what we see to a concept that is ubiquitous in Indigenous thinking: a politics of respect. As Maracle explains, respect for the object of study requires a certain amount

of distance, so that what we study is not alienated from its own context and turned into an acquisition of the learner. With the remarkable resonance of Indigenous thought in the northern half of Turtle Island, the conceptual tools for transforming our ways of thinking are more readily available than they ever have been before. Not only could a strong understanding of far-reaching philosophical concepts such as the Haudenosaunee *Guswentah* (or two-row wampum; see Hill) or *âtayôhkêwina* (Cree for “sacred stories” or “spiritual histories”; see McLeod) reshape how we understand texts by Maria Campbell or Richard Wagamese, but they could also transform what we see when we read the Moodies and Atwoods, let alone the Ondaatjes and NourbeSe Philips of the Canadian literatures.

NOTES

- 1 Among these critics, see especially Himani Bannerji, Smaro Kamboureli, and Eva Mackey.
- 2 I have derived this term from Miranda Fricker’s *Epistemic Injustice*.

WORKS CITED

- Bannerji, Himani. *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ P, 2000. Print.
- Battiste, Marie. “Introduction: Unfolding the Lessons of Colonialization.” *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. Ed. Marie Battiste. Vancouver: U of British Columbia P, 2000. xvi-xxx. Print.
- Fricker, Miranda. *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. Print.
- Henderson, James Sákéj Youngblood. “The Indigenous Humanities.” *Humanities’ Futures Forum*. University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon. March 31, 2008. Address.
- Hill, Richard. “Oral Memory of the Haudenosaunee: Views of the Two Row Wampum.” *Indian Roots of American Democracy*. Ed. José Barreiro. Ithaca: Akwe Kon P, 1992. 149-59. Print.
- Kamboureli, Smaro. *Scandalous Bodies: Diasporic Literature in English Canada*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.
- Mackey, Eva. *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada*. London: Routledge, 1999. Print.
- Maracle, Lee. “Oratory on Oratory.” *Trans.Can.Lit.: Resituating the Study of Canadian Literature*. Ed. Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2007. 55-70. Print.
- McLeod, Neal. *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times*. Saskatoon: Purich, 2007. Print.
- Taylor, Charles. “The Politics of Recognition.” *New Contexts of Canadian Criticism*. Ed. Ajay Heble, et al. Peterborough: Broadview, 1997. 98-131. Print.

Negotiating Sound Identities in Canadian Literature

Susan Gingell

As part of a research program based on the conviction that literary studies could productively attend to the rich archive of print textualized orature and orality in Canadian literature, I've recently begun working with the concept of sound identities. The concept of sound identities was articulated by music education theorist Glenn M. Hudak in "The Sound Identity: Music-Making and Schooling," an article in which Hudak builds on Simon Frith's conclusion that among the functions of popular music for both fans and performers are the formation of identity and the development of a sense of place and social context. Hudak himself argues that music-making with others helps to constitute a musical "We," which is "elaborated across the spectrum of schooling as a practice of love and freedom in the fight against racial discrimination" (447). Musical sound, I concluded from my reading of Hudak, helps to create a sound identity in two senses, one grounded in particular music(s) and one that is sound in the sense of healthy and strong.

When my reading of Hudak intersected with a discussion of sound in Neal McLeod's book *Cree Narrative Memory*, I began to see the potential for adapting the idea of sound identity to the study of what I call print textualized orality, that is, writing that brings to the paper or digital page a non-prestige lect or a colloquial or otherwise clearly oral version of a language. McLeod writes that for Cree people, "stories and words . . . hold the echo of generational experience, and the engagement with land and territory" (6). Defining *nêhiyawêwin* (Cree language), as "the process of making Cree sound," McLeod argues that this process "grounds us, and binds us with other living beings, and marks these relationships" (6). Thus the postmodern understanding that subjectivity is constituted in and through language is here given a particularly Cree formulation that ties identity to sound, kin, and the land.

The use of *nêhiyawêwin* in McLeod's poetry is illuminated by an understanding of these ties, which are further explained by the story he recounts of Edwin Tootoosis speaking to him as a young man about the land after colonization. Tootoosis observed, "*môy ê-kistawêt* ('It does not echo'),"

which statement McLeod glosses as “the land no longer had sound in the same way as it had before” (6). Thus McLeod’s incorporating, in strategically chosen places and contexts, Cree words, phrases, and sentences into the text of predominantly English language poems can be understood as an attempt to decolonize *nêhiyaw-askiy*, Cree territory, making it echo again with the sound of Cree language. One of his tributes to Big Bear, “*mistahi-maskwa, Song Two*,” for example, code switches at a key moment in recording that this Cree leader grounded his people’s claims to traditional Cree territory, language, and ways of relating—that is to say claims to a distinct identity—all by asserting “the Queen can never replace / *kâ-miyikowisiyâhk* / what the Creator has given us” (20-22).

Using the concept of Cree sound identity, we can certainly approach the work of other poets who use *nêhiyawêwin* in their work, poets like Louise Halfe and even, with some modification, Gregory Scofield. The latter’s sound identity is significantly shaped by Cree language because of the key role his *nêhiyaw* auntie, Georgina, played in his young life, but as a Métis person and the son of a Jew, his sound identity is also inflected by English, French, and Yiddish elements. The *métissage* of “Conversation My Châpan Mary Might Have Had with Mrs. Sarah F. Wakefield” entails braiding together a glossed Cree with English and French to create the impression of someone speaking in a Michif-inflected English. The specificities of this accent are most evident in the transformation of the word *English* into *Anglaish* in Mary’s invective-seasoned response to the assertion in the white woman’s captivity narrative that half-breeds are treacherous, negatively artful, and duplicitous:

mâmaskâc! dare I shay	<i>it is foolish or surprising</i>
you shtupid ole biddy	
Mish Shara	
what you got to blab about	
wooman	
you got home shafe an	
you ole man	
he foun you to be—how you shay	
in your Anglaish?	
not boddered, not molested (12)	

Similarly, as Scofield works to integrate the knowledge that the father he never knew was Jewish, he repeatedly uses in the poem “If,” the Yiddish-English phrase, “*Oy vey, you putz!*” or slight variations (3, 11, 21, 42, 51, 75) to weave the Jewish line into his sound identity.

That sound identity is translatable to other cultural contexts beside the Aboriginal is demonstrable in relation to Wayde Compton's book of poems *Performance Bond*. In "Forme and Chase," a poem whose entire text is marked as speech by quotation marks and is printed in a variant font from that of the rest of the book, he echoes Karl Marx in asserting, "A spectre is haunting this font" (1). Compton explains that the chase, or rectangular steel frame into which type was locked for early printing presses, constituted an attic of speech where accents are "boxed up" when people "migrate, marry, or while [those accents] / away" (2-3) so that his persona, if not Compton himself, identifies as "the bastard grapholect offspring of Jane Eyre / and the Rosetta Stone" (12-13). However, it is part of his project in *Performance Bond* to let those accents out of the attic, freeing Black speech to break the jinx that print has placed on accents and to work hijinks on the prestige lects of English. He imagines in a prose poem entitled "[jɪŋx]", for example, a conversation between Jazz Itself and a God who addresses him, "Yo, Jazz Itself, you think you're so cool, but what do you think you'd do if I made it so there were no instruments left in the world except the bagpipes?" ("[jɪŋx]" 25). It is left to Jazz Itself's children to refashion the name in inventive Ebonics: "Instead of bullshit 'bagpipes' we be calling thos / e things 'skin boxes' or some shit" (25) says one, while others offer "cow gut clarinets" (26) and "chit-tlin cellos." As part of *Performance Bond's* larger project of claiming Black space within Canada,¹ its bringing African-Canadian sound identities to the page cannot be divorced from the place of Black musics in the formation of those identities and the recording of intersubjective relations with Blacks in Africa and its Black Diaspora.

We can even carry the concept of sound identity into our study of the literary production of Euro-Canada, for example, reading the work of Newfoundland writers like Mary Dalton through its lens. Dalton's language practice is aimed at honouring the specific orality of her people and at marking the connections between them and sites in Newfoundland. We can see these aspects of her poetic project at work in a poem like "Berry Pails" with its opening

Gadabouts, those young ladyios—
The house in slings and
The whole works of them
Are gone in back, in on the Runs—
All the way in to Skibbereen.

Dalton makes clear in her lexis, idiom, and cadences Newfoundlanders' distinctness in their sound identities from those of the people of mainland

Canada, thus signaling a larger cultural difference. In this respect her work is in some ways analogous to McLeod's, Scofield's, and Compton's because of their signaling of kinship or counter-hegemonic group relations and their reclaiming of territory and/or space for subordinated groups in Canada. We need, however, to be aware that the territory to which Dalton asserts connection was violently snatched from the Beothuk and Mi' kmaq by the Euro-Newfoundlanders of earlier times.

As diasporic and transnational theory and literary studies continue to push to the forefront of critical attention the complexities of identity and subjectivity in a globalized world, focusing on sound identities promises to be a fruitful avenue of research applicable to work in all genres and by writers from diverse cultural communities. Moreover, it's an avenue as yet little trafficked.

NOTES

- 1 John Sherman argued in his MA project paper that in *Performance Bond* Compton is claiming Black space within a Canada that largely fails to recognize the historic and ongoing presence of Black Canadians as a significant part of its national reality.

WORKS CITED

- Compton, Wayde. "Forme and Chase." *Performance* 144. Print.
- . "Jiŋx." *Performance* 24-26. Print.
- . *Performance Bond*. Vancouver: Arsenal, 2004. Print.
- Dalton, Mary. "Berry Pails." *Merrybegot*. Montreal: Signal, 2003. 13. Print.
- Frith, Simon. "Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music." *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception*. Ed. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987. 133-49. Print.
- Hudak, Glenn M. *Sound Identities: Popular Music and the Cultural Politics of Education*. Ed. Cameron McCarthy et al. New York: Lang, 1999. 446-74. Print.
- McLeod, Neal. *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times*. Saskatoon: Purich, 2005. Print.
- . "mistahi-maskwa, Song Two." *Gabriel's Beach*. Regina; Hagios, 2008. 44. Print.
- Scofield, Gregory. "Conversation My Châpan Mary Might Have Had with Mrs. Sarah F. Wakefield." *Singing* 12-16. Print.
- . "If." *Singing* 42-45. Print.
- . *Singing Home the Bones*. Vancouver: Polestar, 2005. Print.
- Sherman, John. "The Hip-Hop Aesthetics and Visual Poetry of Wayde Compton's *Performance Bond*: Claiming Black Space in Contemporary Canada." MA Project, U of Saskatchewan, 2009. Print.

Awina Maga Kiya (Who is it that you really are)?: Cree and Métis Autobiographical Writing

Deanna Reder

As a PhD student at the University of British Columbia I was very fortunate to benefit from the First Nations House of Learning, built to be a “home away from home” for Aboriginal students;¹ it was through the teachers there that I learned the value of following Coast Salish protocols. When speaking in a group, we were taught to introduce ourselves in relation to our families and to the land and its peoples. A Coast Salish person, for example, would identify himself by his name, and if applicable, a ceremonial name often linked to his ancestors, and also would identify where he is from. Following these teachings, I would like to acknowledge that we stand on unceded Musqueam territory and that as a Cree-Métis woman whose family comes from Northern Saskatchewan, I am a guest on this land.²

I am also a literary critic with a specialization in both Canadian Indigenous literatures and in autobiography theory, both fields that have emerged in the past two decades.³ While the language of these fields is strongly marked by the discussions of postcolonial theory, autobiography theory, and trauma studies, my own ideas have been the most profoundly influenced by Native American literary nationalism that, with the contributions of Robert Warrior and Craig Womack beginning in the 1990s, has inspired Indigenous scholars in particular to draw their theoretical lenses from specific tribal epistemologies.

In fact, the moment that the value of Cree concepts was made clear to me was when I was privileged to attend what was one of the final lectures given by respected lawyer and elder, Harold Cardinal at the House of Learning in spring 2005. I will always remember this lecture, entitled “*Einew Kis-Kee-Tum-Awin*,”⁴ because Cardinal had been struggling with his illness and he spoke each phrase in his intelligent but weakened voice and paused, so that his wife Daisy could then repeat his words.⁵

Cardinal made the point that:

“*Kis Kee Tum Awin*” is a Cree term, which means “Knowledge.” It is a concept rooted in the language and conceptual framework of the Cree people. It is a term which incorporates many different, complex and complicated, though

inter-related terms and concepts each originating from and rooted in the Cree language and Cree belief systems.”

To explain his points, Cardinal told of when he was a young man and an elder had approached him with the following question: “*Awina Maga Kiya*—who is it that you really are?” Cardinal had replied, “*Neehiyow Neyah*,” which Cardinal believed to mean, “I am an Indian.” Anyone who knows Cree would know that *Neehiyow* does not mean Indian but rather means “Cree.” What Cardinal was saying was that he was a Cree person.

But we could situate Cardinal’s answer not only in the vernacular of the time but also in the early autobiography and non-fiction writing of that era: *I Am an Indian* (1969); *The Only Good Indian* (1970); *Bobbi Lee, Indian Rebel* (1975), and of course, Cardinal’s own *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada’s Indians* (1969). There was logic to his error.

However, the elder realized Cardinal’s mistake and asked him, in Cree, “Why is it that you are called ‘*Neehiyow*’—what does the word mean?” (np). When Cardinal couldn’t respond the elder explained:

The word *Neehiyow* comes from two words in our language: (1) *Neewoo*—Four and (2) *Yow*—Body [World]. In the context in which I use the term it means: Four Worlds or Four Bodies. We believe that the Creator placed knowledge in each of the Four Worlds. These are the sources of knowledge, which our people must seek to understand so that both their spiritual and physical survival will grow and continue. When I say “I am a *Neehiyow*” what I really am saying is that I come from “the people who seek the knowledge of the Four Worlds.” In short, when I apply the word *Neehiyow* to myself, what I am saying is that “I am a seeker of knowledge.”

As Cardinal understands it, the Four Worlds contain so much knowledge that not even over the course of a lifetime could one person learn everything. Writes Cardinal: “Hence [the Cree] saw the pursuit of knowledge as an unending, continuous, intergenerational exercise . . .”

Using this concept of intergenerational understanding changes my own study of Cree and Métis life-writing. For example, I no longer begin with a post-colonial paradigm because *Neehiyow* concepts begin long before the history of colonialism; I do not rely upon vocabulary like “resistance literature,” “testimonio,” and “witnessing,” coined by autobiography studies, because while these terms are useful for certain conversations, they can also re-inscribe an identity as colonized and leave us less able to engage with writing that is not overtly “resistant” or political. Subsequently, works have been overlooked, perhaps because they do not seem to “protest” in recognizable ways. I approach these neglected texts using Cree paradigms to ask new

questions: for example, instead of looking for *agency* in Edward Ahenakew's *Voices of the Plains Cree* (1973), I wonder what Cree values he demonstrates; instead of examining subversive strategies in Joseph Dion's *My Tribe, the Crees*, I wonder how the author, teacher for twenty-four years and a Cree activist for Métis rights, exhibits a Cree understanding of history, pedagogy and relationships. And when I come across Eleanor Brass' *I Walk in Two Worlds* (1987), I wonder how she, as a Cree intellectual, valued her obligation to, as Cardinal writes, "pass onto the next generation, the knowledge which had been gathered and understood with the expectation that subsequent generations would continue the inter-generational process of gathering and understanding knowledge" (np). And key to all this inquiry is the question of how I, too, as someone in this subsequent generation, am implicated in this process.

NOTES

- 1 For more information about the First Nations House of Learning, see www.longhouse.ubc.ca
- 2 This formula of introduction is not only an autobiographical act but also a point of courtesy that does not wear out with repetition, similar to the custom of thanking a host; the fact that anyone before or after might say a word of thanks would not deter someone from expressing thanks.
- 3 It is worth noting that while Canadian Indigenous autobiography per se has only recently been the focus of much scholarship, texts like *The Book of Jessica* (1989) and *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman* (1999), have drawn attention from autobiography scholar Susanna Egan; more recently work on residential schools (*Magic Weapons* by Sam McKegney published in 2007) and incarceration narratives (*From the Iron House: Imprisonment in First Nations Writing* by Deena Rymhs in 2008) has opened up the field.
- 4 Indigenous People's Knowledge
- 5 Thanks in particular to Madeleine McIvor and Alannah Young who passed on the script to me; a modified version of his essay is available in *Natives and Settlers, Now and Then* (2007) edited by Paul W. DePasquale.

WORKS CITED

- Ahenakew, Edward. *Voices of the Plains Cree*. Ed. Ruth M. Buck. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973. Print.
- Brass, Eleanor. *I Walk in Two Worlds*. Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1987. Print.
- Cardinal, Harold. "Einew Kis-Kee-Tum-Awin: Indigenous People's Knowledge." Mar. 2009. Lecture.
- . *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians*. Edmonton: Hurtig, 1969. Print.
- DePasquale, Paul W., ed. *Native and Settlers, Now and Then: Historical Issues and Current Perspectives on Treaties and Land Claims in Canada*. Edmonton: U of Alberta P, 2007. Print.
- Dion, Joseph F. *My Tribe, the Crees*. Ed. Hugh A. Dempsey. Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1979. Print.
- Gooderham, Kent, ed. *I Am an Indian*. Toronto: Dent, 1969. Print.

- Griffiths, Linda and Maria Campbell. *The Book of Jessica: a Theatrical Transformation*. Toronto: Coach House, 1989. Print.
- Maracle, Lee. *Bobbi Lee, Indian Rebel*. Richmond: LSM, 1975. Print.
- McKegney, Sam. *Magic Weapons: Aboriginal Writers Remaking Community after Residential School*. Winnipeg: U of Manitoba P, 2007. Print.
- Rymhs, Deena. *From the Iron House: Imprisonment in First Nations Writing*. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008. Print.
- Waubageshig, ed. *The Only Good Indian: Essays by Canadian Indians*. Toronto: New, 1970. Print.

The Case for Digital Poetics

Ian Rae

I would like to use my intervention to make a fast appeal to *Canadian Literature* for online space devoted to critical consideration of digital poetry, e-poetry, or, more broadly, new media poetry. These are poems that go beyond the printed word to explore the possibilities of interactive or intermedial features. They can be interactive in the sense that reading these poems involves clicking, dragging, or selecting from options that trigger spatial reconfigurations of the words on screen, or mimic the logic of video games in word play, or launch the poem into the textual space of the web through search engines, or enact on the screen such critical concepts as writing under erasure. Digital poems are also typically intermedial in the sense that they combine word and image, or word and sound, in a fashion that would have been impossible in print.

Embracing digital poetics would not necessarily mean that *Canadian Literature* would succumb to the Gee Whiz factor of every clickable online ode. Marjorie Perloff has rightly satirized the illusory freedom of many programmed poems, and she reminds critics that “however we choose to define it, poetry is *the language art*: it is, by all accounts, language that is somehow extraordinary, that can be processed only upon rereading” (143). Yet as Perloff’s own chapter in the 2006 collection *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories* demonstrates, there are many poets who have managed to strike a compelling balance between the aesthetic standards of oral and print traditions, and the intermedial opportunities afforded by code. Indeed, many, but not all, of the digital poets have emerged from the avant-garde traditions of concrete poetry, sound poetry, and constraint-based writing. These authors

approach the computer and the internet as media that afford new creative opportunities, which is precisely the exploratory attitude that Marshall McLuhan encouraged poets to adopt (*Understanding* 358; “Joyce” 60-70).

McLuhan’s simultaneous commitment to literary criticism and media analysis raises a series of key points: first, Canadian content in the burgeoning field of digital poetics is already well-established. Most books and articles on the subject are littered with epigrams and citations from McLuhan (Glazier 7, 54, 78; Morris v, 4, 28-9, 34; Baldwin xviii) and even Harold Innis (Baldwin xviii). Similarly, the poetry and criticism of bp Nichol, Steve McCaffery, Darren Wershler-Henry, and Christian Bök are already mainstays of the critical studies, as well as of sites such as the *Electronic Poetry Center* out of Buffalo or *UbuWeb* out of New York City. And herein lies the problem for Canadian critics: The digital dimension of the Canadian avant-garde is gradually being subsumed into an American melting pot, both in the textual space of the websites and, more importantly, in the critical studies, which situate contributions from the international avant-garde within a continuum of American writing that moves from Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound to the Black Mountain, LANGUAGE, and New York School poets. This critical trajectory is firmly established in the first book on *Digital Poetics: The Making of E-Poetries* (2002) by Loss Pequeño Glazier, who operates the *Electronic Poetry Center*. It only grows stronger in subsequent publications, as in the “genealogy” (336) of the avant-garde that Barrett Watten constructs in his 2006 essay “Poetics in the Expanded Field: Textual, Visual, Digital.” (C.T. Funkhouser’s wide-ranging *Prehistoric Digital Poetry* is an important exception to the assimilative trend). These American studies are fascinating, but there are other ways of approaching the avant-garde in Canada, as Richard Cavell has demonstrated in *McLuhan in Space* through his reading of Nichol, McCaffery, and Michael Snow (134-5). Furthermore, for fifty years now, it has been the task of this journal to develop alternatives to English and American critical paradigms.

I would therefore suggest that we sift the Canadian content from the various agglomerations of digital poetry on the web; subject this content to critical appraisal; develop a space within the “CanLit Poets” section of www.canlit.ca to showcase this critical writing; curate the site such that critics interested in the topic can follow live links to the poems discussed therein; and ultimately establish new critical paradigms for assessing digital writing in Canada. For example, we might invite some of the poet-critics to curate an online exhibition of the works of their peers, which would foster critical

dialogue and draw attention to the *Canadian Literature* website, especially the attention of a wired generation of students. *Canadian Literature* has done an excellent job of expanding its digital delivery services, but it must still compete for scholarly attention with research databases such as ProQuest. Web exclusives on digital poetics would hopefully draw national and international interest to the journal's website. These exclusives could also be useful teaching tools in wired classrooms.

Thus, in this proposal, I am thinking of the next generation of undergraduates who will be as likely to read lyrics on their cellphones as they will be to peruse them in the pages of *Queen's Quarterly*. I am also thinking about the coming generation of graduate students, such as J.C. Peters, who currently hosts the *AudioText* show on CITR, and who bridges print and performance traditions by reading anthologized Canadian poems over the airwaves and intermixing them with recordings of slam poetry. She then converts the radio show into a podcast that she distributes through her own website (<http://jcpeters.ca/node/34>) and through Facebook. I am also thinking about the coming generation of professors, such as T.L. Cowan, currently a Killam post-doc at the University of Calgary, who is working on an archival project that she says will “examine the politics and aesthetics, as well as the social relations of production and circulation of feminist grass-roots (community-based) performances” (email). I hope that we can take advantage of the multimedia capabilities of the *Canadian Literature* website to better display and disseminate such material for critical consideration, while pushing criticism even further into the realm of poems specifically composed to be read online.

If we create this resource, we will be able to devise more culturally and regionally diverse theories of digital poetry than the ones proposed by the brilliant but small group of white, middle-class, predominantly male poets from Toronto—poets who are largely affiliated with Coach House Books and who have gained entry into the American critical market. Let me be very clear that I applaud these poets for expanding their audience and networks. I also commend the American critics and webmasters for the pioneering work they have done in the digital field. Indeed, the American critics offer exciting and often surprising new readings of Canadian poetry; consider, for example, Funkhouser's use of Lionel Kearns's rarely discussed “Kinetic Poem” (1968) as the epigraph to his book. Please note, furthermore, that I am not recommending that *Canadian Literature* create another archive of digital poems. There are ample online resources and *Open Letter* already makes space for digital poems. I am simply recommending that Canadian critics

intervene in the digital discourse in an accessible yet analytical fashion, and that *Canadian Literature* provide a much-needed forum for evaluating this innovative work.

WORKS CITED

- Cavell, Richard. *McLuhan in Space*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2002. Print.
- Cowan, T.L. Message to the author. 8 Sept. 2009. E-mail.
- Glazier, Loss Pequeño. *Digital Poetics: The Making of E-Poetries*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2002. Print.
- Funkhouser, C.T. *Prehistoric Digital Poetry: An Archaeology of Forms, 1959-1995*. Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 2007. Print.
- McLuhan, Marshall. "Joyce, Mallarmé, and the Press." *Essential McLuhan*. Ed. Eric McLuhan and Frank Zingrone. Toronto: Anansi, 1995. 60-70. Print.
- . *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. 1964. Cambridge: MIT, 2002. Print.
- Morris, Adalaide and Thomas Swiss, eds. *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories*. Cambridge: MIT, 2006. Print.
- Perloff, Marjorie. "Screening the Page/Paging the Screen: Digital Poetics and the Differential Text." *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories*. Eds. Adalaide Morris and Thomas Swiss. Cambridge: MIT, 2006. 143-64. Print.
- Watten, Barrett. "Poetics in the Expanded Field: Textual, Visual, Digital . . ." *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories*. Eds. Adalaide Morris and Thomas Swiss. Cambridge: MIT, 2006. 335-70. Print.

Journals in Digital Space: Electronic Circulation, Cultural Commons, and Intellectual Labour

Larissa Lai

I would like to propose that we direct our critical eyes towards the structure and circulation of journals with the same kind of attention that we think about land. Much of the progressive work in Canadian literature since Margaret Atwood's *Survival*—with its "hostile land and hostile natives"—has reconfigured ways in which we think about land, not just as that which can be owned, but that which is inhabited, crossed-through, encountered, territorialized, deterritorialized, identified with, claimed, and reclaimed.

If we inhabit our discipline in ways that parallel the manner in which we inhabit the nation, the state, neoliberalism, or global flows, then circulation matters. And the way in which we circulate knowledge, as Marshall McLuhan has taught us, has everything to do with what kind of knowledge gets

produced. I'd like to echo here the appreciation that many of my colleagues have already expressed with regard to the way that Laura Moss, Margery Fee, and Laurie Ricou have thought to structure this gathering. I wonder if similar methods could be applied to the journal itself. How would the knowledge that the journal produces be subtly different?

In the current moment, journal publishing is changing. In fact, the entire culture of research and dissemination is changing because of all the possibilities of digital reproduction and circulation. The paper journal, like the paper book, is already in the process of being re-imagined as one interface among many. Radio and television have long since knocked the book off its pedestal as the fastest means of circulating ideas and information to lots of people. We have already lived in and written for the digital environment for decades, but both change and the rate of change are accelerating.

What the digital world has done, and will continue even more intensely to do, is open up the possibilities for circulating large packets of text. Digital circulation is so efficient that it's no wonder that when doing research most of us turn to JStor, ProQuest and EbscoHost before we go to the library, or even turn the pages of the print journals we've subscribed to. I don't think paper journals are going to die, and I don't think books are going to die either, but I think they are going to—because they already do—serve a different function from the function they used to have.

As the Creative Commons advocates frame it, we have a set of choices—to try to hang on to the old methods through which information circulated and reproduce that in digital space by trying to copyright and protect everything, or to surrender to the logic of digital space which simply is not the logic of the print book or journal. At its extreme everything is made freely available. The Creative Commons folk advocate some combination of the two for most publications.

And, in fact, *Canadian Literature* already functions as a combination of both strategies, with the print journal containing all the academic articles, plus reviews and poetry, and canlit.ca providing lots of supplementary material: interviews with authors, databases of Canadian scholars, publishers and periodicals, and a section called Letters and Reflections.

It seems to me, however, that just as there have been many cultural ways of understanding, using, being in relation with, moving through and taking care of land, so there are many ways of understanding, using, being in relation with, moving through and taking care of journals. The rapid emergence of digital possibility over the last couple of decades or so has vastly increased the

potential of what journals can do and be. But a big part of that doing and being depends on understanding the logic and possibilities of digital circulation. It is faster than print. It is more interactive. It may be more ephemeral—time will tell. It seems to me that the mixed paper and digital form suits slow intellectual processes better—paper for polished peer-reviewed articles, but digital for interesting and maybe occasionally incendiary reactions, observations, and responses. For indeed, the reading practices that accompany different modes of circulation are specific to that mode. There is a pleasurable and engaged slowness possible in print, which contrasts sharply against the stark usefulness of the digital mode, with its instant accessibility and the possibilities it offers for rapid information processing.

How the logic of the medium interfaces with the logic of funding, the logic of function—for the building of cv's and tenure files, and the logic of cultural work, then, really needs to be thought through. Do we, for instance, think of the journal more as repository of knowledge or more as a site of knowledge production? How does this thinking affect our own perceptions of our own research and teaching practices? To recognize the journal as a site of interactive knowledge production, indeed, seems already to be a call for a deeper exploration of digital possibilities.

How, then, are we to understand the big databases like EbscoHost, ProQuest, Academic Search Premiere, etc.? They serve a legitimization function. They also provide a source of income as long as journals maintain hold on copyright. But speaking of neoliberalism, as we have been, to be circulated through the big international databases is also to surrender control to large and impersonal corporate forces. It may be that we have no choice—the Google Books battle, insofar as I understand it, already puts cultural creators and producers in a strange, new digital bind in relation to the dissemination of their work. It is empowering in terms of circulation, but disempowering in terms of control, and still not understood in terms of writers' financial gains or losses. (And I think it is important to advocate for the rights of writers—both academic and freelance, in order to make sure that writers' livelihoods don't get lost in all of this.) What the large databases provide is a much wider and more instantaneous reach, so long as we agree to their terms, conditions, and tastes. But they also require the surrender of copyright—something that I was once shocked to learn that most academics accede to, because my copyright, for over a decade, was my bread and butter. As university and knowledge production are increasingly corporatized, it seems to me important to at least recognize what our intellectual labour, at its most material,

is being put in the service of. I ask without judgement whether there is anything to be gained—perhaps not financially, but possibly in terms of the health of intellectual culture—in moving even deeper into the Creative Commons model.

If we are thinking in terms of the circulation of the discourses of diaspora, “race,” post-race and indigeneity in relation to their material effects, I think we need to think about these things in relation to the circulation of knowledge. As Arjun Appadurai has taught us, our own ideas are part of ideoscapes and mediascapes in global flow. What would it mean to reconnect such flows to the flow of water as Rita Wong articulates it? What is dissolved in the “business solution,” and how else might it flow? If Appadurai’s epistemology belongs to an Enlightenment inheritance, where in the non-Enlightenment cultural traditions that many of us also inherit might we draw an imagination and reproduction of a new iteration of information commons?

These are open-ended questions that I don’t have the answer to. I do note, however, that Canadian speculative fiction writer Cory Doctorow offers free downloads of his books the same day they are released in hardcover.

We might consider opening to public fora what the private databases and corporatized universities want to keep private. I understand that there is no such thing as complete access—only certain people have access to the web, only certain people have access to what Rita Wong calls pavement and most of us call English, and even fewer have access to the education that makes critical discourse make sense. But I think that if the ideals we embrace, or at least strive contradictorily towards, are going to make any difference at all, we need at least to try.

Back to the Future

Christl Verduyn

In 1959, the year of the journal *Canadian Literature*’s birth, Hugh MacLennan’s *The Watch that Ends the Night*, Irving Layton’s *A Red Carpet for the Sun*, Andre Giroux’s *Malgré tout, la joie*, and Félix-Antoine Savard’s *Le barachois* won the Governor General’s awards. Was there anything in those selections to foretell the extraordinary developments in Canadian literature and literary criticism that ensued over the fifty years that followed?

Fast forward to 2009 (or nearly, since at the time of writing, this year's winners are not yet announced; thus, this is the 2008 news), by-pass the occasional "they got it wrong" year, and we see, as a community, Marie-Claire Blais taking the French-language fiction prize, Nino Ricci the English-language, and drama established, as was not yet the case in 1959, as a literary category worthy of "GG" recognition. I am not proposing to predict Canadian literature in 2059 on the basis of literary awards; we know what fraught terrain that can be. But, over the past fifty years, Canadian literature and literary criticism have witnessed the explosion of writing and critical work by Canadian and Québécois women, by writers from Canada's multicultural communities, and by writers from the country's Aboriginal communities. In addition, waves of literary and cultural theory (from feminism, postmodernism, postcolonialism, through ecocriticism, to transnationalism) have unfurled over the critical landscape, and new forms of writing (such as life writing, for example) have been embraced (albeit sometimes reluctantly) along with new communities of writers. It would have taken considerable powers of insight in 1959 to have foreseen all these developments. What, then, might be perceived of 2059 from today's vantage point 2009?

New avenues, certainly: in the areas of Canadian science fiction or speculative writing, Margaret Atwood's newest (*The Year of the Flood*) assuring us of the literary future in that particular direction; the graphic novel—now on my course lists in response to student interest; and, the whole amazing world of writing practices on the internet. This latter in particular is an area that I find personally challenging and so I have made it the focus of my brief intervention here. As my title suggests, however, I do so in a "back to the future" sort of way—indeed, in an arguably traditional way—an "archival" way.

E-mails to, between, and among writers and readers; drafts of novels, correspondence, and essays saved to diskettes, hard drives, and now memory sticks, constitute an electronic literary archive that is already extensive and growing by the day. This is not the archive of papers, letters, documents, and so on that the past fifty years have shown us reveal so much about our literature, critical practices, and writers. Moreover, the existence of the electronic literary archive is not a new observation, and this is not about the "end of the book" fifty years from now. More simply, it is about the importance and value of what is being produced *as we speak* in the Canadian electronic literary universe, that would be meaningful fifty years hence to someone undertaking the study of our literary production, history, and criticism at the outset of the 21st century. I have had some wonderful e-mail exchanges

with writers lost to corrupted files or simply to the advance of technology. Remember floppy disks?

The intervention I wish to make, then, looks ahead to the accessibility and value in 2059 of the electronic literary archive being created today in 2009, at the same time that it continues to “look back” into the literary archives of the past, many of them still unexplored, still ignored. There is still a wealth of literary material to explore in smaller regional archives, for example, that can expand, enrich, energize, and revise what will be considered Canadian literature in 2059. In a phrase, then, look back and see ahead to the future of Canadian literature.

Archives of Diasporic Citizenship

Lily Cho

In “Diasporic Citizenship,” I suggest that the rise of minority or diasporic literature in Canada puts into productive tension notions of diaspora and citizenship for thinking about Canadian literature. Today, I would like to further explore some of these issues. What precisely is the productivity of this tension between diaspora and citizenship? How do the demands of diaspora brush up against those of citizenship in the context of national literature? In exploring these questions, I want to turn to the space of the colonial archive as a site in which the encounter between the competing demands (and desires) of diaspora and citizenship unfold.

In a recent book, Ann Laura Stoler notes that there has been a move across a range of scholarship in recent years from approaching the “archive-as-source to archive-as-subject” (44). She notes the sheer number of volumes devoted to notions of “the archive” and argues that *reading* “is an agentive act, one squarely focused on what we know and how we know it” (45). I confess that I was certainly one of those scholars who worked largely outside of the field of history who found turning to the colonial archive, and reading it, to be provocative and agential. Trained in postcolonialism with the taste of the Subaltern Studies Group’s revelations about what could be found between the lines of bureaucratic papers and ledgers still fresh in my mind, it was exhilarating to turn to the documents of Canadian immigration history and to read in them another story of race and diasporic arrival than the one I thought I knew.

Stoler's recognition of the agency afforded by reading the archive reveals something more than simply the allure of the archive-as-subject. It illuminates the ways in which reading for agency in diasporic Canadian literature is, for me, conjoined with the work of reading for agency in the archives. Reading for the construction of Chineseness in Canadian head tax laws was bound up with reading how "place becomes an island in the blood" in Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill*. Or reading the documents on Japanese internment became tied with Roy Kiyooka's *Mothertalk* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*.

The colonial archive of immigration history in Canada—the head tax certificates, the Hansard debates on exclusion, internment, immigration, the passenger logs of immigration ships, and so on—is more than just historical context for reading diasporic Canadian literature. It functions as a site of dialogic engagement. Diasporic Canadian literature is in perpetual conversation with the subjects and subjectivities embedded within these archives. These archives become more coherent with the intrusions and reinscriptions of literature upon them. The contradictions of diasporic citizenship—the need to be at once insistent on diasporic difference and compliant with the generalizing demands of being a citizen—unfold in the diasporic Canadian literature's insistence on recovering what Allen Sekula calls the body in the archive. The tension between the demands of diaspora and those of citizenship maps onto the tension between the literary and the archival. Where diasporic literature intervenes into the archives of citizenship, there is the possibility of agency in reading.

It is not just that diasporic Canadian literature functions as a corrective to the inaccuracies and exclusions of the colonial archive. Rather, it is that diasporic Canadian literature engages with the archive-as-subject and insists upon these documents as a part of the predicaments of the present.

WORKS CITED

- Cho, Lily. "Diasporic Citizenship: Contradictions and Possibilities for Canadian Literature." *TransCanada*. Eds. Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2007. 93-109. Print.
- Stoler, Ann Laura. *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2010. Print.
- Wah, Fred. *Diamond Grill*. Edmonton: NeWest, 1996. Print.

The Best of the West

Christopher Lee

This intervention revolves around a movie. *Not For Love* (*Bushi Weile Aiqing*) is a Chinese film made in 1979. As the film opens, Han, the male hero, rescues a white woman who has tried to drown herself. It turns out that Wilma was overcome by grief after her fiancé was killed at Tiananmen Square while mourning the death of the late Premier Zhou Enlai in 1976. That year, the spontaneous outpouring of grief for Zhou Enlai was violently suppressed by the Communist Party. But after the death of Mao, it was hailed as an expression of popular discontent against what were relabelled ultra-leftist leaders and policies. This rewriting of history legitimated the market reforms that set the stage for China's emergence as a global economy.

Wilma, it turns out, is the daughter of a Canadian doctor and a Chinese woman, both of whom volunteered for the revolution and were killed in action. Wilma's father is, of course, a thinly veiled stand-in for Norman Bethune, the real-life Canadian who was lionized by the communists after his death. After her own parents' death, Wilma was cared for by Premier Zhou who declared her the daughter of socialist internationalism, and it soon becomes clear that her mourning is not really for her fiancé or her parents, but for her Uncle Zhou. When Wilma receives an invitation from her aunt to return to Canada and start a new life, she adamantly refuses because she insists that she is Chinese and would never leave her Motherland. These commitments are strenuously challenged as the film continues. Wilma ends up part of a love triangle with her rescuer and his own jealous fiancée, who accuses Wilma of harboring "foreign ties." When Wilma rebuffs the affections of another man, he calls her a whore, a mongrel, and a counter-revolutionary.

Not for Love is by no means a high point in cinema history. Indeed, it oscillates between the formulaic and the absurd (although it does contain the first interracial kiss in Chinese socialist cinema). But if the message of the film is that sexual desire must always be subordinated to patriotism and revolutionary fervor, this point is almost completely derailed by Wilma's Canadianness. Indeed, her main claims—she is Chinese and China is her Motherland—are undermined by her visible racial difference. What is fascinating about *Not for Love* is how it must bend over backwards to erase

her racial and national difference even while the plot completely revolves around these markers. Canada, it seems, makes it impossible for Wilma to be Chinese, which then brings up the possibility that Han might also betray his country through his relationship with this daughter of international socialism.

For all its shortcomings, I find *Not for Love* riveting precisely because of its treatment of Canada. After all, Wilma's Canadianness is both arbitrary and overdetermined. Canada, it seems, was the safest Western country to include because it recognized the People's Republic before many other Western nations, and because of Norman Bethune himself. Otherwise, it makes no difference to the film where her father is from as long as he is foreign. Aesthetic flaws aside, I could not figure out what was so jarring about *Not for Love* until I realized that it was that "Canada" was devoid of representational depth: it was merely a placeholder for the West. To be more precise, it was the Best of the West.

To see Canada portrayed this way provides what historian Bruce Cumings, in his trenchant analysis of American hegemony in Asia, calls a "parallax vision," an "apparent displacement or difference in the position of an object, caused by actual change of the point of observation" (*OED*, qtd. in Cumings 1). A parallax vision jars us out of our subject positions and inaugurates a new, uncertain, cognitive relationship with an object. Being the Best of the West has long been part of our national mythology. But why would anyone want to be the best of such a compromised formation? Since it's not possible to simply renounce our Westernness, we might entertain instead a politics of shallowness that resists filling in "Canada" with historical, cultural, and social depth. Instead, a politics of shallowness would evacuate the representational content of "Canada" and enable it to function as a dangerous supplement to nationalisms at home and abroad.

WORKS CITED

- Cumings, Bruce. *Parallax Visions: Making Sense of American-East Asian Relations at the End of the Century*. Durham: Duke UP, 1999. Print.
- Not for Love (Bushì Weile Aiqing)*. Dir. Xiang Lin. Emei Film Studio, 1979. Film.

Utopian Longing and Literary Futures

Roxanne Rimstead

Rather than idealizing the future, the term “utopian longing” in my title refers to making the future happen by helping conceptualize the possible. I use the notion of “utopia” broadly in the sense that Ernst Bloch explained in *The Principle of Hope* (and *The Spirit of Utopia*) to mean social imagining, educated hope, and concrete or possible versus abstract utopias, and the temporally layered experience of hope in which we encounter both our individual and collective selves in a “dreaming forward” that encompasses the past, the present, and the future. The way we imagine *Canadian Literature*, both the field and the journal, depends upon what we conceive of as possible, particularly in terms of feminist and everyday notions of cultural transformation and particularly in terms of two of the most enduring sources of conflict and social injustice in our society. The first is contemporary and global forms of class exploitation, what Arjun Appadurai calls econocide: “a worldwide tendency to arrange the disappearance of the losers in the great drama of globalization” (41). The other is linguistic conflict, characteristic of our two solitudes in Canada. Briefly, what worries me is that imagining the future for many of us in this place and time will be truncated by our experience of extreme precariousness, which keeps the poor focused on making a living and keeps the privileged focused on short-term profit rather than long-term responsibility for the future (see Ireland). In the field of literary criticism specifically, I fear this means that we may have lost touch with how to read literature in terms of radical politics because so many of us are involved in careerism (publish or perish) or merely stuck in a pervasive form of presentism, which stems from what David Harvey calls “the nirvana of consumerism,” not to mention a flight from economism so pervasive that we neglect to factor in a critique of class and economic forces when we discuss contemporary culture. This, as both Harvey and Ireland note, makes us, as academics, shy to critique capitalism. As the gap between the rich and the poor widens, we lack reading strategies to understand the structures of feeling of the oppressed and to imagine a future resistant to, or even critical of, capitalism. Present economic crises have us looking away, rather than more squarely at, the accessibility of higher education, the rapport between class and cultural production and consumption, and class biases in the way we conceptualize culture and aesthetics.

Since part of the essence of political precariousness in Canada as nation state is linguistic conflict (reflected in the glaring presence of absence at this conference), this is another unsayable conflict we need to address when we consider what it might mean to dream Canadian literature/*Canadian Literature* (field and journal) forward. We should be discussing how to translate more of our literary theories and literary works across linguistic divides in Canada, given that only about 16.5% of the population is bilingual, which limits the audience for a bilingual journal

On the subject of utopian longing and literary futures, many of you are probably familiar with George Woodcock's "An Absence of Utopias," written for this journal in 1969. It begins "Literatures are defined as much by their lacks as by their abundances, and it is obviously significant that in the whole of Canadian writing there has appeared only one Utopian novel of any real interest; it is significant in terms of our society as much as of our literature" (3). W.H. New recognized the importance of Woodcock's position on utopia. Indeed, Woodcock put it to him in the form of a surprise and off-topic question during his PhD exams some years ago here at UBC . . . asking out of the blue "Can you think of any Canadian Utopias?" (the only utopia Woodcock granted Canlit up until 1969 was James DeMille's *A Strange Manuscript in a Copper Cylinder*, 1888). New deployed utopia as a motif to describe the life and work of George Woodcock in a recent tribute, crediting him with his own brand of utopianism, based on anarchic rejection of organized politics and an unabashed application of aesthetic judgments and years of dedication to the journal: "In some ways this is the same spirit of enquiry that took Woodcock into Canadian writing in the first place, in search of Utopia perhaps, but settling for the freedom to speak."

A Blochian notion of utopian longing, which may exist in absences or moments rather than the fully imagined alternative worlds required by Woodcock, has been applied to literature by Bruce Robbins in *The Servant's Hand*. Robbins encourages us to look behind the erasure, dismemberment, or ridicule of the servant to uncover what often lies unsaid: that is, a latent wish on the part of some authors and readers for utopian union between classes, a common place where servants and masters might finally meet as humanity (13, 26-7, 32). If we shift emphasis to Bloch's work on utopian longing for that which is unachieved in our present world, but imaginable and longed for all the same (sometimes even in realist or hegemonic works as well as fantastic fiction), Canadian literature is full of the longing for a better world from the writings of the Jesuits (Christian utopias), to social critique by Alexander McLachlan,

Louis Riel, Laura Goodman Salverson, and others. More recently, feminist visions of micropolitical acts such as everyday revolutions, for example, in the form of Himani Bannerji's poem "revolutions" (note the significance of the small "r" and the plural in the title), articulate a longing for a better life on a small and realizable scale, globally as well as nationally.

An unlikely place to find utopic moments is in Patrice Desbrien's Franco-Ontarian poetry, a poetry which rages against silence and linguist hierarchy in the mining town of Sudbury. Yet, as in Robbins' work on servants, it is the absence of utopia itself that makes a place for utopic longing in the poem. The speaker is watching a worker asleep at a table in a Sudbury bar, wondering when the worker will wake to resistance instead of despair at his limited power. For the francophone worker to talk back in his own language to the corporate English bosses would fuse class action with linguistic identity and so the speaker equates action with speech and inaction with silence, asking both the worker and the reader repeatedly "Qu'est-ce que tu va faire?" and "Est-ce que tu devrais te taire?"

Invoking Blochian theories of utopia, Harvey reminds us that utopias serve peoples' interests and that our inability to see certain futures results from the need to repress certain possibilities (especially those that critique capitalism). The way we dream Canadian literature forward depends on how we see the present and how willing we are to address the unsayable conflicts in our national culture.

For my part, I would dream the field and the journal forward in four concrete dreams:

1. I have a dream (with apologies to King, Martin Luther, that is, not Tom) that *Canadian Literature*, the journal, begins an exchange with other journals, *Lettres québécoises* and emergent Aboriginal publications, to regularly translate, share, and publish essays on literature and culture from each other's archives, all to become accessible on-line. My dream is for an increase in the translation of literary works and academic articles across linguistic divides in Canada, rather than merely a bilingual journal.

2. I have a dream that university education in Canada will become accessible to all so that we are not merely servicing elites to get credentials (see Côté and Allahar), but teaching the best and most earnest scholars. This dream includes scholarships based on merit not grades alone. For, according to anti-school theory—as articulated by the Birmingham school—academic outreach needs to take into account that people from below, whether for reasons of class or race, often do not seek good grades in school since it so often

seems to them a version of “selling out” to the dominant group. Bursaries could be offered to students, based not just on marks, but on essays they write on Canadian, Québécois, and Native literatures or cultures, essays that could be published in the literary journal to give youth a voice.

3. I have a dream that full-time faculty will unite with part-time faculty to create better working conditions for all academic labourers so that we all have the time and the means to go to conferences, to review books and articles for journals, to write up our research into publications and to stand up together to oppose restrictive state legislation on knowledge production (such as the prescription of research topics for Canadian Studies abroad under the program title “Understanding Canada”; see p. 155). Here we can think of micro-politics, everyday acts of inclusion: lending a hand, inclusion in research projects, respect, promotion, another kind of scholarly generosity. Most importantly, this dream means a reduction in the competitiveness of our field and in the job precariousness that entrenches us in careerism.

4. I have a dream that our literary journal can play a role in fostering more public forms of art and narrative. How can we problematize and break down the rhetoric of excellence that separates literature from more popular forms of stories, and academic criticism from online book-reviewing? Wouldn't it be edifying to see excerpts of well-known literary works in the metro and being performed in public places? This is a dream for more leftist populist forms of performance and reading events that are less market contrived and market driven than the recent radio phenomenon of *Canada Reads*.

WORKS CITED

- Appadurai, Arjun. *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*. Durham: Duke UP, 2006. Print.
- Bannerji, Himani. *doing time: poems*. Toronto: Sister Vision, 1986. Print.
- Bloch, Ernst. *The Principle of Hope*. 3 vols. 1959. Trans. of *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*. Trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight. Cambridge: MIT, 1986. Print.
- . *The Spirit of Utopia*. 1923. Trans. Anthony A. Nassar. Palo Alto: Stanford UP, 2000. Print.
- Coté, James E. and Anton L. Allahar. *Ivory Tower Blues: A University System in Crisis*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007. Print.
- Desbiens, Patrice. *Sudbury Poèmes 1979-1985*. Sudbury: Prise de Parole, 2000. Print.
- Harvey, David. *Spaces of Hope*. Berkeley: U of California P, 2000. Print.
- Ireland, Craig. *The Subaltern Appeal to Experience: Self-Identity, Late Modernity, and the Politics of Immediacy*. Montreal: McGill-Queens UP, 2005. Print.
- New, W.H. *George Woodcock, Canadian Critic*. *canlit.ca*. Canadian Literature, n.d. Web. 6 Apr. 2010.
- Robbins, Bruce. *The Servant's Hand: British Fiction from Below*. New York: Columbia UP, 1986. Print.
- Woodcock, George. “An Absence of Utopias.” *Canadian Literature* 42 (1969): 3-5. Print.

Canadian Literatures, Language, “Race”

Winfried Siemerling

In a position paper for the first TransCanada conference here in Vancouver in 2005, I reflected on possible futures of CanLit with regard to a number of issues. These included our ambivalences about “nation” as critical category (which continues unabated; see Siemerling and Casteel). I suggested to pair, in contrapuntal fashion, critical perspectives focused on national and nation-state parameters with transnational, diasporic, hemispheric, or North American approaches. I also emphasized the example of Black Canadian writing as one of the important diasporic contexts in this respect, and finally made the point that linguistic borders often continue to represent unnecessary boundaries in CanLit scholarship.

Surprisingly, most of the responses to this intervention focused not on the transcultural and transnational arguments or on issues of race, but on the question of language and of French. Collaborations and scholarship across linguistic lines have of course increased—witness the 2009 Edmonton conference, whose proceedings are about to be published as *Transplanting Canada: Seedling / Transplanter le Canada: Semailles* (Carrière). But linguistic difference often remains the repressed of the field of CanLit. The history of this economy of silence and ambivalence is long and complicated, and includes much more than questions of linguistic competence, disciplinary fence-keeping, political disagreements, and questions of funding. It continues to be an important issue for our field. My point is, however, that it is also directly related to the other areas of inquiry that I mentioned at the beginning.

For instance, when writing in French is seen as taking away funding resources for minoritized writers, the fact is overlooked that many of these writers—let’s say Black and Asian Canadian ones—also work in French. Others of course work in a multitude of other languages, including First Nation languages. When I think about diasporas, transnational vectors within and across the national, or trans-border cultural economies, it is clear that diasporic writing and cultures are emphatically *not* restricted to English. Monolingual diaspora studies is a contradiction in terms. When I attended a recent project meeting in the United States about African diasporic writing, most of the discussion time in fact was taken up by the circumstance that diasporic writing is by its very nature multilingual, and that any United States-based

project cannot afford to re-impose English as exclusive operational language. It turned out that sufficient linguistic expertise is not necessarily an obstacle; it is usually present in collaborative projects or can be made available. Publication issues might pose a bigger problem, since publishers are often wary of taking on multilingual or translation projects. A project like *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature*, however, suggests that even these combined difficulties can be overcome (Shell and Sollors).

What about CanLit in this respect? I think that if you are interested in diasporic writing or, let's say, neo-slave narratives in Canada, it would be hard to ignore a writer like Marie-Célie Agnant. She hails from Haiti and has published poetry, short stories, novels, and much more since coming to Quebec. In the hope of increasing cross-linguistic scholarship on the rich production of the Haitian diaspora in Québec (which seems mainly present in English Canada through David Homel's translations of Dany Laferrière), I published an article in English about ethics, recognition, and issues of oral knowledge, gender, and social justice in her work (Siemerling, "Ethics").¹ But most of the scholarship about her work is in French, and her reception in Canadian diaspora criticism remains limited. Agnant herself thematizes the politics of translation and the conveyance of diasporic knowledges in her second novel, *Le Livre d'Emma*, whose narrator is a translator between Creole and French. Luckily the book itself is now translated as *The Book of Emma*, and we are fortunate that in Canada funds are available for translation. But isn't it also up to us as scholars of Canadian literature to see that diaspora studies and critical race studies do not remain linguistically segregated?

This brings me to a coda concerning publishing—appropriately perhaps since we are here to honour the remarkable achievements of *Canadian Literature*, a journal that actively facilitates cross-linguistic contact by publishing and reviewing in both English and French. One of the problems we face currently is to get scholarship on Canadian culture and literature published *in book form* without support from the Aid to Scholarly Publications Program (ASPP), especially if we cut across linguistic lines. ASPP has been remarkable in facilitating the dissemination of outstanding scholarship that is probably very difficult to publish otherwise, given the current economic pressures and concerns for commercial viability. But now ASPP appears to encounter increasing financial restrictions that often seem to result, not necessarily in negative decisions, but in longer delays. And with increasing market concerns, the pressure to translate French passages, for instance, increases even with Canadian presses, while foreign presses want

manuscripts streamlined for international audiences. How can we assure that CanLit scholarship in general, and scholarship that deals with several languages in particular, can continue to be published in timely fashion?

At the 2005 Vancouver conference I mentioned at the beginning, a writer whose work I teach regularly, Wayde Compton, had found his own remarkable way of getting multiple languages out to us; DJing after a long day of conferencing, he played hip hop exclusively in languages other than English.

NOTES

- 1 A more large-scale attempt to increase cross-critical traffic between CanLit, Quebec studies/ littérature québécoise, and American studies has been my comparative exploration of cultural emergence and recognition in *The New North American Studies* (2005), which has been picked up by Presses de l'Université Laval for its *Collection Americana* under the title *Récits nord-américains d'émergence: culture, écriture et politique de re/connaissance* (2009).

WORKS CITED

- Agnant, Marie-Célie. *The Book of Emma*. Trans. Zilpha Ellis. Toronto: Insomniac, 2006. Print.
 —. *Le Livre d'Emma*. Montréal: Remue-ménage, 2001. Print.
 Carrière, Marie and Jerry White, eds. *Transplanting Canada: Seedling / Transplanter le Canada: Semailles*. Edmonton: Canadian Literature Centre, 2009. Print.
 Shell, Marc, and Werner Sollors, ed. *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature: A Reader of Original Texts with English Translations*. New York: New York UP, 2000. Print.
 Siemerling, Winfried. "Ethics as Re/Cognition in the Novels of Marie-Célie Agnant: Oral Knowledge, Cognitive Change, and Social Justice." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 76.3 (2007): 838–60. Print.
 —. *The New North American Studies: Culture, Writing, and the Politics of Re/Cognition*. New York: Routledge, 2005. (*Récits nord-américains d'émergence: culture, écriture et politique de re/connaissance*. Trans. Patricia Godbout. Québec: PUL, 2009). Print.
 Siemerling, Winfried, and Sarah Phillips Casteel. *Canada and Its Americas: Transnational Navigations*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2010. Print.

Comparative Canadian/Québécois Literature: The Way of the Future?

Marie Vautier

In a detailed study, Paul William Martin argues that Canadian literature as currently taught in Canada is a subsidiary of the literary studies of Britain and France. He further says that “the place of the Canadian literatures within monolingual department structures” impedes any serious expansion of the field (“Re: Producing” 116). By accepting such

arbitrary disciplinary constructions as natural, or at least, logical, argues Martin, departments of literature across Canada undercut the teaching of the literatures of Canada and—at least outside Quebec—that of Quebec. In 2009, he updated this research, concluding that if anything, the academic “space” allotted to the teaching of English Canadian literature has been further restricted (“Québec”).

The program I direct at the University of Victoria in comparative Canadian literature—the Combined Major in English and French (Canadian Literature)—was founded in 1988; it is focused on the study of Canadian and Québécois literatures in both official languages and jointly offered by the Departments of English and French. This program, Martin writes, is “[t]he sole alternative that provides a greater space for undergraduate English courses in Canadian literature” and “remarkably, the only one of its kind in the world” (“Re: Producing” 188, 151).

What conditions need to be in place to offer this type of BA program in Canadian literature? English and French departments need to cooperate. My program has survived because it is “between” the French and English departments, strategically placed so that it is frequently considered to be an “exception” to departmental rules. Any such program requires a high percentage of bilingual students. Statistics from the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages confirm that there are more French-speaking citizens in British Columbia than in any of the other Western provinces (“Quick Facts”). Former colleagues such as Stephen Scobie, Smaro Kamboureli, and, in French, John Greene, insured a variety of courses in the disciplines. The program has also benefitted from the promotion of the idea of teaching literature in translation. In my comparative classes, all works are taught in translation; students and professor work from two texts, one in each language; essays are accepted in either French or English; the final exam is written in either language.

However, the program currently faces several challenges. At this time, due to retirements, resignations, and departmental decisions, I am the only Québécois in the French department—and of course I am not a Québécois, but a comparatist. Newly arrived teaching faculty in Canadian literature in the English department are not as open to the “French factor” in Canadian studies as those trained in the 1960s and 1970s. Another detriment is the “snob” factor in both French Departments and Western Canadian culture as a whole, wherein “French-Canadian” still is not considered to be “real French,” but somewhat “folkloric” or “quaint,” even though students call

repeatedly for more courses in Québécois and French-Canadian literature. I have always been taken aback at the Eurocentrism of some French departments in Western Canada, with their very strong focus on the study of France. It can be quite discouraging to be continually treated as “une étrangère dans son propre pays.”

It appears that the Québécois, for better or worse, has been replaced as the de facto “Other” in the English Canadian imaginary. In a recent article, Margery Fee notes that, as “an English-speaking nominally Protestant Canadian, [her] ‘Other’ in the late 1960s, [was] the Quebec separatist or the Native activist” (190). Frank Davey suggests that the appeal of the Québécois has been transferred to First Nations or immigrant writers in English departments (Martin, “Re: Producing” 213). Although *Canadian Literature* continues to highlight academic and literary work written in French, due in large part to editorial decisions and hard work by Réjean Beaudoin and other scholars, the small number of Québécois at the *Canadian Literature* Gala is perhaps also indicative of this ontological shift.

All literary scholars are aware of the decline of the “historical periods.” This decline is common to both French and English Canadian studies. When two young Québécois colleagues resigned recently, I was told by some colleagues that it was not appropriate to advertise for a professor of pre-1950 franco-Canadian literature, as there was no tradition in the field. An alarming number of English literature departments no longer offer courses in pre-contemporary Canadian literature (Martin). New courses simply squeeze out those focused on traditional texts, given the lack of additional “space” in literature departments (see Martin, “Re: Producing” 238; Martin, “Québec”).

Yet, despite these problems, we do have a responsibility—one could even say “academic duty”—to the thousands of bilingual (French-English) graduates from Canada’s high school immersion programs who come to our universities to study Canadian literature. Canada is internationally regarded as a successful bilingual and transcultural society. Bilingual high school students entering our universities are globally-oriented: they will travel to countries where knowledge of our two official languages will be helpful and even necessary. These students have an “engouement” (delight; enthusiasm; pleasant anticipation) for the bilingual study of our culture(s). Although scholars at the conference seemed to be unaware of the “cloisonnement” (fence-building; separating; closing in) of the field known as “Canadian Literature and Cultural Studies,” our bilingual students quickly become very aware of the walls around this discipline and the disconnect with their high

school studies. In the international field of Canadian Studies, the Canadian literatures in French and English are often studied together, even though the Harper government's ill-advised program, "Understanding Canada" is beginning to erode this focus. ("Although *Understanding Canada* is open to all disciplines and issues, . . . proposals related to the following issues will be given priority: peace and security; North American partnership; economic development and competitiveness; democracy and rule of law; human rights; the management of diversity; environmental and energy issues" [Remie 1].) Canadianists and Québécois could learn much from these alternate approaches to the study of our literatures. Europeans who correspond with me are more aware of UVic's specialized program than Canadianists and Québécois in this country. And yet, this program could easily be emulated at other Canadian universities.

I end, therefore, by exhorting you to join an international association for Canadian Studies! Join a professional association that encourages the comparative study of our literatures, such as ALCQ/ACQL! Teach a text in translation! Find one theoretical article in the other official language of the country and use it in your undergraduate courses! And, finally, keep an eye on the "umbrellas"—the systems which, when present, shape our research in ways that frequently do not correspond to what our real work should be, and when absent, fail to protect our work's existence.

WORKS CITED

- Fee, Margery, and Lynette Russell. "'Whiteness' and 'Aboriginality' in Canada and Australia." *Feminist Theory* 8.2 (2007): 187-208. Print.
- Martin, Paul William. "Le Québec Chez Les Autres : The Place of Québec in English Courses on 'Canadian Literature.'" *Transplanting Canada: Inaugural Colloquium of the Canadian Literature Centre/ Centre de littérature canadienne*. Edmonton: University of Alberta, Mar. 2009. Conference.
- . "Re: Producing culture(s): the Politics of Knowledge Production and the Teaching of the Literatures of Canada." Diss. Comparative Literature, University of Alberta, Spring 2002. Web.
- Office of the Commissioner, etc. "Quick Facts about Canada's Francophonie" *Officer of the Commissioner of Official Languages*. Government of Canada, 10 Mar. 2008. Web. 12 May 2009.
- Remie, Cornelius. "A Word from the President." *The International Canadianist/Le canadieniste international*. N.p., Mar. 2008. Web. 30 Mar. 2010.

Agents of Literary Culture

Lorraine York

What I am about to describe could be called a vision of critical generosity—but by “critical generosity” I mean far more than “making nice” with each other. On the level of both the literary artifacts that we enjoy, teach, and write about, and on the metacritical level of our own lives as cultural commentators and teachers, there is much more we could be doing to shift our conversation away from the sovereign individual producer towards collaborative community.

First of all, we need more work on the wide range of cultural agents who are involved in the production of art. As Pierre Bourdieu convincingly argued, we are caught up in “a ‘charismatic’ ideology [which] directs attention to the apparent producer, the painter, writer or composer, in short the ‘author,’ suppressing the question of what authorizes the author, what creates the authority with which authors authorize” (76). Recently I’ve been investigating the role of editors, agents, office assistants in Margaret Atwood’s literary celebrity, and I found little in the way of published scholarship on these increasingly important agents in Canadian literary production. In redirecting attention to what “authorizes the author,” as Bourdieu invites us to do, we must not forget that these agents of literary production take many forms in diverse cultures; we may attend to the editors, publishers, professional agents that currently occupy my attention, but in the category of literary agents I would also place elders, mentors, and ancestors.

One reason why we shy away from doing this sort of analysis, I think, is that it brings us too uncomfortably close to the world of commerce. Current critical paradigms may better prepare us to deplore the relation of art to commerce than to understand it. On this question, one book that I keep returning to is Janet Wolff’s *The Social Production of Art*, published twenty-eight years ago but prescient and wise. She reminds us to query our tendency to see artists and their art as “opponents of the social order”; such a view ignores, she says, “new forms of patronage and employment for artists, many of whom are indeed integrated, as artists, into various branches of capitalist production” (11). We need to be able to respond to these artists and their works with something more sophisticated than political disapproval or accusations of having “sold out.”

In our own methodologies as scholars, we could import a similar awareness of collective labour into our research, writing, daily bureaucratic grind,

and pedagogy. We should check back in with the 2000 MLA Presidential Address by my copanelist Linda Hutcheon, where she called for scholars to “practice thinking with as well as thinking against.” Nine years later, are we any more practiced in the art of “thinking with”? In our daily working lives, this could mean rethinking those opening paragraphs of a scholarly article or introduction of a book in which, Casaubon-like, we clear the ground of previous writing on our subject, showing how other scholars have been sorely deluded. Critical generosity is no less critical for being generous; in recent months, when I have consciously tried to write this way, I have found that interweaving gratitude and critique actually highlights the critique and renders it much more intellectually serious than the scorched-earth method tends to do. Also, the pedagogical space of the graduate seminar, wherein we model, consciously or not, ways to be in this profession, is often a space where a critical theory is demolished in a half-hour’s discussion. Because of my own attempts to practice thinking with as well as against, I often conclude such demolitions with the question, “all right: we’ve taken this article apart and have thoroughly uncovered its problems and silences: now tell me what has been productive for you in this scholar’s thinking.” Invariably, the comments that follow are more thoughtful, and the very atmosphere in the room becomes charged, enlivened. So as we widen our conception of the social production of art and question the charismatic ideology of authorship, let’s not forget to subject our own professional egos to the test.

WORKS CITED

Wolff, Janet. *The Social Production of Art*. New York: St. Martin’s, 1981. Print.

Reviewing in Canada as the “Civil Exchange of Ideas”

Linda Hutcheon

In 1977, in the journal *Fiddlehead*, Barry Cameron wrote, with a certain urgency, about the importance for our then-fledgling Canadian literature of having reviewers who “can write with knowledge and critical sensitivity about not only the new works of our major writers, but also deserving new writers and those writers who, only because we lack the full publicity resources of the critical industries of older literatures, are not as

well-known as they should be" (4). Canada has been fortunate that many took up this challenge to review and have indeed written "with knowledge and critical sensitivity" about both our established and our emerging writers. To pick one canonical example, in the 1950s Northrop Frye was the poetry reviewer for the annual "Letters in Canada" issue of the *University of Toronto Quarterly* with this reviewing philosophy: "To encourage a genuine poet is impertinence, and to encourage a mediocre one is condescension. Discouragement is an even more dubious practice" (124). Nevertheless, he believed strongly that, in his words, "every genuine poet is entitled to be read with the maximum sympathy and concentration" (126). As the reviews in the journal *Canadian Literature* and many others have proved, our writers have been blessed (or cursed) with exactly this kind of serious critical attention.

Reviews and reviewers, in fact, have played a strategic role in the creation of the vibrant Canadian literary scene we enjoy today. But for many reasons, the serious review is, I would argue, an endangered species today: many academics would rather not review, because there is little professional capital to be gained in doing so and, for junior colleagues, there is considerable risk of offending someone who may have an impact on one's career. For all published writers, there's always a lot on the line (public and private) in reviewing each other's work in a small community like ours in Canada. But even more importantly, it has become clear that we are witnessing a major shift in reviewing practices around the world, in the form of the democratization that has come with the explosion of reviewing sites provided by the internet. What this translates into is a situation in which, instead of Aritha van Herk or Sherrill Grace reviewing Margaret Atwood, we now *also* have Ann and Anthony Anonymous as "customer reviewers" on *Amazon.com* or as bloggers. And, while all authors may, at times, dearly desire to ignore these engaged customers' views, they cannot: those star ratings assigned have been closely correlated to sales. And let's face it, the buying of books—or at least the reading of them—affects the viability and vitality of our literature. Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams, in their 2006 study called *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*, call this new democratization the wisdom of crowds. But the motivation of those consuming crowds may not have much to do with nurturing and bettering, through critique, of Canadian literature and its criticism. It could—and in some cases, does—but I want to argue that we all need to be actively engaged in making sure that the positive and constructive function of reviewing is not lost in the capitalist electronic drive to sales. I still want to see, as we recently did, both

an experienced critic like Gillian Beer and an equally experienced novelist like Jeanette Winterson reviewing Atwood's new novel. But we also need to keep Canadian poets reviewing Canadian poets, Canadian critics reviewing Canadian critics.

So, I want to urge us all not to abandon our literature or our criticism, to keep buying the books and, most of all, to keep reviewing—in print, online, no matter. What is crucially important is that we continue what, in the preface to *From a Speaking Place*, Bill New calls that crucial “civil exchange of ideas”: “Civil, yes. Not unargumentative, not without disagreements and contradictions. But always with an eye on *learning more* rather than *fastening on less*” (x). Reviewing has been—and is—a sensitive touchstone in Canada for issues of cultural identity and value, especially, but not only, since the days of emergent Canadian and Québécois nationalism. Today, as always, reviewing not only charts the waters but is also deeply immersed in an ongoing contest over cultural territory and cultural authority. We need to keep the exchange of ideas going, and we need to keep it civil. We owe it to Canadian literature and its writers, critics, publishers—and readers.

WORKS CITED

- Beer, Gillian. “Facing a Poisoned Future.” Rev. of Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*. *Globe* (Toronto). Web. 11 Sept. 2009.
- Cameron, Barry. “Editorial: The Art of Reviewing.” *Fiddlehead* 112 (1977): 3-5. Print.
- Frye, Northrop. *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination*. Toronto: Anansi, 1971. Print.
- New, W.H., R. Beaudoin, S. Fisher, I. Higgins, E.-M. Kröller, and L. Ricou, eds. *From a Speaking Place: Writings from the First Fifty Years of Canadian Literature*. Vancouver: Ronsdale, 2009. Print.
- Tapscott, Don, and Anthony Williams. *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*. New York: Portfolio, 2006. Print.
- Winterson, Jeanette. “Strange New World.” Rev. of Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*. *New York Times Book Review*. Web. 20 Sept. 2009.

Definite Article: Graduate Student Publishing, Pedagogy, and the Journal as Training Ground

John Clement Ball

First, I bring 50th anniversary congratulations to *Canadian Literature* on behalf of all of us who work on *Studies in Canadian Literature*; we may be at an older university and have a longer name, but at a mere 34 years, *SCL* is a full of youthful admiration and appreciation for all of its venerable relative's pioneering achievements. And speaking of youth, in keeping with this conference's emphasis on graduate training and its eye to the future, I want to briefly consider the role of journals in the development and professionalization of new researchers in this field. Since at least the early '90s when I was doing my PhD, there has been an increasing expectation that grad students start publishing their work in journals if they hope to be competitive for jobs and postdocs. Exactly twenty per cent of the forty articles *SCL* published in the past three general issues were by students, and most went through extensive revisions and multiple vetting reports. I regularly remind the journal's wonderful advisory board of the pedagogical aspect of their gate-keeping role; they take that work seriously and provide constructive, detailed criticism—sometimes, several single-spaced pages of it! But what are or should be the boundaries of that developmental role? What is the journal's place in training graduate students and bestowing the stamp of legitimacy on their research?

As context, three very brief anecdotes. Some years ago, on resubmitting an article after some marathon revisions, an author asked me to pass on his profuse thanks to the anonymous reviewers who, he said, gave him more and better feedback than his dissertation committee had. It was an email to warm an editor's heart, and we made sure it was quoted on our next SSHRC application. Just last week, a less welcome email: out of the blue, a student I don't know at a Canadian university eagerly sent me his entire MA thesis, all 120 pages of it, asking me to read it and tell him what part would be most suitable for submission to *SCL*. I politely declined, though I gave him some general suggestions (including asking *his* committee); but I was surprised to be asked in the first place. My final anecdote comes from a young

Americanist I know whose PhD supervisor at a big American university had insisted he publish a chapter of his dissertation in a journal before the dissertation could go to the examining committee. He did so—in *PMLA* no less—but once that was accomplished the supervisor had relatively little to say about subsequent chapters, as if the degree was a slam-dunk and the pressure was off. Whether the later sections were there yet or not, the student's ability had been adequately demonstrated. *PMLA*'s readers and editorial board had, without knowing it, been enlisted to do part of the committee's work. That's quite a responsibility!

So, what role can or should journals play in the development of young researchers and supporting their careers? What can students expect or have the right to expect of journal editors and vetting reports? What can supervisors and programs reasonably expect of their students in the way of external validation? What can they expect of journals as partners in that process? I sense that the Americanist's experience is not a common one (and it wasn't official policy at his institution); I suspect setting the bar that high would mean more ABDs, fewer PhDs, and the exclusion and frustration of some otherwise capable candidates. Still, we know job committees are looking for exactly that kind of validation, and supervisors across Canada may not require students to publish refereed articles, but they do encourage it, whether from course papers or thesis research. And hiring committees may not officially require publications either, but in the current competitive climate, they might as well.

Indeed, with a perennially tight job market suddenly (but hopefully temporarily) getting tighter, with more Canadian PhD programs out there graduating more Canadianist PhDs, and with 33 per cent fewer generalist journals in the field than there used to be, the pressure is on everyone. We all, I'm sure, hope to see *Essays on Canadian Writing* back on its feet, but in the meantime I know our submission rates are up, our issues have gotten bigger, and both *SCL* and *Canadian Literature* have provided homes to orphaned special issues. We're busy, our advisory board is busy, and graduate students across the country and around the world are busy sending us their work.

They're also busy working on our journal. Because of course journals can train and professionalize students in other ways than by vetting their work—by employing them as copy editors, proofreaders, and abstracters, as *SCL* has always done; by commissioning reviews by them, as *Canadian Literature* has always done; by encouraging them to interview an author and submit the transcript, as I've been known to do. But in their search for the holy

grail of the tenure-track job, what graduate students most need from journals are refereed publications.

The good news is, the journals need their work too. So my first concluding recommendation to graduate students is to say keep submitting—your best work is some of *the* best work being done by anyone anywhere. As with this conference, graduate student research is a key place we all look for leading-edge thinking and future directions. We need your work, and our readers need it. Just don't send your whole thesis! Second, for the rest of us who are former graduate students, most of whom supervise current ones, and all of whom, I'm sure, review articles for journals, think of your activities in all those roles as part of a pedagogical continuum—a three-way partnership between yourself, the student, and the journal. The pedagogy should happen both before the submission—through generous, time-consuming close review of the work being adapted for publication, before, during, and after the student's revision of it for publication (including addressing questions of whether, when, and what to send out). And when you're taking off your supervisor hat and putting on a vetting one, thinking of that anonymous, seemingly thankless work as another dimension of your work in pedagogical space—and do that training and that teaching whether you're recommending accept, revise and resubmit, or reject. If all of us on that continuum—faculty and students—do our jobs conscientiously and fully (including the students making sure they ask for help), then it's likely that the articles that most need those long, nitpicky, close-but-no-cigar type reports increasingly won't be by graduate students at all. Theirs will be the ones that sail through and make the readers excited to be reading them, thrilled to discover them, and eager to see the next submission Margery or I send them to review.



Interventions Contributors

John Clement **Ball** is Professor of English at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton. He has been editor (and co-editor with Jennifer Andrews) of *Studies in Canadian Literature* since 1996 and is the author of two books: *Satire and the Postcolonial Novel: V.S. Naipaul, Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie* (2003), and *Imagining London: Postcolonial Fiction and the Transnational Metropolis* (2004). He is currently editing *The Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century World Fiction* to be published by Blackwell later this year.

Alison **Calder** is Associate Professor of Canadian literature and Creative Writing in the Department of English, Film, and Theatre at the University of Manitoba. Her poetry collection, *Wolf Tree*, won two Manitoba Book Awards and was shortlisted for the Pat Lowther Award and the Gerald Lampert Award. She is the co-editor of *History, Literature and the Writing of the Canadian Prairies*; the editor of *Desire Never Leaves: The Poetry of Tim Lilburn*; and the editor of a critical edition of *Settlers of the Marsh* by Frederick Philip Grove. She writes primarily on prairie literature and culture.

Lily **Cho** is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Western Ontario. Her recent publications include “Citizenship and the Bonds of Affect: the Passport Photograph,” *Photography and Culture* (2009), “Asian Canadian Futures: Indenture Routes and Diasporic Passages,” *Canadian Literature* (2008), and “Future Perfect Loss: Richard Fung’s Sea in the Blood,” *Screen* (2008). Her book, *Eating Chinese: Culture on the Menu in Small Town Canada* is forthcoming from the University of Toronto Press in fall 2010.

Daniel **Coleman**, Professor of English at McMaster University, holds the Canada Research Chair in Critical Ethnicity and Race Studies. He won the 1998 John Charles Polanyi Prize for an Ontario researcher of outstanding merit. He is the author of *Masculine Migrations: Reading the Postcolonial Male in “New Canadian” Narratives* (1998), *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* (2006) (which won the Raymond Klibansky Prize for best English-language book in the Humanities), and *In Bed with the Word: Reading, Spirituality, and Cultural Politics* (2009).

Carrie **Dawson** is Associate Professor in the English Department and in Canadian Studies at Dalhousie University, where she teaches Canadian literature, Canadian Studies, ecocriticism, and postcolonial theory. Some of her recent publications include a special issue of *Australian Literary Studies* called *Who’s Who? Hoaxes, Imposture and Identity Crises in Australian Literature* (2004, co-ed.), an article in *Canadian Literature* called “Skinned: Taxidermy and Pedophilia in Alice Munro’s ‘Vandals’” (Spring 2005), and the co-authored “The Art of the Possible: Literature, Citizenship and Canadian Multiculturalism” (2003).

Susan **Gingell** is Professor of English and Associate in Women’s and Gender Studies at the University of Saskatchewan, where she specializes in decolonizing literatures. Among her publications are two editions in the *Collected Works of E. J. Pratt—On His Life and Poetry and Pursuits Amateur and Academic*. Her current research is on textualizings of the oral in Canada. As part of this research program, she edited a special number of *Essays on Canadian Writing: Textualizing Orature and Orality* (#83). She is currently co-editing a collection of essays entitled *Cultural Production at the Interfaces of the Oral, Written, and Visual*.

Linda **Hutcheon** is Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto. Her many books include work on opera, modern fiction, parody, postmodern literature, irony, feminist theory and ethnic minority writing in Canada. Two recent books are *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), and, with Michael Hutcheon, *Opera: The Art of Dying* (2004).

Larissa **Lai** is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at The University of British Columbia. She is the author of two novels: *When Fox Is a Thousand* (1995) and *Salt Fish Girl* (2002). In 2004, *West Coast Line* published a special issue focused on her work. *Eggs in the Basement* (2009), a long poem based on a vocabulary exhaustion exercise, surprised its writer by telling the story of *Moses and Monotheism*. Recent books are *sybil unrest* (2009), her collaborative long poem with Rita Wong, and her first solo full-length poetry book, *Automaton Biographies* (2009), which was a finalist for the Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize.

Christopher **Lee** is Assistant Professor of English at the University of British Columbia. He is currently completing a book on literary aesthetics and the politics of post-identity. Some recent articles are “Enacting the Asian Canadian” (*Canadian Literature*, 2008), “The Lateness of Asian Canadian Studies” (*Amerasia Journal*, 2007), “Rethinking Realisms through the Writings of Eileen Chang” (*Amerasia Journal*, 2006), and “Diaspora, Transnationalism, and Asian American Studies: Positions and Debates” in *Displacements and Diasporas: Asians in the Americas* (2005).

Sophie **McCall** is Assistant Professor of contemporary Canadian literature at Simon Fraser University. Her main fields of interest are contemporary Canadian and First Nations literatures, postcolonial theory and globalization studies. Her monograph entitled ‘*Where is the Voice Coming From?: Collaboration and Authorship in Told-to Narratives in Canada*’ is forthcoming from the *University of British Columbia Press*. Her most recent article, on Anishinaabe performance and installation artist Rebecca Belmore appeared in *Aboriginal Oral Traditions: Theory, Practice, Ethics* (2008). She has published articles in *Essays on Canadian Writing*, *Canadian Review of American Studies*, *Resources for Feminist Research*, *Canadian Literature*, and *C.L.R. James Journal*.

Laura **Moss** is Associate Professor in English at The University of British Columbia, the associate editor of *Canadian Literature*, the Director of the UBC International Canadian Studies Centre, and the Chair of the UBC Canadian Studies Program. She is the co-editor (with Cynthia Sugars) of the 2 volume *Canadian Literature in English: Texts and Contexts* (2009), the editor of *Is Canada Postcolonial: Unsettling Canadian Literature* (2003) and of a scholarly edition of Frances Brooke’s *The History of Emily Montague* (Tecumseh 2001), and author of articles on Rohinton Mistry, Margaret Atwood, Eden Robinson, Chinua Achebe, Salman Rushdie, and Zadie Smith among others.

Susie **O’Brien** is Associate Professor of English and Cultural Studies and Associate Director of the Institute on Globalization and the Human Condition at McMaster University. Her teaching and research interests are in postcolonial literature and culture, globalization and green cultural studies. Her published work includes essays in *Cultural Critique*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Mosaic*, and *South Atlantic Quarterly*, and a textbook, *Popular Culture: A User’s Guide* (2nd ed. 2009), co-authored with Imre Szeman. Her current projects focus on the postcolonial politics of local food and the concept of resilience in ecology and culture.

Ian **Rae** teaches Canadian literature in the Department of Modern Languages at King's University College, University of Western Ontario. Before joining King's College as an assistant professor, he was Acting Program Director at the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada, where he taught in the Canadian Studies program. He published *From Cohen to Carson: The Poet's Novel in Canada* in 2008. He is presently writing a monograph on Anne Carson, as well as articles on Al Purdy, Alice Munro, and the creative economy in Canada.

Deanna **Reder**'s main fields of study are Indigenous literatures in Canada, Indigenous literary theories and epistemologies, and autobiography theory. A Cree-Métis scholar, she is Assistant Professor in the First Nations Studies Program and in the Department of English at Simon Fraser University. She is working on a monograph on Cree and Métis autobiography in Canada. With Linda Morra, she co-edited *Troubling Tricksters: Revisioning Critical Conversations* (2010). Her work has appeared in *Studies in Canadian Literature*, and *American Indian Quarterly*. Recently, an article entitled "Writing Autobiographically: A Neglected Indigenous Intellectual Tradition" was included in *Across Cultures, Across Borders: Canadian Aboriginal and Native American Literatures* (2009).

Roxanne **Rimstead** is Professor of Comparative Canadian Literature/*Littérature canadienne comparée* at Université de Sherbrooke. Her publications include *Remnants of Nation: On Poverty Narratives by Women* (2001) for which she won the Gabrielle Roy Prize (English language), and a special issue of *Essays on Canadian Writing* called *Cultural Memory and Social Identity* (2003).

Deena **Rymhs** was Associate Professor of English at St Francis Xavier University until her appointment at the University of British Columbia in 2009 where she now teaches in English and Women's and Gender Studies. Her recent book, *From the Iron House: Imprisonment in First Nations Literature* (2009), examines the prison's role in post-contact indigenous history. Her teaching and research interests include Indigenous literatures (within tribal, regional, as well as transnational frameworks), narratives of incarceration, life writing, and Indigenous masculinity in the contexts of war, prison, and the city.

Winfried **Siemerling** is Professor of English at the University of Waterloo, and affiliated with the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute at Harvard University. His books include *The New North American Studies: Culture, Writing, and the Politics of Re/Cognition* (2004) and *The Bibliography of Comparative Studies in Canadian, Québec, and Foreign Literatures, 1930-1995* (2001, co-author). With Sarah Phillips Casteel, he is the co-editor of *Canada and Its Americas: Transnational Navigations* (2010).

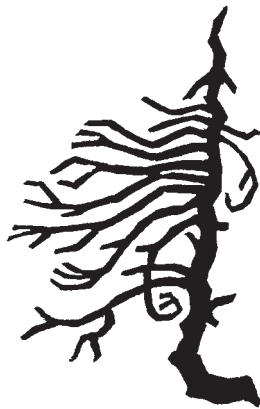
Marie **Vautier** teaches in the Departments of French and English at the University of Victoria, where she is the Director of the Combined Major in English and French (Canadian Literature). Her main work is in contemporary comparative Canadian/Québécois literature and in contemporary literary theory. She is the author of *New World Myth: Postmodernism and Postcolonialism in Canadian Fiction* (1998); the co-author of *Art as an Early-Warning System* (2000); the co-translator of an anthology of Québécois poetry, *Paris/Québec* (2003), and many journal articles.

Christl **Verduyn** (FRSC) is Professor at Mount Allison University cross-appointed in the Department of English and the Canadian Studies Program. She teaches and publishes on Canadian literature and Canadian studies. Her research interests include Canadian and Québécois literatures; women's writing and criticism; multiculturalism and minority writing; life writing and archival approaches to literature; and the interdisciplinary field of Canadian studies. She has recently published *Must Write: Edna Staebler's Diaries* (2005), *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond AutoEthnography* (with Eleanor Ty 2008), and *Marian and the Major: Engel's Elizabeth and the Golden City* (2010).

Rita **Wong** is the author of *monkeypuzzle* (1998), *forage* (2007), and *sybil unrest* (co-written with Larissa Lai 2008) and is a recipient of the Asian Canadian Writers Workshop Emerging Writer Award and the Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize. Associate Professor in Critical and Cultural Studies at the Emily Carr University of Art and Design, she has developed a humanities course focused on water, for which she received a fellowship from the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. She is currently researching the poetics of water with the support of a SSHRC Research/Creation grant.

Herb **Wylie** is Professor of English at Acadia University. He has published articles on such topics as regionalism, postmodernism, Atlantic-Canadian literature, and historical fiction. He is the author of *Speculative Fictions: Contemporary Canadian Novelists and the Writing of History* (2002), and *Speaking in the Past Tense: Canadian Novelists on Writing Historical Fiction* (2007). He co-edited, with Jeanette Lynes, *Surf's Up! The Rising Tide of Atlantic-Canadian Literature*, a special issue of *Studies in Canadian Literature* (2008).

Lorraine **York** is Professor of English at McMaster University. She is a contemporary Canadian literature specialist with a particular interest in theories of celebrity and authorship. Her *Rethinking Women's Collaborative Writing*, published in 2002, looks at collaborative works by women in English, American, Italian, and French as well as Canadian literary and theoretical texts. With Jennifer Blair, Daniel Coleman and Kate Higginson, she co-edited *ReCalling Early Canada: Reading the Political in Literary and Cultural Production* (2005). Her most recent book is *Literary Celebrity in Canada* (2007).



A Something of Crows?

Neil Aitken

The Lost Country of Sight. Anhinga US\$15.00

Alice Burdick

Flutter. Mansfield \$16.95

George Murray

the rush to here. Nightwood \$16.65

Rachel Zolf

Human Resources. Coach House \$16.95

Reviewed by Crystal Hurdle

What do these four books of poetry have in common? Date of publication? 2007 and 2008. Publishers? Different. Origins of author? Burdick and Murray are Maritimers; Zolf lives in Ontario. Born in BC, Aitken resides in California. His *The Lost Country of Sight* is a first collection; Burdick's, a second; Murray's and Zolf's are third books. Three of the four collections speak of crows, this reviewer's favourite creature. So, what do they have in common? Each is good or better.

The cover of Burdick's *Flutter* features evanescent milkweed seeds. They float, prettily and precariously. The book features the quiet of small insects and animals (including crows), a sly subtle humour, a look at the quotidian. The text, devoid of separate sections, seems imbued with light. Many titles are kinky and fun: "The meat leaves, slowly" is followed by "Obsequious Bakery." Some intrigue by their form as questions: "Where are our tiger teeth?" and "Who wants to lose a tooth every day?" At the same time, somewhat insubstantial, they don't always stick.

The cover of Aitken's *The Lost Country of Sight* is a painting based on one of the author's photos. Through part of a boat's hull, a wreck/relic on a beach, is the small figure of a man, his father, barely in sight, almost out of frame. The initial epigraph on loss further sets us up well for the stunning collection, many poems of which focus on the father: pre-death, death, aftermath, looking to the future. The speaker, longing for home, explores various places in Canada, the USA, and Asia. The book deservedly won the 2007 Philip Levine Prize for Poetry.

George Murray's *the rush to here* features a photo on a helicopter pad (X marks the spot) done as a sequence of six (a sextych?)—the gaps reflected in the design of the section breaks, each marked by the same set of six small rectangles, in the shape of the images, but now rendered blank. It is as if the picture puzzle pieces have become interstices. The design is excellent. A very pleasant book to have and to hold. The poems have such a maturity of vision, many on the passing of time, that it's startling to note the author is still in his thirties. Some of the poems are allusive, with mention of astronomers, philosophers, literary theorists, muses, but well contextualized and engaging. "A Moment's Autograph" won the Gertrude Stein Award for Innovation in Poetry. The loose sonnet form allows much. Children, God, Loss, Memories are evoked through sneakily thought-provoking questions and insights, as well as arresting final couplets.

Zolf's *Human Resources* features a photo of what looks to be old stone work, ochre,

in the shape of a distorted male face. What appears to be an ear is suspiciously low, near the neck. Things are not as they seem. Each section (or long poem?) begins with a laundry list following a Human Resources/Business injunction. For example, "How to Write for the Internet" includes "2 write for peckers" and "8 Tell your visitor where to go." Weird juxtapositions meld literature, such as takes on "Leda and the Swan," with business.

Winner of the 2008 Trillium Book Award for Poetry, this is *Dilbert* for the avant-garde.

The four poets use machinery in novel ways. In Murray's "Automatic doors," the body is a machine: "Your mouth a chute // out which language spills past ellipses of teeth." Elsewhere, hinges suggest linking, movement. Aitken denounces with "Your body turned machine." In the wonderful "The Mortician's Bookkeeper," the titular character, addressed in the second person, "crunch[es] numbers," but reveals humanity and proves to be other than a machine, though even machinery has its place. Indeed, "The angel of machinery" is one of the host of different angels in "Litany." Burdick also denounces "Lean mean unconsciousness machines," people too busy to be fully engaged. In her notes, Zolf explains her use of WordCount™ and QueryCount™, as well as the Gematria of Nothing (GON). She also uses "Lewis LaCook's Markov-chain based Flash poetry generators." Impishly, she writes, "All other poems were made by the author's proprietary machine-mind™."

Zolf and Burdick poke fun at the branding of war. Zolf wryly asks of "'Shock and Awe' as it applies / to the new Porsche?" In "Notice," Burdick exposes: "Infinite Justice is really retribution," concluding,

Infinity has no answer,
but can death go on forever?
who do you kill
when all the world is dead?

Murray's "War Memorial" has kids skateboarding on it, desecrating it "with ass and

graffiti." It concludes, poignantly, "Near the street, a soldier in uniform sells poppies, / having long ago made his peace with the thistles." This poem comments further on the one preceding, "An Evolution of Injury," about proclivities for violence: "In just a handful of years / we have guided the open wound / from slash to slit to planned incision." In a love letter from a far away world, Aitken writes, "Even the bamboo has forgotten the napalm at last." There might be worse indignities than war. "Outside Plato's Republic, the Last Poets Wait for Departure" recalls "the experiences of the poets who left China in the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre" (Aitken's note). However, there is hope, in this, and many other poems, including one about an earthquake victim who survives for so long only to surrender to death.

For Aitken, hope is found in language: "A cradle of words, candle, camera, / and pen." Throughout the book, letters are a form of communication, connection, solace. If "the pen has claimed / his tongue, rendered him speechless," one still has "the heart-ticking balm of silence." That people are "haunted by words" imbues the book with rich longing and wonder. Coincidentally, Murray titles a poem "Silence is a Dead Language" and says, "No gesture outside / religion seems uncluttered enough." Language, the code, reveals great truths: "There are lowercase letters that can't be / told apart from their capitals," metonymies for parents and children. Burdick playfully uses language, such as the pun ("Mordant twit"), and asserts "we don't want ethical / in air quotes." Zolf, by contrast, uses, abuses, spews language. Business language is ruse; she must reinvent it. "Money / makes words into alien things." Her opening poem called "Start here" begins "The job is to write in 'plain language.'" By the end, her poems are peppered with a series of numbers replacing words. One poem is all numbers, but for punctuation marks and an "ed" suggesting

a number is a past tense regular verb. In the last poem, she reverts to words: “Look for the hidden meaning use it as a lightning rod / more pokes at the communication.”

Language is not disappearing any time soon, as these four books of poetry attest in different, arch, pleasing ways. (Caw, Caw.)

Poetry’s Underdogs

William Anselmi, ed.

Mary Melfi: Essays on Her Works. Guernica \$18.00

Gregory M. Cook, ed.

Alden Nowlan: Essays on His Works. Guernica \$15.00

Linda Rogers, ed.

Joe Rosenblatt: Essays on His Works. Guernica \$15.00

Reviewed by Vanessa Lent

These books, selected texts from Guernica’s “Writers Series,” initially present a conundrum for readers: how are we to read them? And what sort of audience are they directed towards? Certain elements suggest this series is for academic purposes: selections from book reviews, critical literary articles, and bibliographies; while others suggest a more general readership: effusive praise and personal anecdotes from friends and peers, interviews, and creative responses to the authors. The lack of an index or any indication of the original dates of publication of each individual selection may frustrate some readers. In addition, an unfortunate number of typographical errors plague the series. The individual books offer no guidance and it is only when one searches the publisher’s website that we learn the works are “ideal tools for students and for anyone interested in the work of contemporary Canadian writers.” With this in mind, what at first seems frustrating to the academic eye evaporates as one reads through the collections and accepts their place as texts to read alongside the poetry of each author. Expectations shift from an analytical, precise document to a more personal sketch of the artists—their personalities emerge

from the texts as unique and engaging poets. Each book has a very specific way of approaching its author and the introductions penned by each editor (notably, each themselves a poet) clearly indicate what that focus will be. Gregory M. Cook sets up a reading of Alden Nowlan by addressing the tendency of critics to conflate class and region in his work, which Cook sees as a “disservice.” Linda Rogers focuses her collection on Joe Rosenblatt’s Jewish heritage as forming a poet who writes in an ornate, surreal style she identifies as “Canadian literature for European readers.” Finally, William Anselmi focuses on Mary Melfi’s ability to write skillfully across genres of the contradictions inherent in inhabiting particular gender, ethnic, and class positions. While each collection presents strengths and challenges, the free range with which each editor shapes the text results in portraits of the poets as individuals, achieving coherence to uneven levels of success across the series as a whole.

The Alden Nowlan collection presents the most challenging read in terms of how it has been structured. For example, the inclusion of Thomas R. Smith’s introduction and afterword to two editions of Nowlan’s collected poems, *What Happened When He Went to the Store for Bread* (1993; 2000), produced for an American audience, cuts down on the variety of voices that the other two books achieve. The point of view of the collection clearly is one that desires to move beyond classifications of Nowlan as a regional writer, a term Cook identifies as “a critic’s mark for class-ism.” I wonder, however, if Cook’s emphasis on the damage caused by such labelling goes a bit too far. While he laments that reading Nowlan simply as a regional writer does his work a “disservice,” I worry that reading his work without acknowledging his identity as a Maritimer does a different sort of disservice. Considering that many people view Nowlan’s greatest strength as his ability to capture an

authenticity of voice, I find his writing works very powerfully to undo the damage of regional stereotypes by humanizing his characters so effectively that readers regardless of class or origin relate to them.

Rogers' collection emphasizes Joe Rosenblatt's eccentricity, his restless poetry of a world of animals and humans always in the midst of a metamorphosis, a comic uncanny, a grotesque sublime. His identity as an artist is described as paralleling his poetics. He is Toronto embodied yet his eventual move to Vancouver Island connects him to a natural landscape as fecund as his poetry. He works across mediums as a visual artist as well as poet, having had twelve solo exhibitions of his drawings between 1972-1999. He is Canadian yet has also gained literary attention in Italy—a country as baroque as he. Interestingly, Rogers also includes four short contributions from Rosenblatt alongside the personal, creative, and scholarly contributions about his work. This crystallizes a sense of the poet's work more successfully than the other two studies. Of the three books this is the least analytical yet the most intimate—and the reader has a well-formed sense of Rosenblatt as a poet as well as a character. Unfortunately, the Rosenblatt text is also the most distractingly filled with typographical errors.

In a series that highlights the struggles of the marginalized or “underclass[ed]” poets, one of whom is firmly established in the canon, however problematically, and two who have yet to break into the Canadian literary imagination in a substantive way, it is the Mary Melfi collection that most thoroughly interrogates the politics behind canon formation in our country. As a writer who works across genre lines, producing an impressive number of plays, poetry collections, novels, children's books, and biography, Melfi's work explicitly addresses issues of class, ethnicity, and gender in a highly ironic, surrealistic style. It is this

well-developed sense of style, and her precise, careful manipulation of narrative form, Anselmi notes, that allows her work to acknowledge the irresolvable contradictions inherent in the Canadian subject, specifically a subject marked by ethnicity (Italian Canadian) and gender. Of all three collections, this is the most academically focused, offering complicated and well-developed literary analyses of her works. While the Nowlan text offers a confident yet narrow view of a poet whose innovative style effortlessly affected the ways in which writers in Canada and beyond negotiate issues of voice and authenticity, and the Rosenblatt text presents an intimate portrait of a brilliant, eccentric writer from the perspective of friends, lovers, and admirers, the Melfi text presents, unarguably, a writer whose skill and complex negotiations with identity is glaringly absent from the Canadian literary canon—a gap that causes readers to question the effectiveness of the current literary establishment to showcase contemporary working writers.

New Environmentalist Criticism

Fiona Beckett and Terry Gifford, eds.

Culture, Creativity, and Environment: New Environmentalist Criticism. Rodopi US\$73.00

Reviewed by Lisa Szabo

While reading *Culture, Creativity, and Environment: New Environmentalist Criticism*, edited by Fiona Beckett and Terry Gifford, I could not help but connect the collection's emerging theoretical implications with a talk Hans Bertens gave in fall 2008, at the University of Alberta, entitled “Ecocriticism and the Return of the Real.” In his lecture he traced a selective history of ecocriticism, a trajectory that attempted to examine “referentiality creeping back into theory.” Bertens claims, “ecocriticism brought back the real in the sense that it brought back essence”: in

other words, it brought back “the real in a more concrete way.” This return to the real was predicated on mainstream ecocriticism’s reliance on scientific data. This is true, but partly. Such a narrow definition of ecocriticism detracts from the field’s potential to emphasize other ways of accessing knowledge of environmental issues: material, experiential, and embodied knowledge, for instance. Science informs ecocritical discourse, but it often accompanies other forms of discursive and theoretical thought. *Culture, Creativity, and Environment* demonstrates such ecocritical practice.

While reading this collection’s twelve essays, I could not help but think that conception of referentiality in ecocriticism does not encompass everything of which this relatively new field is capable, in particular ecocriticism’s capacity for environmental activism. Science does not occupy a privileged place; rather, science works in conjunction with other critical modes to draw attention to the relationships between people and natural environments. As a result, the essays’ cumulative effect is to draw attention to the interplay between ethics, writing, aesthetics, poetics, philosophy, ecology, imagination, and environment. By disassembling disciplinary and dichotomized thinking and repeatedly emphasizing ethics, this collection suggests that “new” environmental criticism accentuates the need for articulating integrative critical models as a means for environmental activism.

Overall, *Culture, Creativity, and Environment* proposes that activism begins with recognition of the need for an ethical turn in environmental criticism that incorporates the power of imagination, creativity, and—particularly in the Arts and Humanities—writing. These essays illuminate possible ecocritical models that attempt to extend “the limited reach of current [ecocritical] debates” to impact on a wider range of practical environmental concerns. The “practical solutions” editors Beckett and Gifford propose,

will only occur through a popular change of common assumptions about human relationships with the world. A noteworthy example of the practical application of ecocritical models is Graham Huggan’s persuasive essay “Postcolonialism, Ecocriticism and the Animal in Recent Canadian Fiction,” which looks at Yann Martel’s *The Life of Pi* and Barbara Gowdy’s *The White Bone*. Huggan suggests “yoking” together the theoretical advantages of postcolonial and ecological criticism to benefit struggles for social and environmental justice.

A reassessment of anthropocentrism as a positive model for addressing environmental concerns repeatedly surfaces throughout the volume. Val Plumwood in the opening essay, “Journey to the Heart of Stone,” claims that an ethical consciousness that acknowledges and “re-present[s] experience in ways that honour the agency and creativity of the more-than-human world,” is needed, a practice that should begin literally with the rocks beneath our feet. She contends that writers are the necessary movers for this “cultural change.” Though John Parham’s thought-provoking “new humanist” ecocritical model in “What is (ecological) ‘nature’? John Stuart Mill and the Victorian Perspective” offers a more pragmatic environmentalist approach than Plumwood—in some ways he appears no less radical. Mill’s definition and analysis of the term “nature,” Parham argues, offers a new paradigmatic approach to ecology and a “green political economy.” Gillian Rudd’s analysis of Langland’s *Piers Plowman* and Matthew Jarvis’ exploration of Barry MacSweeney’s *The Book of Demons* also offer anthropocentric readings that emphasize an ecological appreciation and affective attachment to nature that maintains the value of nature for its own sake.

Both Hannes Bergthaller and Judith Rugg examine the ways gendered spaces and writing construct, collapse, and invert domestic/nature spheres to challenge established

views. Particularly significant is painter Judith Tucker's personal and theoretical reflection of the interrelations of post-memory, artistic practice and process, and environment. Guinevere Narraway's study of Luis Trenker's film *Der verlorene Sohn* challenges established interpretations of Trenker privileging *Heimat* (homeland) over *Fremde* (foreign parts). Axel Goodbody's essay "The Hunter as Nature-Lover: Idyll, aggression and ecology in the German animal stories of Otto Alscher" provides a compelling European comparison to North American hunting narratives and historiography.

If this collection seems weighted with ecologically conscious anthropocentric reading models, the last essay by Louise Westling, "Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty: Ecopoetics and the Problem of Humanism," offers insightful ground for reassessing why anthropocentric models provide a galvanizing complement and challenge to current eco- and bio-centric environmental debates. Adapting Heidegger's idea of language and human caring to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological perspective, Westling proposes a posthumanist ecological ethics that promotes "a radical openness to the wildness of being." *Culture, Creativity, and Environment* illustrates effectively and provocatively diverse ways to access a radical openness that enables ethical shifts in perception.

Out of the North, Into the Desert

Joseph Boyden

Through Black Spruce. Viking \$34.00

Fred Stenson

The Great Karoo. Doubleday \$32.95

Reviewed by Gordon Bölling

In an interview in February 2006, Joseph Boyden disclosed that his debut novel, *Three Day Road* (2005), is only the first part of what he refers to as a "triptych of

novels." With the middle panel still missing, *Through Black Spruce*, the 2008 winner of the Giller Prize, functions as the third part in Boyden's series. Readers familiar with *Three Day Road* will instantly recognize the hallmarks of Boyden's powerful storytelling in this new book. Boyden's second novel is again informed by his deep knowledge of Native culture and its mythologies. Like its predecessor, *Through Black Spruce* is peopled with traditional figures such as the windigo. Also in its narrative design *Through Black Spruce* closely echoes *Three Day Road*. Adapting oral traditions of storytelling, Boyden again relies on two narrators from different generations who take turns in relating their interwoven life stories. The first of these is the legendary Cree bush pilot Will Bird who, as it soon turns out, is the son of Xavier Bird, one of the protagonists of *Three Day Road*. Will's counterpart is his niece Annie Bird. She, in a way, is the successor to Xavier's Aunt Niska. Annie has inherited Niska's ability to see into the future and to heal, a "gift that pops up in our family once in a while." Despite these similarities and continuities, Boyden's second novel is more than a mere sequel to his successful debut. Like outer panels in a triptych, *Three Day Road* and *Through Black Spruce* are wholly self-contained works of art and yet mutually dependent parts of a larger narrative.

Through Black Spruce is set in present-day Canada and New York. As the novel opens, Will is in a deeply comatose state in a hospital in Moose Factory. Annie visits her uncle regularly and, only reluctantly following the advice of the medical staff, begins to tell him stories. In her narrative she focuses on her recent search for her younger sister Suzanne, who has been missing for two years. The novel's second narrative strand follows Will's story. Told from a comatose state and addressed to his two nieces, Will's story chronicles his life from his childhood to his long-running feud with the

drug-peddling Netmaker clan. In *Through Black Spruce* the massive influx of cocaine, hash, ecstasy, crack, and other drugs into remote Native communities and the violence that invariably accompanies this development threaten the very foundations of Native culture. Will, in fact, compares the abuse of drugs to the destructive effects of the residential school system: "The big white building that I thought was finally gone came back into my nightmares again when I began to contemplate the Netmaker clan. What Marius and his friends brought into our community was more destructive than what the *wemistikushu* brought with their nuns and priests." In an attempt to rid his community of its evil, Will decides to kill the windigo. He shoots at Marius Netmaker and has to flee into the Canadian North, first to Akimiski Island in James Bay and later to a place called Ghost River. Returning to his hometown of Moosonee, he still falls victim to Marius' wrath. Will's journey northwards finds its equivalent in Annie's search for Suzanne. Her quest takes Annie to Toronto and Montreal and later to Manhattan, where she briefly steps into her sister's shoes as a successful model. Suzanne, however, eludes her and Annie painfully realizes that this fast-moving world of false promises, drugs, and violence is not for her. She also returns to Moosonee, "the asshole of the Arctic," and begins to tell her story at her uncle's bedside. As the two plot lines converge and close in on the narrative present, *Through Black Spruce* moves towards an end that, like the end in *Three Day Road*, counters the threats to Native culture with a celebration of loyalty, friendship, and family. *Through Black Spruce* is a strong second novel from Joseph Boyden. Read in conjunction, *Three Day Road* and *Through Black Spruce* present a collective portrait of Cree culture from the late nineteenth century through the First World War, and from the second half of the twentieth century to the present. It will be interesting

to see how Boyden's next novel will fill out the middle panel and complete the triptych.

In comparison with Joseph Boyden, Fred Stenson is a veteran of Canadian letters. *The Great Karoo* is his fifteenth book and his eighth work of fiction. In close to five-hundred pages, Stenson's epic novel spans five decades and three continents. *The Great Karoo* is one of the latest additions to the time-honoured genre of the Canadian war novel. Revisiting the South African War of 1899-1902, Stenson's historical novel explores a conflict that Canadian war writing has all but neglected. *The Great Karoo* tells the story of Frank Adams, a young cowboy from Alberta's Chief Mountain country, who serves first with the Canadian Mounted Rifles and later with the Canadian Scouts. Soon after his arrival in Africa, Frank is forced to realize that the reasons for his voluntary enlistment were fairly vague: "By now, Frank knew he had outfoxed himself. Like a moose to a horse, the Great Karoo was wide open all right, but was nothing like Alberta would have been in that condition. Thinking that it would be like home, but a purer version, had been a dangerous mistake." Although he hardly ever speaks about it after his return to Canada, his experience of the Boer War does not leave him alone. Unexpectedly switching to a first-person narrative, the final pages of *The Great Karoo* find Frank in May 1942 writing a short memoir. Even before he has finished his memoir, Frank decides that he will consign it to the flames of his wood stove as a failed attempt to give meaning to his experience of war in South Africa: "Back in the Great Karoo when I kept telling myself it was a moose to a horse, that was the closest I came to understanding. The whole war was like that. We travelled inside it, Ovide, Jeff, and me, but we never understood it and were never part of it . . . And here I am trying to make sense of it still, trying to make a horse when it never was a horse and never will be." A

different and somewhat larger perspective is granted to readers of *The Great Karoo* by British General Butler, whose musings on colonial warfare and politics chronicle his growing disillusionment with British imperialism. Like Timothy Findley's *The Wars*, Stenson's novel is suffused with a compassion for horses. In graphic detail, *The Great Karoo* describes the suffering of horses as they are dragged into the machinations of "modern" warfare. To Canadian soldiers like Ovide Smith the welfare of their horses is of far greater importance than the defense of British imperial interests. All in all, *The Great Karoo* is a novel that demands (and rewards) attentive reading.

Jouissances et décrépitudes

Laurent Chabin

Corps perdu. Triptyque 18,00 \$

Pierre Gariépy

Lomer Odyssee. XYZ 20,00 \$

Compte rendu par Kinga Zawada

Contrairement aux textes où les plaisirs de la chair sont le privilège des personnages jeunes et vigoureux, *Lomer Odyssee* et *Corps perdu* sont l'apologie de la décrépitude. Le corps féminin fané et décati s'y trouve objet de désir sexuel.

On dévore d'un coup les vingt-cinq chapitres de *Lomer Odyssee*, séduit par la singulière histoire d'amour du candide Lomer, surnommé Petit, et de la Gueuse, vieille prostituée édentée à la chair flasque, splendide dans sa déchéance. « Il y avait chez elle comme un air de fin de millénaire, une décadence intégrale, des ruines et des ruines comme toute une civilisation enfouie dans la jungle de son corps profané. » Alors qu'il s'était embarqué sur un navire pour ne jamais toucher terre, envoûté, il jette l'ancre et se fait déflorer, tatouer le sexe et découvre les bas fonds d'une ville portuaire débordant de violence, de sang, de sexe, de morpions, de bière, et de friture.

Le lecteur se réjouira de parcourir ce port avec Petit et la Gueuse et de plonger dans l'univers des marins évoquant à la fois *Marius*, *Malperthuis* et *L'Odyssee*. Tout en gardant à l'esprit le clin d'œil au nom du père de Gariépy—Lomer—it se plaira à repérer les liens avec le texte d'Homère.

La combinaison du beau et du grotesque, du pur et du vulgaire feront ressortir l'aspect carnavalesque tandis que les descriptions du corps usé mais ensorcelant de la Gueuse feront songer aux prostituées de Baudelaire. La richesse intertextuelle, les jeux avec les rythmes et les sonorités, le ton taquin et l'écriture poétique oscillant entre l'ingénuité et la fourberie contribueront à rendre la lecture de ce roman déjà captivant légère et agréable.

Corps perdu commence comme une plainte adressée à un amant absent : « Aujourd'hui, tu ne m'as pas écrit. » Une succession de courts chapitres écrits à la première personne, qui ressemblent à des pages d'un journal intime sans chronologie, entraîne le lecteur dans le monologue intérieur d'une femme tourmentée, claustrée depuis plusieurs dizaines d'années dans une chambre sordide aux fenêtres clouées.

Séquestrée par ses parents suite à une fausse-couche subie à un âge précoce, elle est réduite à l'état de bête se nourrissant de poissons et de viande crue. Cette créature décharnée et crasseuse meuble sa solitude de souvenirs et de fantasmes érotiques en s'agrippant à son « tas »—un amas d'ordures croupissantes, d'excréments fétides, d'un avorton putréfié et de vermine qui grouille. Vautrée dans cet immonde amoncellement où elle coule ses larmes et sa tendresse, elle attend inlassablement son prince dans un état de jouissance continue et d'orgasmes violents en remplissant son « pochon » de ses substituts : doigts, crayons, glands, viande décomposée, pieds du lit, etc.

Si le texte de Chabin peut accabler le lecteur avec ses scénarios pervers et le laisser avec l'odeur de poisson et d'effluves

corporelles dans les narines, il ne manquera pas de susciter sa réflexion sur l'épouvantable angoisse de l'extrême solitude.

Je me souviens: Memory and Mourning in Montreal

Ann Charney

Distantly Related to Freud. Cormorant \$21.00

Mary Soderstrom

The Violets of Usambara. Cormorant \$21.00.

Ami Sands Brodoff

The White Space Between. Second Story \$8.95

Reviewed by Jessica Langston

The past looms large in the background of these stories set in Montreal just like the mountain. At base, all three novels are about the value of remembering, but they are also about the importance of living despite, and in honour of, those memories.

At times derivative and certainly reminiscent of Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women*, Charney's novel is a *Künstlerroman* focused on the development of a female artist. The story begins with Ellen at eight years old, fascinated and horrified by the refugees to whom her mother has leased rooms in order to make ends meet. We are introduced to one of the abiding themes of the novel, the simultaneously tormenting and idealized memories that accompany us as we move through our present-day existence. Ellen witnesses this ineluctable past in the nightly outbursts of the typically silent lodgers, in her mother's and aunt's fond recollections of their family and their childhood, left behind in Poland, and in the suicide of David, one of the lodgers, later in the novel. As with most portrait-of-an-artist novels, Ellen's reactions to these events and to the people surrounding her are ambiguous, by turns affected and indifferent. This conflict between engagement and isolation is typical as, throughout the book, we watch Ellen struggle to live and write, until we

find her at the end of the book finally having published her first story.

At times titillating (when an adolescent Ellen is propositioned by a stranger) and at other times humorous (when Ellen, mystified, watches her teacher crying over the Queen's coronation), this is a highly engaging novel. That said, there are some awkward moments. The worst of these comes when Ellen's friend Lydia is abducted. It seems here as though Charney, like her protagonist, struggles with and loses control of her narrative. Particularly jarring is the recounting of the story behind Lydia's kidnapping which slips into third person narration (the rest of the story is in first-person) and provides details that Ellen herself could never know. Because there is no precedent set for this type of detached and factual narration, it disrupts the flow of the text. In fact, it seems that Charney, whose writing is vivid and compelling in the early sections of the books, runs out of steam mid-way and is unsure how to end the story. The conclusion of the book seems random and does not provide the sort of closure or promise we expect from a *Künstlerroman*.

The Violets of Usambara is a book about violence and the possibility of beauty. Set in Africa and Canada, the novel revolves around an older married couple, Thomas and Louise Brossard. In alternate chapters, we learn about Thomas' mission to Burundi, Africa, his quest to find his wife African violets, and his disappearance and subsequent murder by rebels. Meanwhile, at their home in Montreal, Louise, though frantic with worry, is also dealing with a friend's concerns over threats being made to her husband, Manny. Interspersed with these present-day experiences are the memories of their marriage and the rise and fall of Thomas' political career.

In a text rich with metaphor, Soderstrom subtly suggests—through the attack on Louise's homosexual cousin, through

Thomas' destruction of Louise's solarium, through the exhibit of "masterpieces" that were stolen by a Nazi war criminal—that violence, while often imagined as something that takes place elsewhere, is present in everyone's life, even the comfortable, upper-middle class of Canada. The trick, she seems to suggest, is finding the violets in Usambara, which, at the end of the novel, Louise (an agoraphobe) does, returning to Africa for a memorial for her husband and for the announcement of a scholarship in his name for students from Burundi. Soderstrom's beautifully crafted novel garners insight into humanity; for example, early in their relationship, Louise realizes that Thomas' energy is less angry than that of her brothers' "indépendantiste" friends because "he assumed that change for the better was possible. The others weren't sure." Such observations stay with the reader.

The image that lingers after closing Brodoff's book is that of a young girl in the Jewish Cemetery in Prague, panicked by frightening new policies, hiding the menorah her father crafted. The menorah obviously represents the family itself, and as a grown woman, Jana Ivanova has nightmares in which she is uncertain whether she is digging it up or burying it again. The novel itself examines these two choices: should Holocaust survivors stay silent or should they dig up their memories? Brodoff herself seems to have chosen "the white space between" of her title; the book is surprisingly silent about the actual Holocaust, but we are meant to mine the space between the words to imagine what Jana and other survivors endured. The novel suggests the importance of living in the present, while being ever mindful of the past. This balance is demonstrated by Jana's sharing of her memory books with her daughter, Willow; as Jana explains, "[y]ou can survive almost anything, if you can tell a story about it."

Brodoff's prose is unfortunately clumsy. For instance, within a few pages,

both Willow and Jana are described as "warm[ing] [their] face[s] in curls of steam." Brodoff, at times, relies on over-used sentiments, such as her portrayal of Willow as someone living with "an ache she barely notices because it is always there." As with Charney's novel, there are also moments in *The White Space Between* that seem out of place, particularly the almost magic-realist chapter in which Willow has a conversation with her marionettes. Despite these stylistic problems, it is impossible not to care about these characters and shed a few tears at the book's close.

The Past on Display

Marie Clements

Copper Thunderbird. Talonbooks \$15.95

Kevin Kerr

Studies in Motion. Talonbooks \$18.95

Ami McKay

Jerome: The Historical Spectacle. Gaspereau \$19.95

Anosh Irani

The Bombay Plays: The Matka King, Bombay Black. Playwrights Canada \$19.95

Reviewed by Marlene Moser

These four recent Canadian plays are excellent examples of the kind of fervent, exciting writing that exists on the contemporary Canadian theatre scene. Often supported in their development through workshop development with theatre companies or granting agencies, these plays make for compelling theatrical presentations and reflect the diversity of voices and reworking of narrative and remembering of history that continues to characterize much playwriting in Canada. Examinations of the past, especially of figures "on display" suggest current reworkings with the hope that new future worlds will be imagined.

The first three plays deal with historical figures whose stories and lives are retold and remade, taking their audiences into vivid commentaries on the lives,

circumstances and work of these individuals. Marie Clements' *Copper Thunderbird* takes as its subject matter the life and work of Norval Morriseau, the famous First Nations contemporary visual artist. In characteristic fashion, Clements refracts the story, the talent, and the character of Morriseau, wherein Dump Bears advise, a Gallery Room chorus comments and Morriseau, as he is tossed through the various scenes, appears (sometimes simultaneously) as Boy, Young Man, and Old Man. The play is raw and vivid and, like *Burning Vision* demands a theatrical imagination for it to come alive. The play veers into a surreal landscape near the end, as Morriseau enters the "House of Invention" alongside Picasso, Leonard Cohen, Einstein, and Martin Luther King. Morriseau's right to exist in this pantheon is asserted while the next and final scene starkly presents him at the end of his life with the Californication Girls and tequila. The contrast of these scenes demonstrates, as Clements' says in her disclaimer note, "a nation that is still surviving the collision of first contact over five hundred years ago." The play is simultaneously a mythologizing and a de-mythologizing as Clements juxtaposes images, voices, and versions of character.

In a similar unforgiving fashion, Kevin Kerr's *Studies in Motion* examines the life and work of Eadweard Muybridge, the famous nineteenth-century photographer who captured and recorded the motion of the body by using multiple cameras. The writing is crisp and elegant, evoking time and delineating character deftly and effectively, laying bare the contradictory picture of a man so obsessed with a close examination of the physical and so disengaged from his own emotional landscape. The play itself asks questions about our own obsession with technology when our bodies and minds seem so similarly disengaged from the "machines" that we are using. Here the style of the play achieves a lovely

synthesis, beautifully mimicking the photographer's famous images of bodies caught and frozen in motion through movement sequences while the narrative interweaves its own take on Muybridge's personal life: his affair, denial of his child, and murder of his wife's lover. The play is an excellent and compelling read as a story, but it also paints evocative pictures in these poetic movement sequences that are described as scenes between the dialogue exchanges. *Studies in Motion* is sure to be a script produced over and over again for the performative and interpretative possibilities that it affords.

Where *Studies in Motion* draws on nineteenth-century melodrama for the shock value of its story line, Ami McKay's *Jerome: The Historical Spectacle* uses the Victorian sideshow as its inspiration in retelling the story of the legendary Jerome, a man found on the shores of Sandy Cove, Nova Scotia, also in the mid-nineteenth century. Legless and mute, Jerome (the name given to him by his rescuers) rapidly becomes the focus of much mythologizing and many claims to ownership. Two different caregivers take him in, but the suspicious townspeople speculate on his origin and on the caregivers' motivations and are determined to properly place him in this world. Who does he belong to? Where does he fit? Ultimately the play comments more on those around Jerome—meanings that accrue with his presence and what he represents for other people—and we learn remarkably little about Jerome himself. The conceit of the play works well in foregrounding an obsession with difference and with display, for the characters are first and foremost circus performers themselves: the Bearded Lady, the Giant Man, the Conjoined Sisters and others, their actions guided by Celestin, "a shape-shifting trickster and sideshow barker." This play was first presented in an outdoor venue with Two Planks and a Passion theatre company in August 2008. This kind of staging resonates with the

themes that emerge from the play, drawing the audience into the spectacle while reminding them of their own culpability and implication in this enjoyment.

Where the other three plays are based on these fictional musings about real people, *The Bombay Plays* by Anosh Irani presents two tight stories of life in Bombay, India, especially in places in the city where life can be vulnerable—bought, sold, and gambled away. This collection is also highly recommended. Top Rani, in *The Matka King*, is a barker much like Celestin in *Jerome*: the top eunuch in a brothel in the red light district, he has girls to sell and bets to take. The play, as Top Rani says in the opening monologue of act one, examines how “no one is free” and in the parallel pitch at the top of act two, says, “we are all prostitutes.” The story of ten-year-old Aarti whose father gambles away her life on *The Matka King* bet is only the canvas for other sharply drawn individuals and an examination of their motivations. Throughout, the writing is deliciously biting and the exchanges very clever. Every line is an opportunity to comment and satirize while the images are vivid and unexpected: a stuffed parrot who makes predictions, the ghost of the father who committed suicide, the unseen cobra in the basket that bites. Despite (or because of) the humour and the harshness, we feel deeply for these characters.

The second play in this collection, *Bombay Black*, takes its name from a drug made from hashish and black shoe polish and examines a different kind of “selling.” Aspara is a beautiful dancer whose rich and famous clients come from all over to watch her dance (as her mother takes the money.) Kamal is a blind man who pays for this privilege, but never experiences the dance. His motivations are different. As the play unfolds, his connection to Aspara’s past is made apparent and, again, as with *The Matka King*, bonds between children and parents and our own recognition and

grappling with our histories become themes that are considered. *Bombay Black* was the winner of four Dora Mavor Moore awards including Outstanding New Play.

The careful reconsiderations of narrative, biography, and humanity found in these plays make them compelling reading and also provide for exciting staging opportunities for many theatre companies in the future.

Fine Feminist Workings

Louise Forsyth, ed.

Nicole Brossard: Essays on Her Works. Guernica
\$15.00

Reviewed by Susan Rudy

Here, finally, is a collection of essays in English about the work of Québécoise lesbian feminist experimental poet, essayist, and novelist Nicole Brossard. To our great fortune, the eminent Brossard scholar, Louise Forsyth, not only edited the collection but also provides an engaged and engaging chapter-length essay by way of introduction as well as her translation of “Fragments of a Conversation” that she carried out with Brossard in February 2003. (A glance at the topics covered in that conversation, chosen by Brossard for their relevance for her today, gives some sense of the enormous range of Brossard’s inquiry: “Creativity,” “Writing,” “Literature,” “Poetry,” “*le sens apparent*,” “A Fetish Sentence,” “The Feminine Body,” “Characters,” “Connivance,” “Men of Interest,” “Montreal,” “Travels, Being Elsewhere,” “The body, Humanity, the Spiritual,” “Silence,” “The Present, Presence.”) In addition to Forsyth’s, the collection is chock full of superb essays by established Brossard scholars Barbara Godard, Louise Dupré, Susan Knutson, Alice Parker, and Karen McPherson. We also have essays by Susan Holbrook and Katharine Conley, who have each published previously on Brossard, as well as by the significant feminist scholars Claudine Potvin and Lynette Hunter who

turn their considerable perceptiveness here to Brossard. The result is an extremely fine and wide-ranging set of essays on the work of Nicole Brossard.

It is perhaps not unusual that four of the ten essays should focus on what was, at the time the volume was being prepared, Brossard's most recent published fiction: the novel *Hier* (2001), which appeared as *Yesterday, at the Hotel Clarendon* in 2005 in an excellent English translation by Susanne de Lotbinière-Harwood. *Hier* is the focus of essays by McPherson, Parker, Dupré and Potvin, who look closely at the novel in the context of considering, respectively, Brossard's "Writing After Loss," "Performativity in *Hier*," "Novels on the Edge," and "Flirting with the Museum Narrative."

Potvin also discusses *Picture Theory* and it is the focus of Conley's essay "Moving into the Third Dimension." *Picture Theory* is also a key text, along with Brossard's 1988 essay "Mémoire: Hologramme du désir" (1988), for Knutson's crucial argument that "Brossard stands in a relationship of *consilience* to the most powerful knowledge practices of our time," by which she means "brain science, wave theory, mathematics, optics and computer science." (Knutson provides a note explaining that the term "consilience" was first used by William Whewell in *The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* (1840): "Literally a 'jumping together' of knowledge by the linking of facts and fact-based theory across disciplines to create a common groundwork of explanation.")

In "Our Last Chance for Silence," Catherine Campbell, who recently completed her PhD, provides thoughtful reflections on Brossard's shifting concerns about silence in a discussion of *Mauve Desert* and *Baroque at Dawn* while Susan Holbrook's "Delirious Translations" includes additional discussion of *Mauve Desert* set usefully alongside the much less frequently discussed poetry chapbooks published in 1985 and 1986 as *Mauve*

(by Nicole Brossard, translated by Daphne Marlatt) and *Character* (by Marlatt) / *Jeu de lettres* (Brossard's translation of *Character*).

Barbara Godard's investigation of Brossard's "Life (in) Writing" begins with *Intimate Journal* (1998), her translation of *Journal Intime* (1984) but incorporates vital contributions to our thinking about many of Brossard's early and more recent texts, including *These Our Mothers* (Godard's 1983 translation), *She Would be the First Sentence of My Next Novel* (1998), *La lettre aérienne* (1985), *le sens apparent* (1980), *Baroque at Dawn* (1997), and *Mauve Desert* (1990).

The last essay is by Lynette Hunter, whose extraordinarily productive discussion of Brossard's critical essays in the context of the "*inédit*"—which she productively if unusually translates as the not-yet-said—provides a fitting closure to the book. As Hunter points out, "The unknown doesn't just get said. It's a laborious process of working on the words, a kind of training in engagement specific to each reader-writer relationship, that is coincident with the engagement itself." Hunter reminds us to "take up the invitation to work on articulation" that is always available in texts by Nicole Brossard. And after reading these essays, we want to do so. That itself is a mark of the success of the collection.

A Diverse Nation

Daniel Francis, ed.

Imagining British Columbia: Land, Memory, and Place. Anvil \$18.00

Christine Lowther and Anita Sinner, eds.

Writing the West Coast: In Love with Place.

Ronsdale \$24.95

Reviewed by Mark Diotte

Imagining British Columbia and *Writing the West Coast* follow such collections as David Stouck and Myler Wilkinson's fiction and non-fiction anthologies of British Columbian writing, *West by Northwest* (1998) and

Genius of Place (2000). Both *Imagining British Columbia* and *Writing the West Coast* emphasize the importance of the local while charting national-global trends, patterns, and concerns through the uniqueness of specific settings and cultures; together, they are testaments to a growing confidence in the diversity and heterogeneity of Canadian national identity.

Imagining British Columbia, an excellent volume of “creative non-fiction” that serves as a companion piece to the 2003 “collection of fiction and poetry *The Fed Anthology*,” is the broader of the two collections in terms of geographic breadth. In his introduction, Daniel Francis combines the words of Emily Carr and Jean Barman to describe the focus of the anthology as “that state of mind, that way of seeing” characteristic of British Columbia. Yet, while the twenty pieces that comprise the anthology do share the physical location of British Columbia, they quickly and easily transcend any criticism of parochialism. In the superb piece “How We Imagine Ourselves,” for example, Howard White uses logging vocabulary and narratives to challenge institutionalized literary canons and accepted notions of literature. Instead he proposes a “theory of literature” which holds that “mastery of expression [can] occur as readily in an upcoast bunkhouse as in an ivory tower.” Victoria Marvin’s “Tapping For Roots” uses the experience of a New Zealand immigrant in Vancouver to examine the larger issue of how “home” can be constructed through a confluence of repeated experiences, imagination and the “little white lies” of memory. In the delightfully humorous piece “The Secret Life of Litterbugs,” M.A.C. Farrant takes a poke at the hypocrisy of national pride and arrogance through a satirical look at the typical family outing. Here, the family’s reflection that “there i[s] no family cleaner than ours”—while they toss trash out the car window—is analogous to the continued poisoning of

the environment caused by self-absorption and individual accumulation. Similarly, “Ship of Fools” by Pauline Holdstock vividly relates the gluttony and consumption taking place on a “mini-cruise up the B.C. coast to Alaska” where the cruise ship is a “floating entertainment centre selling the illusion of experience (living)” while ensuring that customer/consumers “remain insulated” from life. Holdstock’s essay is not just a condemnation of accumulation capitalism and the illusory practice of “selling experience,” but also a satirical chronicle of the growing leisure and tourism economy.

An “intimate collection about island life” in British Columbia, *Writing the West Coast* comprises thirty stories interspersed with striking colour photographs, and while readers do not encounter the west coast of the B.C. mainland in this volume, they are treated to a rich textual and visual narrative. Indeed, one strength of this collection is the photographs, which range from Jen Pukonen’s “Ladybug on Silverweed” to Warren Rudd’s photograph of “Tree-sitting Protestors” in Tofino; together the photographs form a striking intertextual narrative of island life. The original intention of the volume to “compile a celebration of nature-writing focused on Clayoquot Sound” remains as a strong presence in the volume, yet, this focus on nature and small rural communities such as Tofino readily gives way to larger concerns. In fact, an underlying premise of the volume seems to be that direct personal experience with the concrete physical world is a catalyst for intelligent reflection and abstraction. Brian Brett’s “The Beaches of Clayoquot,” for example, uses the narrator’s experience of how the “beach with the magic cave” became “wall-to-wall houses for the wealthy and celebrities” to foreground a Canada that is “nearly united in a celebration of our unseemly wealth at the expense of the planet’s future.” In Greg Blanchette’s “Forty Kilometres From Home” the physical

isolation of Sara is both a metaphor for the isolation she experiences in the wake of her “sex reassignment surgery,” and a subversion of the clichéd belief that, separate from us, “nature embraces us, refreshes us, renews us.” Nadine Crookes’ (KLIIAHTAH) “Being Nuu-Chah-Nulth” uses the narrator’s connection to the landscape to highlight and implicitly criticize the artificial separation of nature from humanity by focusing on the Nuu-Chah-Nulth “concept of a ‘human family’” where individual actions are “integral” not only to family, neighbours, and community, but to “the Earth” upon which we depend. Indeed, above all, *Writing the West Coast* is an evocative collection of stories that demands an intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual awareness of the environment in which we live.

Cities in Flames

Helen Humphreys

Coventry. HarperCollins \$19.95

Joan Thomas

Reading by Lightning. Goose Lane \$22.95

Gaétan Soucy; Lazer Lederhendier, trans.

The Immaculate Conception. Anansi \$18.95

Reviewed by Paul Denham

The central action of *Coventry* is the bombing of the English cathedral and industrial city in November of 1940 and its immediate effects—that night and the morning after—on some of its residents. Harriet Marsh is a fire-watcher at the cathedral when the bombs ignite it; she and another fire-watcher, Jeremy, make their way through the burning city toward safety. Maeve, Jeremy’s mother, somewhat further from the centre of town, also has to escape the fires. Though Jeremy does not survive the night, the two women meet and realize that at the beginning of the First World War they shared a brief friendship just as Harriet was seeing her young husband Owen off to war. A passage from 1914 and another from 1919, when

Harriet goes to Ypres to find Owen’s grave, interrupt the main story. Harriet cherishes the final letter she had from Owen, and it “stopped her from hating the Germans”—a lesson to be remembered in 1940. In 1962 Harriet comes back to Coventry for the opening of the new cathedral, and just as on the night of the bombing, she sees a swallow swooping about the building, reminiscent of John McCrae’s “lark still bravely singing” over Flanders fields. The burning city and the pain of loss are vividly evoked, and these subjects are brought into the present century by the comment in the Acknowledgements that the descriptions of the burning city are based not only on accounts from the time, but also on “eyewitness accounts of the bombing of Baghdad.” We have not, it seems, learned very much in the interim.

In *The Immaculate Conception*, the action begins with a fire leading to many deaths, a fire set by an arsonist in a working-class district of Montreal. The jacket says that the setting is the 1920s, but there are no dates or historical references, and the public hanging of the alleged arsonist in the final pages sounds like something from a much earlier time. In between are several stories of the neighbourhood’s residents, many of whom are physically deformed or disabled in some way, and all of whom live in fear of something. Remouald Tremblay is afraid of his wheelchair-bound father Seraphon, who in turn fears his own death. Clementine Clement, a club-footed teacher in the local school, is afraid of her own students and her principal, Father Gandon. The burned icon of the Virgin which haunts the story provides no comfort, and the imminent Feast of the Immaculate Conception, celebrating “Mary’s purity”, also offers nothing.

Clementine is infatuated with the hyper-masculine Fire Captain, and they become lovers, but we doubt that their story will have a happy ending. There is not much justice here, and not much love either; Remouald, significantly, dies in another

fire in a cabin where he and his father have taken refuge from the winter's cold: as he dies, "the horror that had encased him in ice for twenty years had melted, and for the first time he breathed without feeling an evil hand, his own hand, crushing his heart." In any historical setting, we make our own frozen lives, and the fire that might thaw us will also kill us. Soucy's is the bleakest of the novels, but like the others it offers a plea for a warmer, freer, fuller life.

In *Reading by Lightning*, Joan Thomas gives us the story of Lily Piper's growing up on a farm in southern Manitoba in the 1930s. Her father was an immigrant from Lancashire with the Barr colonists; her mother is a fundamentalist Christian who believes in the imminent "Rapture" of the redeemed. At sixteen she is sent back to England on the death of her grandfather, and spends four years with her relatives there. From her adoptive cousin George she learns something of a scientific approach to life, an alternative to her mother's version. She and George seem to be meant to be lovers, but neither can make the first move, and she loses George to the Second World War when conscription claims him and he is lost at sea. Returning to Manitoba when her father dies, she finds herself trapped on the farm with her mother until Russell Bates, whom she met on the opening page of the novel, turns up hiding in the barn. He has become a Communist as a result of the Depression, and Communism is now illegal. She conceals him; they become lovers, and she gains the courage to acknowledge him before her mother. Likewise, he decides to stop hiding from the authorities. Both discover that acknowledging their true selves is less terrible than they had feared.

Thomas' odd title might be a reference to Coleridge's remark that watching a performance by actor Edmund Kean was "like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning," except that nothing in the novel is explained by the reference. Rather, the title seems to

refer to Lily's sense that she can have only momentary glimpses of the meaning of her life. The final lightning-charged scene, the closest she gets to understanding, makes her "glad to be abandoned to this world" and its randomness, rather than being raptured up into heaven by her mother's purposeful God.

Education, with Ethics

John Lorinc

Cities. Groundwood \$18.95

Kevin Bales and Becky Cornell

Slavery Today. Groundwood \$18.95

Deborah Ellis

Lunch with Lenin and Other Stories. Fitzhenry & Whiteside \$14.95

Reviewed by Suzanne James

These three works—two short non-fiction texts and a collection of short stories—target the Canadian/North American educational market, seeking to engage teenagers with social realities and global issues which likely fall outside the sphere of their personal experience.

Cities and *Slavery Today* are both "Groundwork Guides," part of a series designed to "provide an overview of key contemporary political and social issues." As the publisher suggests, by "[t]ackling pressing and sometimes controversial topics, these guides offer both a lively introduction and a strong point of view." Both texts follow a similar format: seven chapters, clearly divided into subsections and interspersed with shaded boxes containing charts, key information and anecdotal or personal accounts, followed by a timeline, notes, a list of sources for further information, and an index. Designed for school libraries, *Cities* and *Slavery Today* adopt an earnest tone as they seek to inform and engage their juvenile readers.

John Lorinc's *Cities* opens with a brief historical overview of urbanization and then focuses on contemporary problems

and issues faced by cities: urban sprawl, environmental degradation, transportation, poverty, crime, and epidemics. Loric presents a guardedly optimistic view of urbanization, closing with the claim: “[t]he twenty-first-century metropolis will be a concentrated place of nearly unfathomable diversity—ethnic, social, economic, environmental, religious. Large cities have become a microcosm of everything that’s taking place in this complex world. For good or ill, they are our future.” Using examples from a wide range of global metropolises, *Cities* provides an impressive quantity of information in a clear, direct prose style and balances facts with interesting, more anecdotal material on topics such as “Biking in Bogotá,” “The Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918-19,” the U.S. based “Janitors for Justice” movement, and “A Brief History of Sewers.” Loric never condescends to his teenage readers, and serious students will find a wealth of current information, carefully documented in footnotes, in this text.

Although the format is the same as *Cities*, *Slavery Today*, by Kevin Bales and Becky Cornell, is a stylistically livelier, more inviting, and more accessible text. Perhaps because the issue of slavery is potentially more foreign and less relevant to North-American teenagers, the authors work hard to bring the issues to life for their readers. Compelling personal accounts of individuals bought and sold into forced labour, prostitution, and debt bondage are reinforced by recent statistics identifying trafficking victims and profits, and indicating the correspondence between levels of national debt and slavery.

The agenda of *Slavery Today* is clear, linking the proliferation of contemporary slavery to globalization, but Bales and Cornell also outline slavery’s historical roots, carefully distinguishing between characteristics of “old” and “new” slavery. Although the text’s focus on the horrors of the practice is

understandably negative, this is balanced by accounts of slave uprisings and a very confident, convincingly-argued final chapter entitled “How We Will End Slavery.” *Slavery Today* concludes with a highly relevant list of resources, including non-profit anti-slavery associations, websites, and films which can be viewed for free online.

While the Groundwork Guides to *Cities* and *Slavery Today* provide information for student research in an accessible non-fiction format, the ten short stories in Deborah Ellis’ *Lunch with Lenin* seek to broaden the social and political awareness of teenage readers through entertaining plot-driven narratives. Although half of the stories are set outside of North America, the author avoids exoticism or romanticization, emphasizing instead the sometimes mundane realities of daily life in Moscow, the Philippines, Ulan Bataar, Bolivia, and Afghanistan, and implicitly linking these foreign environments to the North American towns and cities which provide a backdrop for the other stories. Linked by a shared focus on the effects of drug use or abuse, each of the stories in the collection presents a dilemma or problematic situation, and Ellis avoids providing easy solutions or a simplistic morality. Quite realistically, the lives of her teenage protagonists are not exclusively dominated by drugs: they also worry about relationships with their parents, their friends, and their plans for the future.

The short stories in *Lunch with Lenin* prompt readers to explore the ambiguities of a range of personal and ethical situations. Should a teenage boy purchase marijuana to aid his ailing grandmother? How do we respond to the local police officer who destroys the poppy fields of an impoverished Afghani family because “[t]here are too many heroin addicts in Europe”? Questions such as these—and the stories from which they are drawn—have the potential to provoke thoughtful class

discussions and encourage students to relate personally to contemporary issues facing teenagers, both internationally and in their own communities.

Although Ellis' didactic purpose occasionally results in stilted dialogue (such as a mother announcing to her son, "I was drinking a lot when I was pregnant with you; because of that, you have this condition [Fetal Alcohol Syndrome]. After they told me, I decided to stop drinking"), for the most part the short stories in *Lunch with Lenin* utilize realistic plots and convincing characterization to explore a broad range of concerns linked to drug use and related local/global problems.

Golden Boy

Christopher Plummer

In Spite of Myself. Knopf \$37.00

Reviewed by Jerry Wasserman

At 648 unindexed pages with 182 photos, Christopher Plummer's terrifically informative memoir is positively Rabelaisian. It can hardly contain the magnitude of his life story: the extraordinary stage and screen resume unmatched by any other Canadian, and by few American or British actors of his generation; his enormous appetite for alcohol and other trappings of the show biz *Good Life*; his impossibly prodigious memory recalling the hundreds of celebrities with whom he has worked and played over the past sixty years, all named (or name-dropped) in lengthy catalogues.

In one typical two-page section Plummer surveys 56 members of the New York theatre scene with whom he rubbed and bent elbows in the early 1960s, from Jack Lemmon and Lillian Hellman to Kenneth Tynan and Walter Winchell. Elsewhere, he describes his Broadway debut at age 24 in a Christopher Fry play with Tyrone Power, Katherine Cornell, Sydney Pollack and fellow Canadian Don Harron, and his first

movie, *Stage Struck*, with Henry Fonda and Susan Strasberg, directed by Sidney Lumet. He goes to Paris with Judith Anderson and parties with Gloria Vanderbilt. He works with Peter Hall's Royal Shakespeare Company alongside John Gielgud, Vanessa Redgrave, Peter O'Toole, and Judi Dench, hangs out in Hollywood with Jack Warner, Shirley MacLaine, and Natalie Wood, drinks heavily with Orson Welles, and gigs at the National Theatre with Olivier: "I did work with Larry. For a time, we had the most wonderful fun together—endless stories, ribald jokes, many dinners, with or without the ladies, and much wine and song."

Note the slightly affected tone and mid-Atlantic accent, as if he were lip-synching John Barrymore (whom later in life he played in a touring solo show). This is the language of his bad-boy show biz party-animal self despite which, as the title suggests, Plummer feels he succeeded professionally. He carries on a love-hate relationship with this alter ego, chastising the boozy self-indulgence that makes him "a lousy husband and even a worse father." Yet he revels in page after page of blithely amusing anecdotes about his bad behaviour, busting up dressing rooms with drinking buddy Jason Robards and getting "happily smashed" during the 1966 filming of *Dr. Doolittle* with Rex Harrison and Harrison's actress wife Rachel Roberts, "a very funny drunk." Mark Harris' *Pictures at a Revolution* (2008) describes Roberts during these same episodes as a sad, ugly, self-destructive alcoholic.

In contrast to his backstage lives, Plummer has relatively little to say about his family—he loved his mother, married and divorced actress Tammy Grimes, had no contact with actress daughter Amanda for two decades until they reconciled and won Tony awards the same year, and was "saved" by current wife Elaine Taylor—and even less about his own talent and stardom. He treats his remarkable career with exceptional modesty. His

Shakespearean roles alone comprise multiple lifetime achievements: three Hamlets, two Macbeths (both panned), Richard III, Henry V, Mercutio, Antony, Benedick, Iago, and Lear at the RSC, the National, Stratford, and on Broadway. He played Oedipus twice and the definitive modern Cyrano. Yet he spends the most time discussing his film role as Captain von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*, which he sarcastically called “S & M” (“it did not promise to be one of ‘my favourite things’”). Never having sung before and hating his character, he misbehaved throughout the shoot. Now, he acknowledges the movie’s quality and paints a gracious portrait of Julie Andrews. Such homages to co-workers throughout the book show him at his most admirable: lionizing Archibald MacLeish and Elia Kazan, and offering a beautiful reminiscence of Frances Hyland’s Ophelia opposite his Hamlet at the Stratford Festival.

Plummer appeared at Stratford almost from its beginning. The Festival provided him with some of his best roles and funniest anecdotes. He played Henry V in Michael Langham’s 1956 production; in 1957 he was Hamlet (understudied by William Hutt) and Sir Andrew Aguecheek in Guthrie’s *Twelfth Night* with Douglas Campbell and Bruno Gerussi. Forty-five years later he tackled Lear. He recalls his Leontes in the 1958 *Winter’s Tale* saying to Jason Robards’ Polixenes, “Methinks, there is an air comes from her!” At which point Robards, who “could supply a variety of speeds and volumes at will,” slowly, softly farted.

The Stratford episodes comprise part of a fascinating motif of Canadian theatre history that runs through the book. Plummer’s career encompasses a Who’s Who of mid-century Canadian theatre. He began acting with Herbert Whittaker’s Montreal Repertory Company, followed by work at the Canadian Repertory Theatre with Amelia Hall and Sam Payne, summer stock with William Shatner and John Colicos, radio drama with

Andrew Allan, and rep with Kate Reid, Barbara Hamilton, and Eric House, all before Stratford’s inception. Despite his living as an expatriate, calling Brian Mulroney “Canada’s premier” and American Burt Bacharach “my fellow Canuck,” Plummer’s memoir remains a Canadian story: local golden boy makes good.

It begins and ends in Montreal where he was born and raised, a spoiled, bilingual only child, great-grandson of railway magnate and prime minister Sir John Abbott. Growing up wealthy “on a tiny atoll of privilege,” he felt “the gutters and pavements of the harsh outside world beckon.” He answered the call of the outside world, as have so many successful Canadian artists, appears to have narrowly avoided the gutter, and has manufactured a splendid career on stage and screen which has not slowed at all since the book’s publication. His triumphant Caesar in Shaw’s *Caesar and Cleopatra* at Stratford and on film; his voiceover work in the animated feature *Up*; his title role in Terry Gilliam’s *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*; his Academy Award nominated portrayal of Leo Tolstoy in *The Last Station*; his Prospero at Stratford in 2010—all since he turned 80—comprise just another remarkable chapter.



Exhibitions of Diversity

Scott Rayter, Donald W. McLeod, and Maureen FitzGerald, eds.

Queer CanLit: Canadian Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Literature in English: An Exhibition. Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library and Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies, U of T \$25.00

David Watmough

Myself through Others. Dundurn \$24.99

Reviewed by Andrew Lesk

The Thomas Fisher Library's recent showcasing of (English) Canadian literature's revered and forgotten or neglected works was both comprehensive and exceptional. This sterling exhibition, curated by Scott Rayter, Donald W. McLeod, and Maureen FitzGerald, consisted of not only books but also pamphlets, periodicals, and 'zines, with images of prominent LGBT figures on the walls. Yet it is the catalogue's essay, written by Rayter, that almost upstages the exhibit itself and deserves special recognition in amplifying what was on view.

In his introductory gestures to the problems of inclusiveness and canonicity, Rayter celebrates the exhibition's intent to "challenge the very category of the 'literary.'" (And so the display cases included works as diverse as Forever Comics' *Little Tranny Fanny* and the Queer Punk Collective's *Faggo*, amongst others.) This is wise, as LGBT groupings and various related queer incarnations means the marginal and the otherwise readily dismissed cultural productions.

Rayter's essay foregrounds a discussion of "que(e)rying" the nation, literary history, identity, translation, gender, and borders. The breadth and concision of his debate of these issues is enhanced by his eschewal of jargon that often plagues academic discourse, thereby evincing how the best writing is that which is considered yet relaxed. For example, Rayter says that selected writers in this exhibit "explore the relationship

between Aboriginality and sexuality, not only in connection to past—and present—abuses, but also in the way they work to overcome shame, reclaim the body, and articulate and celebrate sexuality on their own terms." This writing honours not only the subject but also the (lay) audience. It is welcome, too, that the discussion of "the Nation" begins with a deliberation on colonialism and First Nations, rather than with European foundational experiences that so often mark such examinations.

Rayter brings this topic to bear on Canada's literary history and the marginalization of various homosocial or homoerotic voices. The survey includes heretofore 'hidden' gems, such as Morley Callaghan's novella *No Man's Meat* (1931), and scans the century for overlooked works such as Barbara Gowdy's *Mr. Sandman* (1995). These texts are not included in the exhibition, though, as Rayter asserts that they "suggest other possible groupings than the one we have opted for." The works on display, then, are more often than not explicit about same-sex sexuality and written by queer-identified authors. Many exceptions follow, however: for example, straight-identified Anne Carson is included for her unique exploration of queer themes in *Autobiography of Red*, and (recently uncloseted) Douglas Coupland is excluded. Identity, for the curators, is an always-incomplete and contested category, and it is this quality that aptly suggests the appellation of "Canadian" itself.

The exhibition rightly includes attention to gender and its various manifestations that do not easily coincide with expected roles and with expressions of sexualities. The finest examples of these exhibited are works by Shyam Selvadurai, Shani Mootoo, and Timothy Findley, and in the anthology *Māka*. In the way that authors and works such as these eschew rigid binaries, so too do they cross borders in terms of what Rayter terms "classificatory regimes" that tend to

reproduce certain power relations that create various marginalities in the first place.

Rayter goes on to note what is in the cases themselves: two examples of pre-1975 material; two of poetry; four of fiction; two of drama; and one each of journals and zines (the latter ten consisting of post-1975 material). There are some welcome surprises: Joan Haggerty's *Daughters of the Moon* (1971); a poem by "Brother Grundy," aka Thomas Waugh, that appeared in 1954 in *ONE Magazine*; 1964's "The Upper Room" by "Peter Alann" (John Alan Lee), included in *TWO: The Homosexual Viewpoint in Canada*; and Brion Gysin, a poet who was recently included in John Barton and Billeh Nickerson's important anthology *Seminal*.

Rather than rambling through the cases, Rayter carefully places each work in its context, such as Gail Scott's examination of the connections between sexuality and space, or Michel Marc Bouchard's engagement with the performance of gender. Perhaps the most interesting of the exhibits (because of its relative novelty) is the case focusing on 'zines; Rayter says that they offer "spirited resistance" to the mainstreaming of gay and lesbian culture: "Campy, parodic, and raunchy, many of these 'zines are filled with images lifted from pornography, altering them and tagging them with new messages and meanings."

What's missing? Nothing, really, save for the section on journals. Vancouver's *Gay Tide* (1973-80) and Toronto's *Angles* (1984-92) deserve mention. And I'd like to think that George Isley's *Random Acts of Hatred* (2003) deserves its own case. However, one author does get his own case: John Herbert, for *Fortune and Men's Eyes* and his *Underwood*. A fitting tribute.

My final mention concerns the reproduction of various covers. The digital photography by Bogda Mickiewicz and Paul Armstrong, with the catalogue design by Stan Bevington, is simply astounding. The quality of the

exhibit's insight is indeed matched by its presentation. Congratulations to Rayter, McLeod, and FitzGerald for a revealing and affirming exhibition.

David Watmough must be one of Canada's most underappreciated writers. Now in his ninth decade, Watmough's gifts have not lessened, and this sterling, smart memoir is clear proof. He looks back through his life, more or less chronologically, to those "with the power in their personalities to define my own self and to give edge to the qualities that make and shape me." His encounters with various luminaries—Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Tennessee Williams, Carol Shields, Stephen Spender—serve less to illuminate "celebrity" than to shape, as Watmough says, his own talent. In writing of his friendship with Margaret Laurence, Watmough picks up Laurence's description of Canadian writers as a "tribe": "[H]er sense of the tribe is also concomitant, I'd suggest, with an awareness of life *outside* the tribe: that of the ardent but still unpublished writer, the uprooted anywhere, the orphan and the refugee." Watmough revisits and refreshes contours of not only Canadian writers but of the idea of being Canadian itself. Reading this fine volume will help to reassert, if I may, the qualities that make and shape *us*.

Walk the Line

Tony Rees

Arc of the Medicine Line: Mapping the World's Longest undefended Border Across the Western Plains. Douglas & McIntyre \$36.95

Phil Jenkins

Beneath My Feet: The Memoirs of George Mercer Dawson. McClelland & Stewart \$34.99

Reviewed by Samuel Pane

One of the most enduring elements in Canadian cultural topography is the metaphor of an invisible demarcation stretching the breadth of a continent from Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains. Sitting

Bull's Sioux knew it as the "Medicine Line" because only powerful "medicine" could halt charging US Cavalry hell-bent on revenge for the Little Bighorn. Competing empires and nascent nations recognized it as a political boundary imposed upon the 49th parallel of latitude by the force of arms, appropriations and treaties signed by bureaucrats an ocean away. It made a bold stroke on maps of the day. But on the ground, the prairie looked much the same as it had since the glaciers retreated. Enter the surveyors. From their astronomical tents, over two seasons in the field, they read the line in the stars.

If Wallace Stegner is to be believed their work, but not necessarily their names, must be commemorated. He writes, "there are no heroes among them. And they do not need to be separated by nationality, for it was of the essence of their work that it was international, co-operative, mutual." Unfortunately, it seems that Stegner was largely taken at his word. The men of the commissions have slumbered in the archive with no major disturbance since 1874. Enter Tony Rees and Phil Jenkins, very different writers of very different books, but identical in their determination to remember individual actors in a grand historical endeavour.

Like the surveyors who forded an ocean of native grass to establish their boundary mounds, Rees fords an ocean of archival documentation to plot a narrative for the Boundary Commission. His methodology is also as meticulous as that of the surveyors. With it he challenges another of Stegner's contentions that no geodetic instrument "lifts the imagination and achieves grace or weight as a symbol." Rees' portrait of transits, theodolites, sextants, compasses, and chronometers makes a pretty good case, even without the zenith telescope, the very key to the exact mapping of the 49th parallel. At one point Rees even takes pains to qualify his book's title. For exigency's sake both boundary commissions agreed that the

line should be an astronomical, rather than a mean parallel:

So establishing a series of exact measurements along the 49th Parallel and then, as it were, connecting the dots between them would produce a series of straight lines that, viewed from a larger scale, made a slightly irregular curve that was as close to perfect as it needed to be.

While assiduous in detail, Rees' narrative is never weighed down by technicalities. Explanations of "tangents" and "offsets" and "meridian calculations" are often couched in anecdote. For instance, Rees recalls how Chief Astronomer Samuel Anderson was able to synchronize the British Commission's chronometers in the wilds of the northwest. Because Greenwich time is essential to establishing precise longitude, a novel solution was required. Chief Commissioner Donald Cameron dispatched the Deputy-Surveyor General of Canada, Lindsay A. Russell, to Chicago for the express purpose of providing a time check via the recently completed telegraph line to Winnipeg. Some weeks after the transmission, it was blown down in a fierce snowstorm. This brief passage gives a taste of events to come. If there is a protagonist in Rees' account it is surely the brilliant and driven Anderson, who overcomes immense natural obstacles and the meddling of his principal antagonist, not an agent of Uncle Sam, but rather his self-important boss, Cameron.

George Mercer Dawson had to contend with his own burdens during the trek to the terminus at Waterton Lake. He too worked on the Boundary Survey as Chief Naturalist and Geologist. It was his duty to collect all manner of scientific data regarding the country near the line. This was an enormous responsibility for a graduate fresh from the Royal School of Mines, let alone one handicapped by fragile health and dwarfism. Yet his efforts resulted in the publication of a landmark tome, which ensured Dawson a respected place and

a distinguished career on the Geological Survey of Canada. This episode represents but one chapter in Phil Jenkins' biography, but it is lavishly detailed and supplemented with well-chosen passages from Dawson's field books, and haunting photographs from the expedition.

Earlier chapters describe Dawson's youth on the ramshackle grounds of McGill College, and his scientific education in Britain. Later chapters track Dawson's progress through the interior of British Columbia, and north to the creeks of the Yukon where his diligence is eponymously commemorated. Each is cleverly labelled as successive strata on a geological section diagram. Like Rees, Jenkins faced a daunting archive. Dawson's official papers and private correspondence fill shelves in Ottawa and Montreal repositories.

Perhaps the sheer volume of source material gave rise to Jenkins' self-described "unusual approach." Essentially, he writes a frame narrative wherein Dawson prepares a "memoir" from his field notes. Postmodern trickery is certainly not the motivation behind a project so lovingly rendered. Jenkins obviously lived with the documents until they seeped into his marrow. However, the reader will recognize Jenkins' hand in the insertions of Dawson's poetry. Dawson was not ashamed of this work; he proudly maintained membership in literary societies throughout his life. Although the odd snatch of verse appears on blank telegraph forms from the field, it seems that he drew a boundary between his professional writing and his literary aspirations. Indeed the original poems are conspicuously segregated in Dawson's archive, alongside unpublished drafts of his collected verse arranged thematically, and heavily edited by his sister.

Ironically, Jenkins is at his best when he allows his imagination to stray from the documents. He is entirely *with* Dawson at the summit of *Tsa-whus* where the geologist recognizes the marks of glaciation on a slab

of basalt as he is *with* Dawson near the Thompson River where the geologist reads the buckling and draining of the earth's crust. Ultimately, Jenkins transmutes a strange note from the end papers of one of Dawson's Boundary Commission field books into a dream and a poignant conclusion.

Burdened Paternities

Sarah Schulman

Rat Bohemia. Arsenal Pulp \$17.95

David Elias

Waiting for Elvis. Coteau \$21.00

Jonathan Bennett

Entitlement. ECW \$27.95

Reviewed by Neta Gordon

The reprint of Sarah Schulman's *Rat Bohemia*, an emotionally devastating portrait of the gay and lesbian communities in New York City during the height of the AIDS epidemic in the mid-80s, makes clear that the context for thinking about AIDS, and for thinking about New York, has changed radically. In the introduction she wrote for Arsenal Pulp Press' new edition, Schulman reflects on how the recent gentrification of New York has all but eliminated the neighbourhoods in which the counter-cultures of various marginalized groups—gay, ethnic, poor—flourished during the last century. Corporate interests, she laments, did the job that the disease alone could not do, and the East and West Villages are finally "clean." Schulman also alludes to another shift in the narrative of the city, noting that, "[a]t least 75,000 New Yorkers have died of AIDS . . . Where is our memorial? Our federal aid to survivors and damaged communities? Our Congressional investigation?" Since 9/11, the "ground zero" for the global AIDS epidemic has become, simply, Ground Zero, and the fact that the world *Rat Bohemia* presents does seem all too much like an odd historical phenomenon reflects distressingly on just

how much of the city's previous identity is buried underneath the rubble. The epicenter of AIDS has shifted too in the intervening years, and it is startling to consider what, if anything, Schulman's hilarious and grief-stricken representation of a vital but frantic gay community bent on loudly declaiming their agony and insisting on its profound and revealing difference from the various agonies experienced by straight America has to do with the Western World's response to the AIDS crisis in many African countries. A thematic crux of Schulman's novel—that parental indifference toward gay children and gay lives is as cruel and damaging as the murderous disease itself—is perhaps a useful point of comparison between these two phases of the epidemic. However, it likely does a disservice to Schulman's novel to consider the representation of parenting as symbolic of anything else, even of the West's paternalistic attitude toward “third world countries,” as the basic proclamation that most straight parents fail to love their gay children is so crucial to the book's emotional core.

The topic of the failure of parents is a useful entry point for a discussion of Bennett's *Entitlement* and Elias' *Waiting for Elvis*, neither one of which manages to match the vibrant style and emotional pitch of *Rat Bohemia*. Elias' novel wants to ask a question that takes up a consistent refrain of one of its characters: “That's the beauty.” Arty, owner of a roadside diner, answers almost every query regarding his (questionable) business choices with this refrain, thus turning all rational discussion on its ear. Throughout the novel, Elias challenges the reader to find beauty, irrationally if need be, amid so much ugliness. The narrative juxtaposes scenes describing the vile abuses suffered by Sal when he was a child, which have led him to live alone in some woods by the side of a highway, with the story of Betty, Arty's wife and co-owner of the diner, whose childhood experiences are also

unhappy if not nearly as violent as Sal's. Betty is also a parent to Tony, a young biker and emerging criminal who the narrator assures us has been rotten from the get go: “It's like he was carrying something around inside him right from the start, and all she could do was watch it grow in him along with his arms and legs and hands.” The morally simplistic representation of Tony is one of several similar characterizations, including that of Betty's mother (selfish drunk), Sal's mother (pathetic drunk), Sal's stepfather Harry (irredeemably vicious child abuser), and Arty (hapless husband, who conveniently dies making way for Betty's own development). Even Sal, the abused child now grown and instinctively able to see Betty's kindness, ultimately appears two-dimensional, as the representation of his horrifying existence is diminished by his overriding narrative role as social victim and pawn in Betty's redemption.

The first half of *Entitlement* is quite engrossing, as the gathering mystery about the whereabouts and “problem” of Colin, heir to Aspinall fortune, ripens. Stuart Aspinall, father of Colin and smoothly tyrannical head of this first family of Canada, enlists the help of a morally flexible cop and an unwitting would-be biographer of the family to find his son who has, inexplicably, fallen off the map. Colin's childhood friendship with Andy, a charity case with whom he attended school, becomes the linchpin of the investigation, as Andy's memories of Colin provide insight into why Mr. Aspinall has such dire concerns about his son's choices and how they reflect on his family (and here we come full circle to the main thematic thrust of *Rat Bohemia*—most straight parents simply fail to love their gay children). Along the way, some pithy pronouncements are made, and some entertaining, though heavy handed, imagery is used, in reference to Canada's unremitting provincialism and inability to recognize how the political power of wealth

operates: Mr. Aspinall is given to making comments like, “If Canadians have a common trait, it’s an ability to make nice—no matter what the cost,” and, in one scene, Bennett actually describes the call of the loon being silenced by the rich man’s gun. The latter third of the novel, however, is somewhat stilted, as plot machinations seem to overwhelm the complex relationships that have been developed.

New Voices Considered

Patricia Jean Smith

A Song for My Daughter. Oolichan \$22.95

Sheree-Lee Olson

Sailor Girl. Porcupine’s Quill \$27.95

Reviewed by Caitlin Charman

At its best, Patricia Jean Smith’s first novel, *A Song for My Daughter*, reminds us that we are all interconnected—with each other, and with place—that death spawns new life, and that in change we have nothing to fear but new growth. The novel opens with the birth of Joan Dark, a sort of mythological figure whose mother, a Salmon Woman named Vivian, narrates the story. Vivian interweaves tales from a variety of traditions with the personal narratives of the women Joan meets at a mental institution—Mary, a Carrier-Sekani woman who has been traumatized by the horrible death of her children, and Sally, the disaffected heiress—to explore the nature of what it means to return home. Smith’s greatest strength is in her evocation of place; her descriptions of British Columbia’s landscapes are frequently luminous.

For all its emphasis on stories and storytelling, however, the personal histories of the protagonists are decidedly lacking. Smith’s characters too often seem like shallow caricatures, and their psychological motivations seem either simplistic, or obscure. Sally, for example, is apparently driven to excess and mental illness because her parents left her in boarding school, which is juxtaposed rather

dubiously with Mary’s experiences at a residential school. Sally’s speech, with her frequent use of words like “cool,” sounds more like Paris Hilton than a middle-aged woman. Moreover, unlike Atwood’s *Alias Grace*, where the doctor’s obsession with his patient seems the natural outcome of, among other things, an overbearing mother and a repressive culture, the origins of Dr. Rivers’ neuroses—and subsequent need for a saviour-figure like Joan—seem rather obscure.

Furthermore, Smith’s use of Vivian as an omniscient and moralizing narrator is a rather high-risk device. We are sometimes rewarded with wise and humorous insights, but, at other times, Vivian’s interjections are intrusive, tedious, and overly didactic. Similarly wearisome is Joan Dark, through whose wide-eyed naïveté we are meant to question the trappings of the modern world, and the ecological devastation we have wrought on the landscape. Although the message is apt, Smith sometimes presumes her reader is as childlike as Joan.

For all the novel’s flaws, we are drawn into the women’s journey and entertained by the eccentric and humorous characters we meet along the way. Sally’s brief infatuation with a Robert Redford look-alike revivalist preacher is one of the highlights, as is Joan’s fantastical trip to the “Island of Bliss.”

In another debut novel, *Sailor Girl*, Sheree-Lee Olson chronicles the rollicking, tumultuous adventures of nineteen-year-old Kate McLeod, an art school student who puts away her books for the summer to work on the Great Lake freighters. Angstridden and endearingly flawed, Kate is reminiscent of some of the best in Canlit teenage-rebel heroines, from Del Jordan to Nomi Nickel. From her opening description of Kate as a girl who wears purple Doc Martens, “boots for standing your ground. For kicking. For running if you had to,” Olson captures the longing, confusion, excitement, and despair of a girl struggling to figure out who she is and desperately

trying to define herself against her conventional, middle-class family.

One of the book's greatest strengths is its honest evocation of a teenage girl's sexuality during the early 1980s, when "Lady Diana's face was on every [magazine] cover: the new patron saint of virgin brides." Whereas Lady Di's story makes her sister "giddy," it makes Kate, far from a virgin herself, "want to spit." Olson explores the full complexities of female desire, from the disturbing connection Kate makes between sex and violence, to Kate's later revelation that "Pleasure is seditious. A boy with an artful tongue can upset the social order."

Olson also provides an unflinching portrait of the working life of men and women aboard the Great Lake freighters. In poetic language, she expresses both the artistry and the raw physical brutality of hard labour, in a manner that recalls MacLeod's depictions of coal-miners and Ondaatje's portrayal of immigrant workers. Moreover, like the metaphysical poets, Olson yokes seemingly unlike images together to create stunning, original metaphors, and her descriptions of the freighters, the waterscapes, and the port towns around the Great Lakes are dazzling. Like Kate's photographs, time and again Olson succeeds in revealing, "a single element that she knew would telegraph the utter loneliness of the whole." Yet the novel's stark portrayals are tempered with a gritty sense of humour, as Kate stumbles towards acceptance and self-awareness. With this sensitively rendered picture of teenage life, Olson has announced herself as one of the new bright lights in Canadian literature.



One Event, Plural Views

Paul S. Sunga

Red Dust, Red Sky. Coteau \$21.00

Anand Mahadevan

The Strike. TSAR \$18.95

Mark Anthony Jarman

My White Planet. Thomas Allen \$22.95

Reviewed by Emily Johansen

Paul S. Sunga's *Red Dust, Red Sky* makes clear from its very first line that this is a novel about the difficulty of finding the truth—and whether such a thing exists in the first place—and the particular difficulty of figuring out family truths: "It was because I had no father that I asked questions." Set primarily in the late 1980s in Lesotho, *Red Dust, Red Sky* examines the ambiguous position of Asian South Africans during Apartheid. Kokoanyana, the novel's narrator, tries to puzzle out the mystery of her father while her family grapples with the incarceration of her half-brother, Sohrab, by the Lesotho Paramilitary Police. In both these contexts, Sunga suggests the near-impossibility of creating a singular, truthful narrative. Most of the chapters throughout the novel begin with Koko describing a photograph and then working out from that image to the story it attempts—and often fails—to capture.

This sense of multiple, conflicting narratives is particularly heightened in the final third of the novel when Koko, her dying mother, her spectral former step-father, her adopted brother—the child of a witch—the principal of the local school and the woman who looks after Koko and her brother must leave their home to avoid capture by the South African Defence force. During this journey, Koko gets at the apparent truth of who her father is—a story revealed in bits and pieces by her step-father and the local principal, both of whom have histories that intersect with Koko's father and the fight against apartheid that have been necessarily suppressed. Sunga imagines a world

that borders on the magical real—yet also indicates that the magical explanations that Koko offers for various events (the return of her presumed dead step-father and the end of apartheid among others) are perhaps a child's explanations of events that defy simple notions of cause and effect. Throughout the novel, Koko must come to grips with the difficult work that interpretation demands—interpretative work that, Sunga suggests, is perhaps made particularly complex in postcolonial places.

Like *Red Dust*, *Red Sky*, Anand Mahadevan's *The Strike* takes up similar questions about understanding events that resist easy interpretation. However, unlike Koko in Sunga's novel who must make sense of past events, Hari, the protagonist of Mahadevan's novel, must try to make sense of events as they happen and where, in fact, he is often at the center of the complexity. *The Strike* is set in southern India in the late 1980s. The novel is a *Bildungsroman* where both Hari and southern India are in the process of developing. While the novel is set forty years after Indian independence, Mahadevan suggests that the growing pains of independence are still being felt—especially in parts of India that exist in a much more ambiguous relationship with the seats of national and global power.

Hari is perpetually the catalyst that causes simmering class politics in Tamil Nadu to erupt. His preference for Hindi over Tamil leads to difficulties for his family within their community. These difficulties reveal to his family the narrative they have constructed about their own social position. The family believes themselves to be kind and philanthropic yet are oblivious to the social privileges they possess and that they seek to make invisible. Hari's accidental killing of a political protester makes these privileges even more visible. Hari is absolved of all responsibility for his actions—partly because he is a child and it was an accident but primarily because his

family has the ability to make it so. Indeed, strings are pulled to allow Hari and his family to emigrate to Canada in the aftermath of the protestor's death. Mahadevan imagines, then, a complex intersection between class and ethnic differences. And this intersection is shown to shape how ethical decisions are reached and how events are interpreted and understood.

Mark Anthony Jarman's short story collection *My White Planet* shares with *Red Dust*, *Red Sky* and *The Strike* a focus on how moments are interpreted. However, unlike Koko and Hari, the narrators of Jarman's stories are rarely as closely enmeshed with the events being described. The plots of Sunga's and Mahadevan's novels have profound effects on the two protagonists' lives and families and these characters feel the importance of these events. The common thread through the stories in *My White Planet* is the sense of alienation the narrators feel from the events they witness—even when they are participants in the story's action. In "A Nation Playing Chopsticks," the narrator observes that "It's not my country, but it is my country now, I'm a traveller in a foreign land and I relish that."

But what Jarman means by "country" here cannot be easily reduced to nation-state or even ethnic group—though those are certainly at play in these stories. Three of the stories are set during the Red River Rebellion. For these narrators—one of whom is an ambivalent participant in the Wolseley Expedition sent to quell the Red River Rebellion, the country that they do not belong to is both Canada and the military. Particularly in both "Swimming to America" (which depicts the hanging of Thomas Scott) and "Assiniboia Death Trip," the narrator views the rebellion but remains outside it—each focusing on their infatuations with Inside Woman in "Swimming to America" and Crow Jane in "Assiniboia Death Trip" respectively. In the stories set during the early twenty-first

century, the narrators' sense of alienation is often particularly driven by class or age—and sometimes both. Like in Sunga's and Mahadevan's novels, Jarman suggests the many conflicting points of view from which an event can be viewed—even from within a single person. Many of Jarman's stories resemble collages—introducing new events and voices into the primary narrative to point to the ways in which events which appear to be singular and linear are never quite so easily pinned down.

Negotiation and Dissonance in AC Lit

Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn

Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autoethnography. Wilfrid Laurier UP \$38.95

M.G. Vassanji

A Place Within: Rediscovering India. Doubleday Canada \$34.95

Reviewed by Ranbir K. Banwait

In *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autoethnography*, editors Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn offer an overview of minority literature's divergences from and convergences with multicultural writing and suggest that in all its creative potential, minority writing with anti-racism politics defies being categorized simply as multicultural writing. This argument rests on the premise that, as Smaro Kamboureli notes, minority writing that has been read as multicultural literature "fails to raise issues that are of minor concern to Canadians." Along the same lines, Ty and Verduyn also identify how many Asian Canadian writers have argued that minoritarian writing retains a necessary but evolving relationship to innovative literary modes of critique. Indeed, the term Asian Canadian itself connotes a theoretical pan-ethnic critical impulse that interrogates both the racialized social contexts from which this literature emerges and an ongoing engagement with

the potential for hybrid reinventions. Pan-ethnic Asian Canadian identification thus seeks to evade normative racial categories and instead includes a wide range of literature by minority writers.

This mandate, suggest Ty and Verduyn, is accompanied by a troubling of dominant readings of minority literature—readings of autoethnographic representation that assume an essentialist relationship between the individual and the community she is understood as representing. As Ming Tiampo suggests, although "[r]eclaiming stories of the past and rebuilding histories that were assimilated, obscured, and marginalized through . . . autoethnographic narratives was an important first step in cultural race politics . . . these voices risked being received as . . . exoticism." This collection of essays thus traces the different ways in which minority writers have increasingly complicated the relationship of the ethnic subject and autoethnographic representation. While *Beyond Autoethnography* suggests that Asian Canadian writers are now addressing questions of race and ethnicity in new, creative, and hybridized literary forms, that indeed, writers are moving 'beyond' literary expression as *the exposition of one's ethnic identity*, M.G. Vassanji's *A Place Within: Rediscovering India* complicates (and to a certain extent, contradicts) the shifts in representation that the essays in *Beyond Autoethnography* trace.

A Place Within offers a detailed account of Vassanji's travels in India. Imagined as a place of return, India figures prominently in the text as the site of nostalgic visitation. Over the course of a number of years, Vassanji conducts a traditional tour of the Indian landscape as a way of learning more about his family history through the purview of the architectural histories of places such as Delhi, Shimla, Gujarat and Kerala. Moving to and from these locales, the author also contemplates the communal riots that are taking place as he journeys

through India and explores his own family's spiritual tradition which relied on both Hinduism and Islam as sources of spirituality. The genre of travel writing here eclipses some of the pressing questions raised by critics such as Larissa Lai in *Beyond Autoethnography*. As Lai speculates in her essay "Strategizing the Body of History," she questions what part, if at all, self-reflexivity plays in the ethnographic method; we may also consider in what ways the narrating voice interrupts its presumed connection to India in *A Place Within*; does Vassanji at all challenge the autoethnographic mode?

The essay collection is noteworthy in its comprehensive analysis of a diverse range of literary texts, an analysis that involves a critical examination of autoethnographic writing in its complicity with and departures from *representations of otherness*. As Smaro Kamboureli asserts in "The Politics of the Beyond," if, as "beyond" seems to suggest, a critical move past autoethnography is both desirable and an inevitable critical shift, then "beyond" as a proposition may be both needlessly optimistic and point to a future field of study that *lies ahead of autoethnography*. It may be more relevant, therefore, asserts Kamboureli, to consider the "how" of autoethnography rather than imagining its "beyond." The question of how a text may or may not be read as autoethnographic is relevant here.

Vassanji, who was born in Africa, contributes to a growing work of diasporic literature that coalesces around literary explorations of identities stemming from Indo-African-Canadian descent. *A Place Within* draws our attention to the multiple ways in which a chronicle of personal and social history can be read. On one hand, Vassanji's travelogue is easily accommodated within a postcolonial model that features South Asian Canadian literature in a primary connection to the Indian subcontinent. Understood this way, the text can indeed invite an ethnographic reading.

That *A Place Within* is strangely reminiscent of V.S. Naipaul's similar returns to India reflects the convergences of diasporic literatures that write thematically around the ethnic minor's desire to recuperate a lost ancestry. The site of the autoethnographic text, its easy readability as postcolonial, and its eschewal of the racialized social contexts of Canada, places the text in an ongoing engagement with South Asian identities that are not limited to the minority condition in Canada. As Christine Kim observes in "Troubling the Mosaic," the ways in which a text travels "across a postcolonial international community may encourage ethnographic readings of ethnic literature"; this suggests that the critical shift in minority writing that *Beyond Autoethnography* traces has eluded Vassanji's work. That Vassanji's writing has thus far been received as postcolonial suggests that inasmuch as the text can be read as autoethnography, it characterizes a persistent inclination in both the production and consumption of South Asian Canadian literature to reflect autoethnographic impulses.

On the other hand, Vassanji's critical attention to his role as both outsider and insider to the communities he encounters in his forays through the Indian landscape, establishes what Paul Lai identifies in "Autoethnography Otherwise" as being "a more nuanced, reflective [literary project that] questions the division between insider and outsider, between subject and observer." In offering the underlying premise of his initial trips to India, Vassanji vacillates between providing an affective account of his return to his "roots [that] were there, amidst all that magic of India" and a critical, yet subjective, evolving relationship to the place. As he qualifies his desire to acquaint himself with his ancestral birthplace, the narrator suggests not only that his *relationship to the country has evolved*, but also that *India* is as much a product of artistic enterprise as it is a place of self-discovery.

This sense of ambivalence in Vassanji's writing accounts for the multiple readings (autoethnographic or otherwise) that the text generates through its self-reflexivity.

Both Eleanor Ty and Christl Verduyn's *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autoethnography* and M.G. Vassanji's *A Place Within: Rediscovering India* articulate relationships to autoethnographic representation that are mired in longstanding histories of negotiation. For the scholars of *Beyond Autoethnography*, literary innovation and shifting minority politics are transforming the field of Asian Canadian writing; for Vassanji, however, negotiation constitutes an ongoing engagement with postcolonial nostalgia. This disjuncture between the two texts suggests a dissonance in the field of Asian Canadian literature: a dissonance, in other words, within "*Asian*" as a space of [both] mobility and of becoming [and] as a geographical point of origin (*Beyond*).

Through German Eyes

Luise von Flotow and Reingard M. Nischik, eds.

Translating Canada: Charting the Institutions and Influences of Cultural Transfer: Canadian Writing in Germany. U of Ottawa P \$40.00

Reviewed by Jenny Bingold

As the subtitle suggests, this collaboration of German, Austrian, and Canadian scholars brings into focus literary translation as a prime medium of cultural transfer between Canada and Germany. Co-editor Luise von Flotow's opening essay claims that the role translation plays in all efforts of cultural diplomacy and the international projection of Canadian values and culture has long been ignored. She thus sets the frame for the whole collection as she highlights the importance of making translation visible as the basis of cultural transfer because it is only through translation that the majority of another country's reading public can be reached.

The fourteen contributors to this collection, however, seem to agree that the main reason for the outstanding interest of the German reading public in Canadian literature since the 1980s is not primarily located in an interest in Canadian culture and values, but rather in specific needs of the German target culture and the particularities of its book market. Thus, cultural transfer is certainly not as easy to guide and direct as Canadian funding institutions might wish for. Marketing strategies, thematic aspects, *Zeitgeist* or simply the readers' interest in a "good story" might in the end be more relevant factors for the dissemination of Canadian literature in Germany than the promoted images of Canada.

The question of why certain books have appeared in Germany at certain times is explored in Brita Oeding's and Luise von Flotow's essay on the success of Canadian women writers in Germany in the 1980s and 1990s. Here, the triumphal success of Carol Shields, Alice Munro and, of course, Margaret Atwood, is attributed to their specifically Canadian feminism, which was perceived as less aggressive and easier to identify with than contemporary German women writers' perspectives. Thus, Canadian literature filled a gap in the German literary market.

The challenge of translating cultural otherness is the focus of Eva Gruber's article on Native Canadian literature in German. Here, it becomes clear that the cultural stereotype of "the Indian" is still deeply ingrained in the German perception of Native Canadians. The mainstream reading public seems to be more interested in stories *about* Native Canadians than in literature actually produced *by* Native Canadians, a factor that— together with the problem of translating words in First Nation languages—has made it difficult for Native Canadian literature to enter the German book market successfully.

English Canadian children's literature is discussed by Martina Seifert as an

important factor for the perpetuation of stereotypical images of Canada. As Seifert shows, works that do not cater to the established wilderness/adventure stereotypes are indeed often not presented as Canadian at all in German translations. Nikola von Merveldt presents a different picture with regard to French Canadian children's literature. Here, the problem is not the distribution of stereotypical images, but rather a difficulty in entering the German market at all. Differences in the perception of English and French Canadian writing in Germany are also apparent in other fields. However, while English authors are unsurprisingly still much better represented in the German book market than their French Canadian counterparts, Andreas Jandl shows that especially contemporary Quebec drama is continuously gaining ground in German theatres.

Apart from these overview articles, other contributions provide detailed case studies of translations of particular works. Stefan Ferguson, for example, traces the translation history of Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* in order to come to an explanation of Atwood's outstanding success in Germany, while Klaus-Dieter Ertler discusses Antonine Maillet's *Pélagie-la-charrette* as an example of a rather troubled German reception. Moreover, several essays present translators' experiences during the actual process of translation. While in the case of Brita Oeding's translation of Stephen Orlov's *Sperm Count* the problems were mostly owing to institutional differences, Albert-Reiner Glaap presents translators' difficulties in translating linguistic particularities of English Canadian plays for the German stage.

All in all, the book will be a convenient source for scholars looking for factual information on specific dates of publication or theatrical first productions, as many of the articles present such data in extensive tables. Another advantage of the collection is the

detailed index. Moreover, the back cover's claim that the book is also accessible for lay readers is certainly true as theoretical and scholarly references are mostly kept to a minimum. Georgiana Banita's excellent study of the German reception of Canadian political theory is an exception. When read in its entirety, however, the book loses some of its impact because the articles sometimes overlap.

Seven Days in Detail

Nathan Whitlock

A Week of This: A Novel in Seven Days. ECW

\$26.95

Reviewed by Julie Cairnie

Manda, the hardened call-centre worker at the core of Nathan Whitlock's debut novel, *A Week of This*, enjoys reading. One day (Friday) Manda borrows "a novel they'd been talking about on the radio now, one about the building of the Bloor Viaduct in Toronto." While the librarian assures her, "That's a good one," Manda decides otherwise. The following Wednesday (the last day of this seven-day novel) she gives up on the effort to finish the novel, dismisses it as "condescending," and "break[s] its spine." Although the novel is never named, it is clear that Manda attempts to read Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion*.

Unlike Ondaatje's canonical novel of working-class life, in *A Week of This* there is no engagement with multiculturalism, no reflections on historical and mythical landscapes, and the novel unfolds as seven days. If anything, it feels like a return to Virginia Woolf's version of realist modernism. All sorts of seemingly banal details are recorded: the narratives of fishing shows, internal monologues regarding masturbation, the precise feeling of being inebriated and falling drunk in bed, the taste of cheap but satisfying Chinese food. *A Week of This* is an innovative novel that tries to explore the meaningfulness of the banal and

ultimately tries to rework the possibilities of Canadian fiction.

It is the details of the characters' lives that engage—or, alternatively, repel—the reader. Most of the details circulate around the experience of family, as siblings, children, and parents. Marcus, Manda's reprobate hockey-coach step-brother, refers to their family first as an "emotionally broken Brady Bunch" and then concludes that they are more like the "fucking Adams [sic] Family." Curiously, both of these examples are middle class and the families are unified and loving, despite their quirks. Can the same be said of the family at the centre of Whitlock's novel, a family comprised of dysfunctional parents and step-siblings? It is the representation of the white working-class family, parental anxiety, reproduction, and inheritance that are the main concerns of *A Week of This*. And it is the ways in which women and men experience family that is of particular interest. Thankfully, while the characters seem familiar, Whitlock does not engage in stereotyping. There is a complexity in these working-class women and men that is often absent in fiction.

Manda is thirty-eight years old, married to Patrick, and under some pressure to have a child. Based on her own parenting model, (her mentally disturbed and estranged mother, Shelly), she is not overly keen to succumb to this pressure. Manda wants to keep her distance from Shelly who lives on the outskirts of Toronto and spends most of her time in food courts stockpiling ketchup sachets and plastic utensils. Kelly is Marcus' current girlfriend, a young single mother with a history of being abused by boys. Despite Marcus' flaws as a lazy, middle-aged, and poorly dressed man, he is kind to her. Still, when we last encounter Kelly she is embroiled in a bitter dispute with her son's father, and Marcus has left her to deal with the mess. Other women are preoccupied with weight loss, the procuring of husbands and thus children, and the pleasures of Chinese food buffets. On

the surface there does not seem to be great depth to these concerns, but attention to detail reveals the complexity and (frankly) familiarity of their lives. Those of us who are more privileged may dismiss these as petty desires, but they are—whether social pressures or individual proclivities—at the core of many women's lives.

The men in the novel have their own concerns and anxieties when it comes to the experience of family. Patrick's one desire is to have a child, a daughter, who will complete their lives; his desire is for normalcy, but the recalcitrant Manda refuses that particular family narrative. The novel manages to keep these conflicting desires in balance, and Manda, although she admits to being "hard," is never reduced to a vile character because of her refusal of motherhood. Like his step-sister, Marcus refuses parenthood, or at least some version of it, when he gives up on the complications of his relationship with Kelly. It is not insignificant that Marcus is presented mostly in his dingy apartment, mostly alone, and sometimes masturbating. It is the perfunctory nature of men's sexuality that comes through at several points. Along with Patrick, though, there are other male characters with an enduring commitment to their children—some are transient characters and others are peripheral but significant: Manda's father, for instance, worries about bequeathing her something meaningful.

There is one other character in the novel—a shadowing and indistinct character—who preoccupies Manda's thoughts and drives her movements: her emotionally, physically, and intellectually damaged brother, Ken. Ken appears at the beginning of the novel as a sinister and threatening character to a woman who never again appears in the story. He is searched for, inquired after, and missed throughout the text, and finally enacts the most brave gesture of all. The rest of the characters seem to change too, but it is difficult to gauge how much and in what way. It seems that life goes on.

Articles

Sarah **Krotz** works on place, space, and mapping in early Canadian writing in English at the University of Alberta, where she is currently a postdoctoral fellow. Her work can also be found in *SCL/ÉLC*, *Canadian Poetry*, and Canadian Literature Centre's inaugural publication, *Transplanting Canada: Seedlings*.

Eli **MacLaren** is a SSHRC post-doctoral fellow in the Department of English at Queen's University. He has published in the *History of the Book in Canada*, the *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, and the *Journal of Canadian Studies*.

Michel **Nareau** avoir complété une thèse de doctorat à l'Université du Québec à Montréal ayant pour titre « Transferts culturels et sportifs continentaux. Fonctions du baseball dans les littératures des Amériques ». Il poursuit actuellement des recherches postdoctorales à l'Université de Moncton. Il s'intéresse aux revues culturelles québécoises et à la manière dont une référence latino-américaine est intégrée à la réflexion identitaire et littéraire du Québec.

Ching **Selao** est professeure adjointe à l'Université du Vermont, poste qu'elle a obtenu après avoir soutenu une thèse de doctorat sur le roman vietnamien francophone à l'Université de Montréal et complété un stage post-doctoral sur les écritures francophones de l'exil à l'Université McGill. Elle a participé à de nombreux colloques nationaux et internationaux et fait paraître plusieurs articles, entre autres dans *Études françaises*, *Présence francophone* et *L'Esprit créateur*. Elle est également collaboratrice au magazine culturel *Spirale*.

Bart **Vautour** is a doctoral candidate at Dalhousie University. He is currently working on his dissertation—"Writing Left: The Emergence of Literary Modernism in Canada." He has recently prepared a scholarly edition of Ted Allan's Spanish Civil War novel, *This Time a Better Earth* (1939), for the Canadian Literature Collection of University of Ottawa Press.

Josée **Vincent** is professeure agrégée in the Département des lettres et communications at the University of Sherbrooke. She is the co-editor of *Autour de la lecture. Médiations et communautés littéraires* (2002) and the author of *Les Tribulations du livre québécois en France (1959-1985)* (1997). She has written numerous articles on the history of the book in Quebec.

Poems

Marie **Carrière** teaches at the University of Alberta. M.W. **Field** lives in Calgary. Sharanpal **Ruprai** lives in Toronto. Patricia **Young** lives in Victoria. Paul Williams **Zits** lives in Calgary. Jesse Patrick **Ferguson** lives in Fredericton.

Interventions

See the *Interventions* section for the authors' biographies.

Reviews

Ranbir K. **Banwait** lives in Vancouver, BC. Jenny **Bingold** and Gordon **Bölling** teach at the University of Cologne. Julie **Cairnie** teaches at the University of Guelph. Caitlin **Charman** lives in Kingston, ON. Paul **Denham** lives in Saskatoon, SK. Mark **Diotte** lives in Langley, BC. Neta **Gordon** and Marlene **Moser** teach at Brock University. Crystal **Hurdle** teaches at Capilano University. Suzanne **James** and Jerry **Wasserman** teach at the University of British Columbia. Emily **Johansen** lives in Hamilton, ON. Jessica **Langston** lives in Navan, ON. Vanessa **Lent** teaches at Dalhousie University. Andrew **Lesk** teaches at the University of Toronto. Samuel **Pane** lives in St. Catharines, ON. Susan **Rudy** teaches at the University of Calgary. Lisa **Szabo** lives in Edmonton, AB. Kinga **Zawada** teaches at Ryerson University.



Canadian Literature

Call for Papers!!! Call for Papers!!!

21st-Century Poetics

This special issue will explore works of contemporary poetic experiment and the conditions within which they are produced. This can include written; digital/screen poetics; popular forms like hip-hop or other “insurgent” music like punk/indie/heavy metal; spoken word/oral.

Note: As this edition is dedicated to the study of structurally innovative texts, submissions that challenge the boundaries of the conventional paper will be considered as well as those taking more standard approaches.

» **Submission deadline:** December 1, 2010

New Directions in Early Canadian Literature

Much of the important scholarly work on early Canadian literature that began in the 1970s and 1980s has been supplanted by succeeding waves of postmodern, post-colonial, and now contemporary Canadian literary scholarship. But research in the areas of Colonial and Confederation literature has recently expanded in a number of exciting ways.

We invite articles on authors, texts, genres, and contextual issues that will not only help bring attention to the study of early Canadian literature, but will also help address the gap in scholarship.

» **Submission deadline:** June 1, 2011

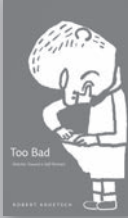
Call for Poetry: Everything New is Now and Again

Canadian Literature invites poetry submissions from across the range of poetic practice among Canadian writers. We are particularly interested in poetry that experiments with form, sound, and compositional method; poetry with social and/or political concerns; and poetry that engages or pushes beyond the possibilities suggested above. Emerging, mid-career, and established poets are all equally encouraged to submit. Please submit poems to a maximum of two pages in length. Attach a cover letter that lists a few of your most recent publications, if any. *Canadian*





POETRY FROM
THE UNIVERSITY
of ALBERTA PRESS



*"...the portrait that evolves
is multiple, protean,
impossible to pin down....
one more brilliant addition
to his oeuvre."*

— DOUGLAS BARBOUR,
EDMONTON JOURNAL

Too Bad

Sketches Toward a Self-Portrait

ROBERT KROETSCH

112 pages • \$24.95 paper • 978-0-88864-537-1



*"...tender, wise, beautifully
cadenced work which
embraces the reader
on every page"*

— DON DOMANSKI

Memory's Daughter

ALICE MAJOR

144 pages • \$24.95 paper • 978-0-88864-539-5



*Nothing escapes
mclennan's subtle gaze,
his flighty wit, his voracious
gleaning of experience.*

wild horses

rob mclennan

96 pages • \$19.95 paper • 978-0-88864-535-7

ORDERS 1.877.864.8477
INFO ccrooks@ualberta.ca

Harbour Publishing congratulates
DAVID ZIEROTH, winner of the
2009 Governor General's Literary
Award for Poetry



Harbour Publishing acknowledges the support of the



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts
du Canada

WWW.HARBOURPUBLISHING.COM

Unigraphics ad to be placed
here.

Keyline does not print.

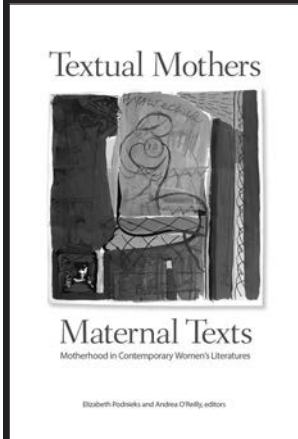


Canadian Women in Print, 1750-1918

Carole Gerson

\$85.00 Cloth • 978-1-55458-220-4

Canadian Women in Print, 1750-1918 is the first historical examination of women's engagement with multiple aspects of print over some two hundred years, from the settlers who wrote diaries and letters to the New Women who argued for ballots and equal rights. Considering women's published writing as an intervention in the public sphere of national and material print culture, this book uses approaches from book history to address the working and living conditions of women who wrote in many genres and for many reasons.

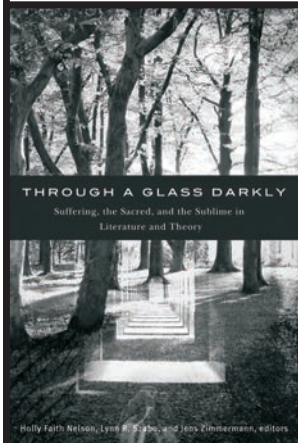


Textual Mothers/Maternal Texts Motherhood in Contemporary Women's Literatures

Elizabeth Podnieks and Andrea O'Reilly, editors

\$38.95 Paper • 978-1-55458-180-1

This collection focuses on mothers as subjects and writers who produce auto/biography, fiction, and poetry about maternity. The contributors examine the mother without child, with child, and in her identities as grandmother, mother, and daughter. They show how authors use textual spaces to accept, negotiate, resist, or challenge traditional conceptions of mothering and maternal roles.



Through a Glass Darkly Suffering, the Sacred, and the Sublime in Literature and Theory

Holly Faith Nelson, Lynn R. Szabo, and
Jens Zimmermann, editors

\$85.00 Cloth • 978-1-55458-184-9

International contributors address the ways in which literature and theory have engaged with suffering, the sacred, and the sublime, analyzing literary and theoretical texts from the medieval period to the postmodern age. This collection will be of particular interest to scholars of religion and literature, philosophy and literature, aesthetic theory, and trauma studies.

Wilfrid Laurier University Press

Order from your favourite bookstore or call 1-800-565-9523

Visit www.wlupress.wlu.ca for more information • Find us on Facebook and Twitter at [wlupress](https://www.facebook.com/wlupress)



Canada and Its Americas

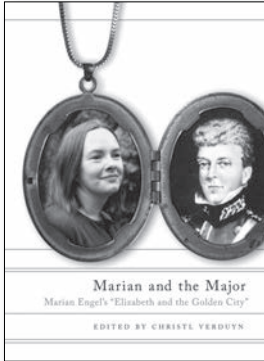
Transnational Navigations

Edited by Winfried Siemerling and Sarah Phillips Casteel

978-0-7735-3684-5 \$32.95 paper | 978-0-7735-3657-9 \$95.00 cloth

“Siemerling and Casteel break from the focus on U.S. research traditions and their relationship to Latin America, and draw attention to the overlooked subject of Canada. They examine theoretical issues involved in the inclusion of Canada into hemispheric work and present case studies that model potential methodologies for doing so. Further, the book dares to ask questions about the role of the nation within a transnational and hemispheric framework of study.”

– Claudia Sadowski-Smith, author of *Border Fictions: Globalization, Empire, and Writing at the Boundaries of the United States*



Marian and the Major

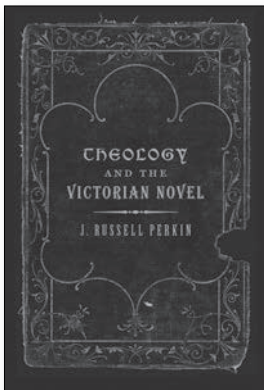
Marian Engel's Elizabeth and the Golden City

Edited by Christl Verduyn

978-0-7735-3634-0 \$85.00 cloth

“*Elizabeth and the Golden City* is a significant contribution to Canadian letters whose publication is not only warranted but imperative. Engel excels at conveying the dynamics of female identity, particularly the conflicting desires for autonomy and companionship. Since Elizabeth becomes involved in publishing, in the process of depicting her protagonist's life, Engel was also able to give a fascinating tour of Canada's cultural and political life in the second half of the twentieth century.”

– Albert Braz, University of Alberta



Theology and the Victorian Novel

J. Russell Perkin

978-0-7735-3606-7 \$85.00 cloth

“Perkin's central thesis, which pushes back against the unexamined secularism of so much modern criticism of Victorian literature, is highly original and very convincing.”

– Stephen Prickett, University of Glasgow

Write a Jackpine Sonnet and Win \$500

THE GEIST JACKPINE SONNET CONTEST



“The Jackpine
grows to any
shape that
suits the light,
suits the winds,
suits itself.”

—*Milton Acorn*

PART JACK PINE, PART SONNET, ALL CANADIAN

How to enter:

Write a jackpine sonnet and send it to *Geist* online or by post with a \$10 entry fee (includes a one-year subscription to *Geist*, digital edition).

Contest deadline: July 1, 2010

Winning entries will be published in *Geist* and *Poetry is Dead Magazine* and at geist.com and theyee.ca



Full contest details at
geist.com

What the jackpine sonnet is:

A sonnet-like poem.

Where it comes from:

Milton Acorn (1923–1986), a poet from Prince Edward Island, created the genre and named it after the jack pine, a tree that seeds itself in fire.

How to write one:

Write a poem with 14 lines, each line containing 7 to 13 syllables. But an odd number of lines is okay too. Apply the rhyme scheme of your choice, and in the absence of rhyme, use assonance.”

For more info on how to write a jackpine sonnet, visit geist.com.

GEIST
FACT & FICTION
MADE IN CANADA

Now available in the MLA series *Options for Teaching*



Teaching Life Writing Texts

MIRIAM FUCHS and CRAIG HOWES, eds.

“Howes and Fuchs have spanned a remarkable breadth in terms of where their writers come from, the sorts of schools they teach in, and the life writing issues on which they focus. The result is a veritable gold mine for both teaching and research.”

—*Susanna Egan, author, Mirror Talk: Genres of Crisis in Contemporary Autobiography*

“This book is an invaluable pedagogical and theoretical resource. The extensive bibliography . . . is truly impressive.”

—*MLR*

vi & 400 pp. • 6 x 9
Cloth 978-0-87352-819-1
\$40.00
Paper 978-0-87352-820-7
\$22.00

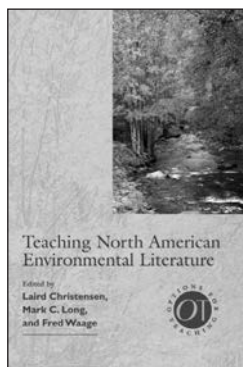
Teaching North American Environmental Literature

LAIRD CHRISTENSEN, MARK C. LONG,
and FRED WAAGE, eds.

“A landmark in environmental literary pedagogy.”

—*Louise Westling, University of Oregon*

From stories about Los Angeles freeways to slave narratives to science fiction, environmental literature encompasses more than nature writing. Today, writers evince a self-consciousness about writing in the genre, teachers have incorporated field study into courses, technology has opened up classroom possibilities, and institutions have developed to support study of this vital body of writing. The challenge for instructors is to identify core texts while maintaining the field's dynamic, open qualities.



ix & 502 pp. • 6 x 9
Cloth 978-0-87352-809-3
\$40.00
Paper 978-0-87352-810-7
\$22.00

Modern
Language
Association

MLA

Phone orders 646 576-5161 • Fax 646 576-5160 • www.mla.org



OTTAWA ARTS REVIEW

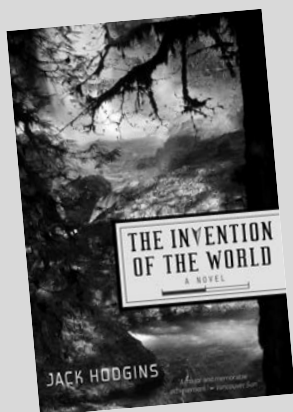
* * *

a student-run, not-for-profit publication
promoting literary and visual arts from
around the world

www.review.artsuottawa.ca

*visit us online for
submission guidelines and
event info*

New from Ronsdale Press



The Invention of the World

Jack Hodgins

With this new edition of the novel that introduced magic realism to Canada, readers once again have the opportunity to savour the humour and darkness of utopianism on the west coast. Wild Irish myth lands on the “Island” to be met by equally wild loggers, by the lovely Maggie Kyle and her entourage of misfits, by Becker with his tape recorder, and by the mysterious “Horseman,” a Doppelgänger, who arrives in a silver machine.

ISBN: 978-1-55380-099-6 356 pp \$18.95

Skin Like Mine

Garry Gottfriedson

A native poet like no other, Gottfriedson reveals what it feels like to be a Native Canadian in the changing landscape of band politics and environmental degradation.

ISBN: 978-1-55380-101-6 122 pp \$15.95

Strange Bedfellows: The Private Lives of Words

Howard Richler

Richler’s wit and erudition make his fifth book on language a must-have for all those intrigued by the louche reputation of the English language.

ISBN: 978-1-55380-100-9 164 pp \$19.95



Visit our website at: www.ronsdalepress.com

Distributed by LitDistCo