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Donna.Chin@ubc.ca
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Editorial

Literary History
Business Arising

Laura Moss

In November 2017, we ran a promotion for themed bundles of issues of *Canadian Literature* and called it a Black Friday sale. University of Saskatchewan professor Kevin Flynn responded to the promotion on our Facebook page saying, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, "Am I allowed to be slightly offended that *Canadian Literature* has adopted the VERY American 'Black Friday' tradition to peddle its wares? The optics on this one are not so good, methinks." I have to admit that my cultural nationalism was not on high alert when I agreed to the promotion. I was, however, thinking of how we need to sell some issues. Plain and simple. I was trying to "peddle" our "wares" because without peddling them, we won't be able to produce them. If you want to maintain a notion of the purity of academic inquiry without sullying it with financial details, then you might want to stop reading here. I can't ever stop thinking about the budget, though. It is fundamentally tied to *Canadian Literature*'s ongoing feasibility and that important question pressing upon this and other journals, especially in the humanities: What is the future of academic publishing?

As we begin to plan to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the journal in 2019, the pressures exerted on our operations in a shifting climate of scholarly publishing mean that we also need to stop and take note of what it is that the journal does, how it does it, and why we do it at all. We need to ask the big existential questions like has *Canadian Literature* run its course? Is it still tenable to have a journal dedicated to the study of CanLit in the twenty-first century? Is it really possible to host a bilingual journal in British Columbia? Is UBC still the place to do this? If we answer yes to these in principle, which for now I am, we need to ask further questions about content, production, distribution, and reception.

I'll begin with the *how* of production: How will we produce an academic journal in 2019 and beyond? When the journal began in 1959, a subscription model for a print journal made sense. Does it still? Print or digital? There is extraordinary pressure on humanities journals to follow the trend in STEM publishing and move towards Open Access (OA). What funding models actually work with OA? Do we consider author-funded article processing fees? Commercial platforms? What is gained and lost if we go in that direction? Who is willing to financially support the journal? Could we be more efficient in our production and operations? The circulation of academic knowledge, as it now occurs, depends on the dissemination of research in peer-reviewed forums. Is double-blind peer-review vital? Is it sustainable, given the amount of time and work it requires (both in-house and from the academic community)? How do we attract more submissions? Should we try to collaborate with a scholarly association? Given the volume of labour it takes to produce an issue, how long will it be possible to continue to publish four issues a year (approximately 800 pages)? Might we move to bi-annual production? Can we afford to continue mentoring undergraduate and graduate students in academic publishing at our current rate? How do we balance slow thinking with an obviously increasing desire for fast production? Is there another model of academic publication and dissemination we should look at?

Moving on to the *what* of content: What could the journal look like? *Canadian Literature* is distinct within the field in the quantity of reviews and original poetry it publishes in addition to articles, and in our production of the *CanLit Guides* (canlitguides.ca, an OA teaching resource). Is this the right combination for our energies and budget? What are the most productive kinds of articles? Are we missing some important scholarly conversations? What is the best format for an article? Is 7,000 words too short? Far too long? Is an article too linear? Should it be multidimensional on a digital platform? Interactive? Do we continue to try to do a large number of reviews of a cross-section of the books being produced in the country? Or, is that too ambitious given the sheer volume of creative and critical work out there each season? Again, when *Canadian Literature* began in 1959, it was possible to keep up with what was being published in Canada. It is now completely impossible. We are currently the third largest venue for reviews of Canadian writing in the country (behind the national newspapers). Is this sustainable? Would it be more productive to publish fewer but longer and more scholarly review essays? Should such review essays be peer-reviewed? Would that increase their cultural (and

academic) capital? Do we continue to try to cover a range of genres? Should we just move to reviewing criticism and leave poetry, drama, and fiction to other venues? Further, should we continue publishing original poetry? Are the poems really gravy to the meat of academic articles (the only things SSHRC currently funds us for)? Or, are they still a fundamental part of what we see as the ongoing mission of the journal—to unite creative and critical work? Do we keep building the *CanLit Guides*? With seventeen new chapters launching in spring 2018, should we celebrate what we have already contributed to Canadian literature classrooms and public pedagogy and leave it there? Should we invest in more chapters?

The questions in this long list are not rhetorical. These are real questions that we need to consider in the coming years. They arise out of some of the realities we are facing, mainly relating to lost subscriptions, labour shortages (the problems of relying on volunteer service for key positions from editing to reviewing), decreased submissions, and the pressures of OA, not to mention a field in turmoil. Nothing is off the table as we rethink everything.

Let me pause here on two of the reasons I am asking these questions now: Subscriptions and OA. With library and educational cutbacks in Canada and the US, our number of institutional subscribers has decreased by half over the past five years. This includes having subscriptions cancelled by large provincial and state universities and small institutions alike (including Douglas College, and the Universities of Illinois, Ottawa, and Regina, for example, as well as Athabasca, Concordia, Georgetown, Loyola, Rutgers, Thompson Rivers, and Trent Universities, among others). We have also lost subscriptions from many public libraries and from secondary schools across the country. Our number of individual subscribers is shrinking too. At the same time, though, our web traffic has increased dramatically. I am confident that people are reading the journal, just not accessing it in the traditional ways. Our downloads tracked from aggregators (EBSCO, ProQuest, and Gale) have increased greatly. Our top article has been downloaded over 7,000 times. Over the past two years, the *Canadian Literature* website itself has had almost three-quarters of a million (719,000) page views from 206 countries, proving the international reach of the journal (and the reach of the reviews in particular). Unfortunately, even with some ads on the site, web traffic does not pay the web developer's salary or production costs of the content. We made $35 last year from the Amazon links we have on book reviews.

We currently have a rock-and-hard-place problem when it comes to access: On one hand, aggregators pay us to disseminate our current content

and require that we have a moving wall of accessibility (currently a five-year paid-access embargo before issues become freely accessible on our website and join the fifty years of articles already archived), and, on the other hand, SSHRC (from whom we currently have an Aid to Scholarly Journals grant) is pushing for OA (with a limited embargo period). The two hands don't co-exist well as OA would cut deeply into our revenue streams from subscriptions and aggregators. It is a common misconception to think that a move to digitization will greatly decrease production costs. In fact, there is a great deal of unpaid academic and paid administrative labour required at each step of the production process of an issue of *Canadian Literature*, only a fraction of which involves actual printing and mailing of the print journal. If you think of the submission-to-publication process as fifteen steps, as I do, only the final two are cut with digitization. The rest of our budget would remain constant. Last summer, *Canadian Literature* participated in a study by the Public Knowledge Project at Simon Fraser University about alternative forms of funding for journals to go OA, including a variety of payment options. I will leave it to them to detail their findings, but suffice to say that the project showed that people are trying to find creative solutions to the question of how to make OA work financially. That said, we are still a long way off from that point on a practical, day-to-day operations level. Finally, with OA, I wonder if the complete loss of the material object of the print journal and the permanent archive of issues is inevitable. Budgetary issues, combined with a real shake up in the field at large, mean that it is time to rethink the core operational policies as well as the philosophical values of the journal. As we approach our 60th, I look forward to consulting with the editorial board and readers of the journal to discuss the questions laid out above and to figure out what the future could hold for *Canadian Literature*.

To look forward, it is often useful to look at where you've come from. This issue does just that. It also illustrates one of the reasons why reading articles bound and published side by side is productive. Although this is a General Issue, a clear theme has emerged—literary history matters. The articles span texts and topics from the 1930s to the present, and deal with a remarkable series of significant moments in Canadian history. They help us think about post-war cosmopolitanism, refugee narratives, Quebec separatism, Indigenous self-representations, and institutional formations in ways that nuance and complicate decades of cultural history in Canada. Our commitment to sustaining a space for such conversations in the future is why, for the time being, we keep peddling our wares.

Eli MacLaren

Copyright and Poetry in Twenty-First-Century Canada

Poets' Incomes and Fair Dealing

Twenty-first-century Canada has shifted its definition of copyright to give more weight to fair dealing and to users' rights. Copying original, recently published works without the permission of the copyright owner is more explicitly legal than ever before. The purpose of this essay is to discuss the significance of this historic shift for the unique case of poetry. What effect will the redefinition of fair dealing have on Canadian poetry? Should teachers provide free copies of poems to their students? How important are royalties to poetic creativity? How do contemporary poets make a living, and how does copyright contribute to it? From 2014 to 2015, I directed a survey of approximately fifty active Canadian poets to gather evidence on their sources of revenue and the utility of copyright as they see it.[1] The results indicate that, while the poets unanimously cherish moral rights in their work, the direct commercial benefits of ownership, as measured by the sales of authorized copies, are so low as to be almost negligible. Nevertheless, ownership retains indirect value, in that it provides a framework for the subsidization of poetry. In light of these findings, it is reasonable to advance a complex model for the production of Canadian poetry, one that prizes the established system of government grants for creative writing and authorized book publishing, but that also recognizes the good that comes of unauthorized copying. State sponsorship and fair dealing are compatible tiers in the economics of poetry.

The Legal Context

Jurisprudence and legislation have combined to reform the law of copyright in Canada. In 2004, the Supreme Court delivered a landmark ruling in *CCH Canadian Ltd. v. Law Society of Upper Canada*, stating that fair dealing is a

user's right that should not be interpreted restrictively. The judgment was remarkable but not radical: fair dealing had been an integral component of copyright law since the eighteenth century (Katz 97-104). In 2012, the Supreme Court confirmed the 2004 ruling in a suite of five further decisions that have been dubbed the "Copyright Pentalogy." Meanwhile, Parliament passed the Copyright Modernization Act, S.C. 2012, c. 20, which explicitly expanded the definition of fair dealing to include not only research, private study, criticism, review, and news reporting, but also parody, satire, and, most importantly for the culture of poetry, education.

Since its origins, copyright law has governed inherently conflicting interests—the private ownership of texts on the one hand, and public access to them on the other. Of the 2012 Supreme Court decisions, the one that touches poetry most closely is *Alberta (Education) v. Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency (Access Copyright)* [2012] 2 S.C.R. 345, which concerns teachers' photocopying of parts of textbooks for use by their students. Although the Court confirmed the wide scope of fair dealing, it did so in a manner that nevertheless manifests the different interests inherent in copyright. In 2004, a dispute broke out between the provincial ministries of education and Access Copyright, the collective of authors and publishers that licenses educational institutions to copy its clients' works, over the rate of the tariff that schools would pay to cover teachers' photocopying practices. At the Copyright Board of Canada, Access Copyright pressed for the higher tariff, while the education ministries countered that the photocopying constituted fair dealing. The Board found in favour of Access Copyright. The Supreme Court overturned this ruling in the 2012 decision, but not unanimously, and the splitting of the nine judges (five to four in favour of the teachers' fair dealing) attests to the fact that the law will always be a practical negotiation between ownership and use, never an absolute triumph of one over the other.

Delivering the majority opinion, Justice Rosalie Abella identified the photocopying with its final goal, the students' reading: "[T]he teacher's purpose in providing copies is to enable the students to have the material they need for the purpose of studying. The teacher/copier therefore shares a symbiotic purpose with the student/user who is engaging in research or private study" (sec. 23). In a memorable phrasing, she further clarified that "the word 'private' in 'private study' should not be understood as requiring users to view copyrighted works in splendid isolation. Studying and learning are essentially personal endeavours, whether they are engaged in with others or

in solitude" (sec. 27). Finally, she emphasized the barrier of price to access: "If such photocopying did not take place, it is more likely that students would simply go without the supplementary information, or be forced to consult the single copy already owned by the school" (sec. 36). In contrast, the four dissenting judges, led by Justice Marshall Rothstein, insisted that the photocopying constitutes "instruction or 'non-private' study" (sec. 43) and that the adjective "private" cannot be evacuated of meaning (sec. 47). Furthermore, he underscored the importance of compensating authors and publishers for their publications:

> On the premise that the same class sets of books will be subject to numerous requests for short excerpts . . . it was not unreasonable for the Board to consider . . . that from a practical standpoint, the schools had the option of buying more books to distribute to students or to place in the library or in class sets instead of photocopying the books. (sec. 56)

The struggle over the meaning of "private study" has become a moot point with the addition of education to the list of fair-dealing categories, but it is important to understand that *Alberta (Education) v. Access Copyright*, even as it shored up fair dealing, registered a strong concern for the other principle, too—that authors and publishers should be rewarded for their labour.

While the judgment in *Alberta (Education) v. Access Copyright* is applicable to the teaching of poetry, it concerned textbooks in general. A more specific controversy over the relation between educational copying and the creation of poetry flared up in the winter of 2017 around Professor Nathan Brown, director of the Centre for Expanded Poetics at Concordia University. According to *The Globe and Mail*, Brown was using a high-end Atiz scanner to digitize entire books by a number of contemporary poets, including Dionne Brand, Anne Carson, Jeramy Dodds, and Claudia Rankine, and then uploading the files to the Centre's web page, where they were freely accessible to the public (Taylor). The Writers' Union of Canada alerted the publishers, who complained to Brown. Brown acknowledged that the Centre was in the wrong. He immediately removed the files and purchased five copies of each poet's book (one for each student in the Centre's reading group). Indeed, a court would probably have dismissed a fair-dealing defence, given the quantity of the copying (whole books) and the character of it (not restricting access to students). What is of most interest, however, is the assumption on the part of the publishers, the Writers' Union, and *The Globe and Mail* journalist that the unauthorized copying deprived the poets of a significant portion of their livelihood:

> "I find it distressing," said Alana Wilcox, editorial director at Toronto's Coach House Books, the publisher of two of the books. "Poets make so little money . . . making their work available for free on a public website feels very disrespectful. . . . These aren't tenured professors with salaries; these are poets who are scraping by, getting no compensation for their hard work." (Taylor)

The logic espoused here is a common one, namely, that book sales enable the creation and publication of poetry. In removing the digital files and buying copies of the poets' books, Brown appears to have accepted such logic. *The Globe and Mail* report grows heated at its end in its denunciation of "scofflaws in the universities" and its ironic references to "'fair dealing,'" always in scare quotes. However, this indignation is precisely what needs to be examined more closely. Does unauthorized copying threaten the livelihood of the poet?

The legal struggle over this question is anything but resolved. In July 2017, the pendulum swung dramatically back toward private ownership when the Federal Court of Canada decided *Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency (Access Copyright) v. York University* [2017] F.C. 669. This case also centred on a tariff, this time for the copies (photocopied coursepacks and digital copies posted to course websites) that university students could be expected to use during their degree. Access Copyright had proposed an increase in the tariff from $3.38 to $45.00 per full-time student, which the Copyright Board cut back to $26.00. York University countered that educational copying according to its institutional guidelines—10% of a work, a single article, a complete painting, or a whole poem, etc.—falls under fair dealing. Burdened with massive amounts of evidence and contradictory interpretations of it, the court nonetheless swept York's defence aside, criticizing the guidelines as arbitrary and the university as lax in its enforcement of them. Judge Michael L. Phelan ruled that the tariff is mandatory and that budgetary goals, not educational ones, had led York to evade it. Furthermore, Phelan accepted the logic that unauthorized copying would destroy writing and publishing: "It is almost axiomatic that allowing universities to copy for free that which they previously paid for would have a direct and adverse effect on writers and publishers" (sec. 25). Here, again, we would do well to pause, to test the assumption. Does fair dealing have this adverse effect? At the time at which this article is being prepared for publication, it remains to be seen if Judge Phelan's ruling will stand.

Economic Models of Poetry

The extent to which poetry can be explained economically is itself a profound question. On the one hand, some might argue, poets defy the market. They scorn writing for money. Poetry is escape from the very

mindset of wage labour. As one poet put it in response to our Judging Copyright Survey (JCS), "Depuis toujours j'écris, non pour gagner ma vie mais surtout pour ne pas la perdre à vouloir la gagner" (JCS).[2] If the world turns its back on poetry, poets return the favour, looking to posterity for recognition. In the words of Al Purdy, the ivory carver dies, but "After 600 years / the ivory thought / is still warm" (70). This anti-commercial attitude seems essential to poetry, at least for the poet. No amount of money can guarantee the creation of a good poem. No economic inquiry can ever really get at what it is.

On the other hand, others might say that poetry is not outside the economy. Every poet must make a living. Creation depends on propitious circumstances; it thrives precisely on concentrated wealth, if not personal then regional, industrial, and social. If Shakespeare succeeded in the London theatres during the long reign of Elizabeth I, his famous example represents the ways in which poetry benefits from proximity to kindred talents, substantial audiences, and economic power. Poetic creativity needs space and freedom, yes, but it also needs an income: private inheritance, patronage, sinecure, royalties, compatible employment (teaching), institutional residency, arts grants, prizes. It is worthwhile, at least for the scholar, to step back from the purely literary study of poetry to consider the material conditions in which it flourishes.

The simple model of copyright, from the owner's perspective, is that property in published work motivates authors, since it entitles them to derive revenue from the further copying of their work. Distinguishing between individual copy and intellectual content, John Feather's definition incorporates this rationale: "The purpose of copyright law is to define the extent to which the owner of the physical object may legitimately make use of the content while ensuring that the creator and owner of the content (who may not be the same person) are appropriately rewarded" (520). It is attractive to conceive of the market as naturally rewarding poets for their work, but if contemporary poetry is to be discussed economically, our theoretical model of it must move beyond the assumption that demand drives supply, for the simple reason that poetry generally does not sell. Although objections can be raised to this generalization—Byron's books, *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, books for young children—on the whole it holds that original poetry by living poets has a tiny market. According to Sarah MacLachlan, publisher and president at House of Anansi Press, publishing a book of new poetry is always a clear financial loss. Anansi produces a few of them each year for

reasons of prestige and out of loyalty to its own tradition as a publisher, using money derived from more lucrative titles and from grants. It is an old story in Canada. "A sale of 300 or 400 copies of a new volume of poetry is probably all that is to be expected," observed John Gray, publisher at the Macmillan Company of Canada, at the Canadian Writers' Conference in 1955 (63). He continued: "[o]f two volumes of poetry imported from England last season we managed to sell in Canada four and sixty-seven copies respectively; the second volume was by an exceptionally distinguished figure . . . In the face of such indifference what justification can there be for publishing poetry? Certainly no commercial justification" (64). Nevertheless, a few years later, Gray would publish James Reaney's *A Suit of Nettles* (1958), a book that would go on to win the Governor General's Literary Award for poetry.

In their recent book of interviews with writers, *Producing Canadian Literature*, Kit Dobson and Smaro Kamboureli examine the economics of poetry as well as fiction and non-fiction in contemporary Canada. The centrality of grants and prizes to poets' careers is one theme that emerges in the collection, although the administration of such awards is highly contentious among those interviewed. Dissatisfaction with the conventional marketing of poetry is another. For example, Erín Moure emphasizes the vital role of the reader in the life of poetry—"This person is part of your book, because without this person, it's no different than a block of wood" (108)—and goes on to criticize the "early industrial model of production" that has characterized writing in Canada. She looks forward to

> a new model that takes into account electronics, that crosses borders, and that engages the young writers coming up so that they have access. Then there will be a public, rather than this industrial model that has poets being anxious over this object [*holds up a book*]. And anxious about whether their bog-standard book will get on a shortlist. (110)

This veteran poet's remarks prioritize access over conventional sales.

Dobson and Kamboureli's interview with Ashok Mathur throws commercial publication into relief through the alternative of the chapbook. The modern chapbook—the small, often self-published edition produced out of relatively uncompromising artistic or political ideals without regard for market value—established itself as a standard form in the twentieth century. In print runs of two hundred to five hundred, Mathur published a dozen chapbooks under his disOrientation imprint in Calgary from 1992 to 1997, including writing by Robert Kroetsch, Roy Miki, and Hiromi Goto. Mathur describes his desire to break away from the meagre financial cycle that characterizes the

mainstream publishing of poetry: "If your book is having print runs of five hundred or a thousand, which is pretty standard, then you're making a dollar to a dollar fifty a copy. Over the course of a three-year run, you might be making maybe $500 or $1000. Is it worth holding out for that money if you're a poet?" (43). A thousand dollars over three years is not enough to pay the rent. It is not enough for groceries. The essential goal of Mathur's chapbook publishing was not financial but artistic/social—the creation of "innovative bookworks" (42) and the "distribut[ion of] them more directly and freely" (43).

Such initiatives litter the history of Canadian poetry. Other examples of chapbook series are the Ryerson Poetry Chap-Books, New Writers, Fiddlehead, Carillon, A-Z, Immersion, New Brunswick, Devil's Whim, Tuatara, and Staccato Chapbooks. Many poets publish small collections outside of any such series. Many others have autofinanced magazines and full-length books. All of this activity questions the extent to which poetry depends on any calculation of revenue from the sale of copies. Someone might object that a thousand dollars over three years is better than nothing. This is true, all things being equal, but what if earning revenue from the sales of books and reaching an increased audience are not mutually exclusive? After all, an audience comprises different tiers of users. Connoisseurs tend to be eager to buy a book, while uncommitted students tend to be loath. The current fair-dealing provisions entice the latter without necessarily replacing the former.

In rethinking the model of publishing poetry, it is also crucial to remember that copyright law provides for moral rights as a distinct category from economic rights. Moral rights are a category that fair dealing does not disturb. Sections 14 and 28 of the Copyright Act, R. S. C. 1985, c. 42, define moral rights to include that of attribution (the right to be acknowledged as the author of one's work by name or pseudonym or to remain anonymous), integrity (the right to see one's work published whole and unadulterated), and association (the right to prevent one's work from being used in connection with a product or service that damages one's reputation). Even if copies are made under a fair-dealing exception, then, the owner still has the power to control aspects of the work through his or her moral rights. Another series of interviews, conducted by the organization Canadian Women in the Literary Arts (CWILA), provides evidence that poets are used to distinguishing their moral rights, which they hold dear, from their economic ones, which can often be dispensed with. For example, Sachiko Murakami grasps the division between creative reuse and plagiarism:

> I'm more interested in the commons than the marketplace. The idea that I own a poem is a weird concept to me. It has no life until a reader comes along and we create meaning together (another collaboration). . . . I don't advocate for everyone just ransacking everyone else's language, though. Sometimes crossing that divide can be an act of aggression.

This commentary may appear paradoxical, since Murakami rejects private ownership of a poem in one breath only to assert the individual possession of language in another. It is quite sensible, however, as an articulation of moral rights. It is fair for others to take Murakami's poem, make their own meaning from it (as readers), and even make it into a new poem of their own (as poets), but it is not acceptable for them to claim her original poem as their own, or to pass off a deliberately adulterated text as hers.

Finally, a revised model should recognize the extent to which the various roles in the life cycle of poetry—writers, publishers, teachers, librarians, students—are more often than not interdependent and entangled rather than discrete. University poetry instructors are often active poets themselves, as will be shown below, and Laura J. Murray and Samuel Trosow recognize complexity such as this when they urge us to move beyond the trope of a battle between owners and users: "People learn to create by seeing, imitating, experimenting, listening, practising, and watching . . . creators are the most ardent consumers of the arts. They need ample and affordable access to the works of others" (xi). The challenge, then, is not to wish for one group, poets or professors, to vanquish the other, but to strengthen the bridge of understanding between them.

The Survey

Understanding of this kind motivated my dual-purpose survey of contemporary Canadian poets, which proceeded under the working title, "Judging Copyright: Legal Pressures and Literary Activity in Canada." Its first purpose was to gather information about the value of copyright to their writing careers, both their opinions and some quantifiable data, in order to learn about the issue from the writer's perspective. The second purpose was to reach out to them as a representative of their audience—both as a spokesperson for the university educator's interest in fair dealing and as a real reader of their recent work. The goal was thus to open a dialogue between writer and reader, to contribute actively to the social process of negotiating copyright in contemporary Canadian poetry.

My research assistants and I identified poets for the study using two sources: the annual *Best Canadian Poetry in English* anthologies edited by

Molly Peacock, and Andrew David Irvine's bibliographies of the winners of the Governor General's Literary Awards. For the most part, we selected poets with two or more full-length collections. The reason for this choice was our desire to understand the position of accomplished writers who have an appreciable readership and some commitment to the traditional printed book. Peacock's anthologies are based on Canadian literary magazines, and relying on them thus also slants the survey toward print. We do not pretend to have captured the views of those working only in other media such as born-digital or installation art. Probably because of the two-book threshold, the average age of our poets is fifty. Moreover, only seven francophone poets responded to the survey; our study thus mainly covers English Canada.

We met weekly to discuss our reading of a poem and then contacted the author to share our interpretations and introduce the survey, which was administered online. The respondents have been anonymized to protect their identities and a draft of this article was circulated electronically to all for their approval prior to publication. Of the seventy-four poets identified, nineteen responded to the survey in 2014 and twenty-nine to the revised survey in 2015, totalling forty-eight respondents. This is by no means an exhaustive record, but it is a fair sample. Interpreting poems and composing personalized letters was a slow but effective way to proceed. Although we failed to entice some big names, the response rate was 66%, and the most gratifying result of the project was our exposure to many brilliant new poems, which we had the pleasure of discussing with the authors themselves, and which I have since incorporated into my teaching.

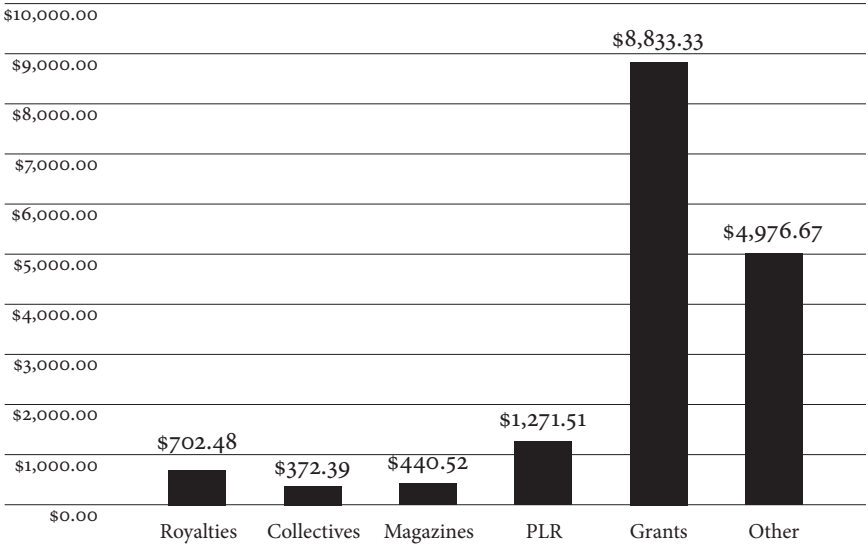
In the survey, we asked respondents to estimate the percentage of their income that comes from various sources, starting with royalties and similar payments. Some of these sources are largely commercial (from sales) and others mainly interventionist (from subsidies), although the two categories overlap. Royalties, of course, are the fraction of the retail price of a book that the publisher pays to the author each time a new copy is sold. They depend on the sale of authorized copies, which generates income for the original publisher. Payments from magazines are similar. A magazine pays a contributor once for permission to publish his or her work—thus recognizing creative property—and then recoups its costs through subscriptions. Canadian literary magazines are also subsidized by governments, universities, and private endowments. Payments from collectives like Access Copyright are more sophisticated but are still based on the commercial logic of consumers paying for their use. In addition to

these mechanisms, there are other streams of revenue less tied to the sale of copies. The grants administered by the Canada Council invest in the creation of new literary works. Poets apply for them, and juries adjudicate and rank the applications on merit. The grant is meant to stimulate creation; it is dispersed in advance, whether a work goes on to sell ten copies or ten thousand. Still, a poet's publication record is a salient factor in the adjudication of his or her grant application: the better one's CV, the more one merits the grant. It might be added that, by stabilizing both writer and publisher, the state aims for indirect returns on its investment in the form of taxes. The Canada Council has run many granting programs for writers, covering travel, translation, public readings, and residencies. It also administers the Public Lending Right (PLR) Program, which compensates registered authors according to the frequency with which their books are found in public libraries across the country. In 2015-2016, the PLR Commission paid out approximately $9.8 million to 21,000 Canadian authors, with per-author payments ranging from $50 to $3,556 at an average of $568 (Public Lending 19). The PLR might be likened to commercial publication in the sense that its rewards are indexed to use rates, but it is essentially a subsidy because the government allots the funds that it pays out each year. Finally, literary prizes are also based on merit and emanate from public or private endowments. In contemporary Canada, the book trade and government funding criss-cross each other at many points.

On average, the surveyed poets reported making less than 2% of their annual household income directly from commercial sources (see Chart 1). Royalties, magazine payments, and payments from collectives added up to 11% of the poets' income earned as writers. Since their average income as writers ($13,121.80) was only a fraction (18%) of their and their spouses's average combined total household income ($72,417.39), however, these sources yielded only 1.98% of their living. Grants, PLR payments, and other non-commercial sources amounted to 89% of their income as writers, but still only 16% of their total household income. These quantities, although less exhaustive than suggestive given the modesty of the survey, nevertheless confirm how little poetic creativity derives from the free market. Poets depend overwhelmingly on various forms of support, from other personal income to grants and prizes.

In their qualitative comments to the survey, the poets rejected the idea that money motivates, limits, or permits their writing. "I don't write for money—I've written consistently when income has been high or low," noted

Chart 1
Income Earned as Writer: Annual Averages



This chart breaks the poets' average earnings from their writing down into different sources. The "magazines" category includes one-time fees charged for inclusion in an anthology. The "other" category includes revenue from public readings, editing, jury work, residencies, and literary prizes, many of which are funded, like the Public Lending Right payments and creative writing grants, by government (JCS). The chart is based only on the revised survey from 2015, which divided income streams more precisely. For this reason, these columns will not add up to the average income for writers reported above ($13,121.80), which was calculated from both the 2014 and 2015 surveys.

one poet (JCS). We asked them whether royalties, magazine payments, and payments from copyright collectives are an important factor in enabling them to write poetry, and their answer was negative: the average and median answer was "not really" (2 out of a 5-point scale), and the mode "definitely no" (1 out of 5). At the same time, however, many poets described the validation that even a little money brings with it:

> These amounts may not be large, but they do help out, practically; moreover, they give me a sense of fair treatment in situations where other people will be making money (however small an amount) because of the publication of my work. There is a certain amount of validation in making money for something, even if it's a small payment, that allows you to say to your family (and yourself!), see, what I do is important. (JCS)

Another poet wrote, "[S]ometimes my royalty cheques, especially for older books, can be as little as $14.00. Still, it is good to know that books are being bought years after they were written" (JCS). Another pointed out that "[i]t is valuable to be compensated but also valuable to know that your books are being used" (JCS). Clearly, the quantitative measure of income does not tell the whole story. Money has a non-monetary value, too.

We polled poets on the interrelated issues of ownership and access through several questions. Would they approve if they knew that a school or university instructor was distributing unauthorized copies of their work to students? Would it be acceptable to them if another poet or another artist used their work in his or her creative process? Have they ever come across their work posted online without their permission and how did they react? In the aggregate, their responses expressed wariness. On average, they were "neutral" (3 out of 5) on the prospect of finding their work used without their permission in another medium, such as a film. They did "not really" (2 out of 5) approve of unauthorized copying, whether by an educator, a fellow writer, an anthologist, or a blogger.

Individual comments ran the full gamut. On the question of classroom use, there were strong statements for ownership and the seeking of permission:

> It is of utmost importance to me that I retain copyright of my own written work, and that there are laws in place to make that copyright meaningful in a practical, economic and moral sense. . . . I do not think it's unduly difficult for people, whether they are educators or creators or others, to seek permission (and where appropriate, to offer compensation) to use another's work. (JCS)

This measured position aligns with the stance of the Writers' Union of Canada, as laid out on the Union's website. Others wrote in favour of free use and the exposure this promotes. One underscored the prevalence of subsidy-based economics over sales: "Poets have ample opportunities to earn income from grants, prizes and author appearances. There is so much public funding available to support poetry that it is shortsightedly selfish to insist on payment for work used in a public education setting" (JCS). Another identified him/herself as both creator and user, making explicit the entanglement of positions noted above:

> As a university teacher, I have often photocopied pertinent poems by way of illustrating an instructional matter that has come up in class. I can hardly complain if someone used my poem in a similar way. No sales are lost in this process, in my judgment: in fact, students introduced to a writer's work via poems handed out in class frequently seek out books by that poet, i.e., book sales can result from such free distribution of samples of an author's work for pedagogical purposes. (JCS)

Given that twenty of the forty-eight respondents identified education as their principal sector of employment, it is not surprising that several expressed this sort of ambivalence: "I stand on both sides of this argument" (JCS).

On the question of creative reuse, the poets distinguished between acknowledgement and plagiarism. "It would certainly depend on the degree of reworking," responded one, "but I have no problem with this in principle, as long as best practices are followed. It must be either relevant or transformative" (JCS). A second answered, "if I use any part of another work I always make a note of it at the end of the poem or at the end of the book. I also acknowledge when I write 'after' another poet's poem" (JCS). Wrote a third, "it wouldn't be a problem if I were properly credited. I want my work read" (JCS). "This is how art is made in general" (JCS), observed a fourth. The tenor of these remarks is that artistic reuse is acceptable on condition that due credit is given. One case came up, however, in which a hypersensitivity to intellectual property encroached even on the best practices of "writing after":

> On two poems in my last book I had included short epigraphs with full attribution. One was a line from Cocteau's *Orphée;* the other was a brief excerpt from a microscopy text. To my amazement, the publisher asked me to drop them because there was no time to ask for permissions. . . . The changes I had to make were damaging to both poems, and I regret them. (JCS)

Another respondent queried the limits of acceptable reuse: "I work quite frequently with found material and always cite my sources but am never entirely certain how much material can be borrowed/transformed, what constitutes 'borrowing' versus 'adaptation'" (JCS). A particularly frank response delved into the subconscious layers of creative reappropriation: "I feel a lot of anxiety of influence. Like, you finish a poem, and you really like it, and then a month later you're reading somebody's book from a few years ago, and you're like, oh. Drat. Now I know where that trick came from. That's not a bad thing, necessarily" (JCS). Acknowledging one's fellow poet is a good rule, but it is only a convention. Because language is social, poetic creativity will cross the asserted perimeters of private property from time to time.

Reactions to online copying ranged from lukewarm to cold. A lukewarm response ran thus: "I have found several of my poems reprinted via Tumblr and other web sites. I don't know how one goes about monitoring such online posts. However, to be honest, I am just glad that people are reading

my poetry—or any poetry!" (JCS). A colder one was as follows: "There are several YouTube videos of me reading poems. I did not give permission" (JCS). Lingering on this issue allowed certain respondents to question the extent to which poetry can even really proceed via the Internet: "The Internet is for surfing, not for reading with the kind of deliberate care poetry requires" (JCS). Another respondent confirmed this distinction, judging the form of copy (handwritten sheet, printed book, photocopy, online post) according to the author's moral right to the integrity of a work: "The infringement of moral right online is out of control. . . . When the work is not copied correctly—and in most cases it isn't—this sort of unauthorized publication, attributing to authors things they have not said, constitutes a form of libel" (JCS). These last two quotations exhibit experiences of two cultures of reading: one centred on the printed book, and one on electronic devices. Given the criteria we used to select poets for the survey, it is not surprising that a number of our respondents questioned the compatibility of poetry and the Internet.

The survey resulted in one collateral finding, namely, the persistent material nationality of Canadian poetry. A question asked respondents to tally the number of books, chapbooks, and magazine pieces that they have had published in Canada, the US, and other countries. Its purpose was to help us assess the respondent's depth of experience as a published poet. What it yielded was evidence of geographical rootedness. There is an overwhelming tendency among Canadian poets to have their books published in Canada. Of the 308 books published over the course of their careers to date, the surveyed poets collectively reported that 265 (86%) were published in Canada. This fraction rises even higher (to 94%) if one anomalous poet (with 30 Canadian books, 24 American, and 4 others) is not counted. A similar, if less pronounced, trend appears in magazine publication: together, the respondents reported 882 poems published in Canadian magazines, 268 in American ones, and 250 in other international ones. This finding may be biased by the method of selecting poets; however, finding a poet in a Canadian anthology would not necessarily exclude his or her publishing elsewhere too. Short of evidence to the contrary, it appears that Canadian publishers are crucial to poets working in Canada. Despite globalization, contemporary poetry is still enlaced in the state, and what this material nationality means for this study is that Canadian copyright law matters to Canadian poetry.

Conclusion

Authors, publishers, and readers all co-operate to build literary culture, and it is important to find ways past simplistic assumptions that would pit them against each other as hostile opponents. One such assumption is that copying a poem is an act of theft that deprives the poet of his or her living. This assumption is attractive, even "axiomatic," but it is not borne out by the findings on poetry presented here, which, although preliminary, suggest that contemporary Canadian poets derive approximately 2% of their annual household income from royalties and other commercial payments, 16% from government funding or privately endowed prizes, and 82% from other sources. Many poets, as writers and educators, have an entangled position on both sides of the line between private property and public access. Several identified their chief interest to be the reading of their work. Are the fair-dealing provisions of the Copyright Act, then, really a threat to the poet's livelihood? Ariel Katz points out that such provisions have been with us for a very long time. Justice Abella reminds us not to assume that stricter enforcement of owners' rights would turn every unauthorized copy into an authorized sale, and as the case of Nathan Brown indicates, educational copying that is deemed unfair can still be stopped.

Another unhelpful assumption, however, is that all poems are now free and that readers should no longer have to pay anything for them. On the contrary, the creation of poetry is deeply proprietary. Poets view their work as the inscription of their life and the record of their being. They value payments from the sale of copies of their works. Any amount of income is better than none, and it not only encourages but legitimates writing as a profession. For publishers such as Sarah MacLachlan, poetry is part of a wider business plan involving prestige and grants. How far fair dealing affects publishers reporting net losses on their poetry lines is the next question that should be studied with disinterest, especially given the emphasis that *Access Copyright v. York University* placed on such losses, both real and projected. For the state, poetry is an institution with cultural and economic facets. The rise in state sponsorship of literature in the late twentieth century, which made Canada a place where writers wished to live (like Michael Ondaatje) rather than escape (like Bliss Carman), followed the stabilization of literary property across North America, a development that suggests an indirect but compelling causal relation between authors' property and public investment. Unlike royalties,

government funding does make a major financial contribution to Canadian poets' income. It is a strategy that makes all citizens pay for poetry whether they read it or not.

One way past the deadlock of mutually hostile assumptions is to view contemporary Canadian poetry as possessing a multi-tiered economic structure that combines private and public dimensions compatibly. In this view, writing and publication are supported by the state while reception is encouraged through fair dealing. The audience for poetry consists of specialists, who will continue to gravitate to authorized editions because of their aura; it also consists of members of the wider public, who should have the stillness of poetry thrown into their busy path by every available means, including fair dealing, not least because the demands that poetry makes of them as readers is barrier enough to their accessing it. Instructors should direct their students to buy books of poetry, teaching them that buying not only supports poets and publishers directly, if symbolically, but also helps build one's own personal library. At the same time, teachers should practise fair dealing, making texts accessible to a limited extent if there is no good alternative, and if doing so serves pedagogical goals and supplements the required books without unduly negatively affecting the original works. Readers should be taught to buy and copy poetry, partly because citizens pay taxes that uphold the state's sponsorship of the arts, and especially if students pay tariffs up front for copying that they may or may not do, but most of all because, by reading, they complete what a writer can only begin. As they mingle their life with that of poetry, they grow into the responsibility of giving poets their living.

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NOTES

1 This research adhered to standards set out in the CIHR, NSERC, and SSHRC *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*.

2 "I have always written, not in order to earn my living, but above all so as not to lose my life through trying to earn a livelihood."

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Adam Dickinson

The People of Grassy Don't Have a Mercury Problem, They Have a Drinking Problem

Mercury Blood 1.42 ug/L

They were no longer themselves and there was talk of making a national park to solve the problem. This kind of talk was the part of the problem where the problem-people are spread onto maps and folded into animal shapes on long car trips through the wilderness. There was talk of the problem in a few arms and legs that couldn't talk and so folded in on each other and clenched on something no one could see, which seemed heartbreaking and unnecessary, but was a way of signaling that the problem was all around us, that the problem could be touched and when touched it would grab back like the rapids in that river. There was talk that the waters were not polluted, and if they were polluted, then the company was not responsible. There was talk that nothing escaped from the plant, and if anything did escape, the company did not know it was harmful. There was talk that bodies were not actually poisoned, and if they were poisoned it was because of what goes into them, the weekends in Kenora, the altered dream-states that break into leaf in this culture but culture urine and vomit in the streets of that culture. There was talk that they couldn't hold their liquor, as if liquor were a front door you held open for a crowd pouring in to pound your liquor. The fur trade was in there burning in a shooter. There was talk about how drinking was one long peristaltic protest against colonialism, an attempt to clear the throat as perfectly good protein threw itself into rivers, through car windshields. Some people went on talking like this. And here I have it in my blood talking, a settler methylated by the privilege afforded by the problem's extremities shaking with poorly connected dreams. All this talking and I am beginning to repeat myself. Myself.

The title of the poem "The People Of Grassy Don't Have A Mercury Problem, They Have A Drinking Problem" is a paraphrase of a pervasive and persistent prejudice expressed during the 1970s by, among others, the largely white community of Kenora toward the Indigenous residents of nearby Grassy Narrows. The community of Grassy Narrows had been and continues to be poisoned by mercury spilled into the Wabigoon-English River system in the 1960s by a pulp and paper mill in Dryden, Ontario. I found mercury in my blood and it made me think about my connection to this issue of racial injustice as a privileged settler in southern Ontario.

Adam Dickinson

Galactic Acid

Lactobacillus acidophilus

For the first two years of my life, my mother's vaginal flora lived in my stomach. Consigned to the edge of their star system, they ate everything I ate, fermenting chains of starch into acids that fed the high energy demands of trying to erect an antenna. The flora flexed for deep space convinced they weren't alone. They transmitted their contractions and hoped to reach aliens before the terrible facsimiles of the 1970s: humans drawn without sex organs and burdened by messages whose content had become instructions for reading. Set amidst this mucosa, a gram-stained parabolic reflector waited for word from newcomers. We're a lot alike, my mother and I. Our mutual disdain for underachieving campsites and the way we signal for help by maintaining a slight underbite during awkward conversations. Her vagina made me cosmopolitan. A dialectic crowned in the forest, its many antlers have since come to crowd my self-possession with spent velvet. I watch my mother favour her disintegrating hips. The small party that left her for the new world founded a settlement on a moon she still tracks without looking. Its tidal pull on the pit of her stomach makes her pause at the zenith of a phone call: "What is it?"

Heather Murray

The CANLIT Project (1973-1981)

In Search of the National Reader

Introduction

The year 1972 marked the appearance of a groundbreaking collection of essays edited by cultural nationalists Robert Fulford, Abe Rotstein, and Dave Godfrey. Public attention was compelled by the book's directive title: *Read Canadian*: *A Book about Canadian Books*. In the face of an encroaching American culture, the contributors exhorted Canadians to support their own authors and publishing houses by purchasing and reading Canadian materials. The collected essays provided surveys of Canadian writing across a variety of genres and fields—history, political economy, sociology, and the arts, as well as literature—to display the creative and intellectual heritage of which their audience presumably was uninformed.[1] The collection concludes with a polemical chapter on the plight of Canadian publishing authored by Godfrey and publisher James Lorimer urging action and even guerrilla tactics: readers should cancel their Book-of-the-Month Club subscriptions and complain to school trustees about the Americanization of the curriculum; students should refuse to purchase course materials published by branch plants and start photocopying as an act of resistance.

The *Read Canadian* manifesto is a salutary reminder that the energetic and forward-looking new writing of the 1970s balanced precariously on a publishing industry in crisis, beset both by long-standing infrastructural problems and by new incursions from competitors to the south. This is perhaps most economically illustrated by the fact that in 1972, the year the collection appeared, 37% of the 1,700 books of English Canadian literature then in print *in Canada* were published by foreign-owned firms (Broten [1975], *Lumber* 4). The decade had begun with the bellwether back-to-back

sales of two key Canadian publishers: educational publisher W. J. Gage to Scott Foresman of Chicago and then, even more dramatically, the Ryerson Press to McGraw-Hill of New York (MacSkimming 205-08; for the Ryerson sale see, especially, Parker). The shock of the sales impelled the formation of the Royal Commission on Book Publishing in Ontario, which reported at the end of 1972, recommending stronger support for Canada's publishers and booksellers. But the juggernaut—or so it seemed—of American control rolled on. In 1975, in a high-profile case, McClelland & Stewart lost an injunction trying to prevent the bookstore chain Coles from selling dumped US editions of popular Canadian works at bargain-basement prices. Threats were internal as well as external: in 1976 the religious right mobilized to ban the study of Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* by grade thirteen students in Peterborough schools, and there were further book challenges elsewhere in the province. And censorship could be more subtle: writing in 1975, T. H. B. Symons noted that only 8% of university courses in English dealt in any substantial way with Canadian literature, and that the situation was considerably worse at the graduate level (Symons 1: 40-43). The recalcitrant universities seemed to stand for the colonized (and colonialist) mindset that the new generation of nationalists was determined to oppose.[2]

In hindsight, *Read Canadian* is an oddly optimistic book, with somewhat circular operating assumptions: familiarity with Canadian-authored materials can spark the development of a Canadian consciousness, leading to collective political action, which in turn will empower new and distinctively Canadian cultural forms. The volume's essays pay little attention to the readers themselves: who and where they were, their tastes and motivations, and how (or whether) they might have access to the books and periodicals judged crucial to their individual and collective well-being. Similarly, with the exception of one survey taken of Readers' Club of Canada members, the Royal Commission failed to generate readership research or to commission background briefs on the topic. But understanding the Canadian reader would become one of the key mandates of the CANLIT action-research group, which sprang into being in 1973, mobilized by a comment made by Michael Ondaatje, then teaching at Glendon College, York University, when he mentioned that Canadian writers had very little sense of the overall sales of Canadian literature (Broten [1975], *Lumbe*r 1). Despite the nascent promotional efforts of publishers, the formation of trade councils, and the tallies of the Royal Commission, authors and publishers still were flying blind without understanding the specifics of their markets or the

motivations of their readers. CANLIT's immediate impetus was to fill this information gap, and it is the purpose of this essay to delineate how and why they attempted to do so, and to reconstruct the history of their further efforts to build a national readership for nationalist authors and publishers.

The Launch of CANLIT

Attempting a sales tabulation was the first project of the newly formed CANLIT group, whose founding members were York University students, several of whom were taking a course on "Canadian English" from the linguist Richard Handscombe. At the core was Delores Broten, a former editor of the Glendon student newspaper, and then a master's student writing a sociological study of English Canadian literary criticism. She handled the logistics of the project throughout its lifespan and her expertise and guidance were central. Gail Donald, Sandra Stewart, and Bob Waller also were founding members: Donald was writing a doctoral dissertation on Sara Jeannette Duncan; Stewart, also a Canadian literature specialist, had worked as a newspaper reporter before coming to York; Waller was a high-profile student journalist at the time (Request for Sustaining Grant, CLF).[3] A funding grant application at the end of the year listed Ruth Cawker, Peter Birdsall, and Bartley Higgins, all students, among the core members: Cawker had worked as a researcher for the bookseller and publisher Mel Hurtig; Birdsall was a former researcher for the Canadian Radio-Television Commission (CRTC); Higgins had been a researcher with a community development organization (Contract Proposals, CLF). Margery Fee—now a former editor of *Canadian Literature*—was also actively involved. The project drew on other scholars when particular expertise was required and relied on the computing capabilities of the Institute for Behavioural Analysis at York. It recruited volunteers, researchers, and people with pedagogic expertise as needed, in addition to engaging high-profile supporters, often authors and publishers, who provided both moral and financial encouragement. In a retrospective of CANLIT's first three years, Broten noted that, although the core usually consisted of four members, some thirty people had been involved to that point (Broten, "CANLIT" 4). Given the extent of their publications, their nationalist stance, and the unusual or experimental nature of a number of their initiatives, CANLIT not surprisingly attracted media coverage in trade journals and in the mainstream press—in *Quill & Quire*, *This Magazine*, and *Books in Canada*, for example—and the columns authored by William French, cultural critic for *The Globe and Mail*, were crucial in raising public awareness of their work. Although

initially located at Glendon College, the project relocated to Peterborough early in 1975 when York no longer was able to supply space and support (although the connection to York was retained during the Peterborough years), and then moved, finally, to Victoria, with both relocations undertaken when key staffers moved for personal reasons.

The CANLIT group had a coherent set of principles, or so it appears from the outside and with hindsight: in actuality, these must have been forged through the ongoing debate, critique, and self-examination characteristic of left-wing cultural groups. Its purpose was to undertake action research, and its politics were decisively cultural nationalist and anti-imperialist. The group ran as a co-operative, and its projects were designed to feed research results back into the communities from which they were drawn, and to involve those research subjects and the wider public in the ongoing work of CANLIT. The members attempted, at least initially, to do work that was bicultural and comparativist, although very poor rates of return for survey materials sent to Quebec eventually required them to undertake more limited studies. The group depended upon the alphabet soup of employment and funding initiatives available in the 1970s: federally generated OFY (Opportunities for Youth) and LIP (Local Initiatives Programme) grants; support from the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Secretary of State; the enjoyment of charitable status for a period in the mid-1970s; and donations and gifts-in-kind from foundations and supporters. CANLIT remained in active existence for eight years, its history tracing an arc from a headily optimistic beginning in 1973 to dissolution in 1981, with the explicit recognition that its efforts, and those of compatriots engaged in parallel endeavours, had failed to stop the American takeover of Canada's cultural institutions, or even to change the education system very much. A final publication in 1980 contrasted the availability of Canadian literature in schools at that time to the situation as they had documented it eight years before, with disheartening results. "Because of the survey's negative results for promoters of Canadian literature, it is fitting that *Course Countdown 1973-1980* should be CANLIT's last publication" (Broten et al. [1981], *Course Countdown* 1). CANLIT's publications are little-consulted now, but one contention of this article is that its studies and reports as well as the group's archived materials are valuable resources for scholars today.

The CANLIT Archives

As CANLIT prepared to relocate to Victoria in 1978, Broten approached the University of Calgary Archives, which already, under Special Collections

head Apollonia Steele, was targeting Canadian authors' papers. The CANLIT collection, MsC 221, is composed of nine large boxes of material, and there is a very serviceable file-level finding aid. However, the fonds (henceforth CLF[4]) is more than the record of this one particular group since, taken in total, it provides detailed evidence of the print culture and "communications circuit" (in Robert Darnton's term) of English Canada throughout the 1970s, showing authors, publishers, publicists, booksellers, librarians, readers, reviewers, government agencies, and educational authorities in their highly interactive relationships. In one particularly intriguing letter, Margaret Atwood (writing on House of Anansi letterhead) offers the CANLIT collective both logistical advice for approaching publishers and detailed methodological suggestions for a survey then in the planning stages (Atwood, Letter; CLF). Donors were envisaged not only as providers of much-needed funding, but as the invested "constituency" for the research to be undertaken (Canadian Readership Survey prospectus [4], CLF). In short, the CANLIT material provides evidence of the high degree of interactivity among different sectors of the book trades and the book-using public during a crucial time in the development of Canadian letters, and, more generally, the ways in which the agents of print assume mutable and multiple roles.

The fonds is also valuable for literary historians and book historians wishing to undertake more focused studies. The CANLIT project began its publishers' survey project by identifying some nine hundred publishers and printers, and then winnowing down to those who published Canadian literature, defined as fiction, poetry, drama, children's literature, and literary criticism. There is book-by-book sales data for some 1,600 titles, provided by publishers across the country, both Canadian and foreign-owned, including small-press, basement, and "ethnic" presses, with an impressive level of detail, some publishers providing breakdowns over time for a hundred titles or more.[5] (Scholars will need to use this material judiciously, as publishers provided the information with the expectation that results would be aggregated.) Further, the letters and marginalia that accompany the submitted sales figures are revealing as they range from the polite, informative, or humorous, to the hasty, opinionated, and (occasionally) irate, depending on the correspondent. Moreover, the files contain course syllabi and classroom exercises sent by teachers across the country, in addition to curriculum documents solicited from boards of education and provincial ministries, all useful for reconstructing the evolution of CanLit and

Can-content teaching. The voluminous correspondence between CANLIT and funding agencies, government bodies, foundations, and private sponsors illustrates the challenges of financing cultural projects even during the propitious post-Centennial years. While the raw readership surveys yielded less than one would have hoped in terms of commentary by respondents, and while the data printouts are now too fragile to be handled (even assuming they could provide information additional to that in the published reports), other materials in the CANLIT fonds fill in crucial details about their work on readership.

CANLIT Publications

The CANLIT project also left behind a significant body of published material, issuing some twenty-five reports in all, often mimeographed but sometimes professionally printed, as well as regular Progress Report newsletters that were sent out to as many as eight hundred supporters (Broten, Telephone interview). (A checklist of CANLIT publications is appended.) The project also generated copious amounts of print in other forms: postcards, posters, survey forms, data printouts, and reams of correspondence laboriously typed with carbon copies. While publications were issued in fairly large runs (2,000 copies of the 1976 publication *Contentions*, for example), the survival rate is low, and some occasional publications have not yet come to light. The publications may be divided roughly into three categories: first, research studies, primarily statistical, of book sales and the book publishing industry, as was the project's initial goal; second, surveys of teachers and studies of curricula, especially in the secondary sector, along with materials to support nationally minded Canadian teachers; and third, surveys of readers in an attempt to answer the question which the contributors to *Read Canadian* had begged—what makes a Canadian reader? While the third strand of their work is the focus of this study, I will begin with an overview of the publications, highlighting their utility for scholars of English Canadian literature, culture, and book history.

CANLIT's inaugural published report, *The Lumber Jack Report: English Canadian Literary Trade Book Publishers' Sales*, focuses on literary sales specifically, in response to Ondaatje's request, and tracks sales patterns for Canadian literature from 1963 to 1972. This report has especial value today for its wealth of information about the rapidly changing picture of CanLit production in a dynamic period, especially given the availability in the CANLIT fonds of the disaggregated figures and the correspondence

concerning the collection of sales data. The group undertook further studies of the industry (*Spying on the Book Trade* and *Who's(e) Who*), of the history of Canadian publishing (*Paper Phoenix* and its accompanying *Studies in the Book Trade*), and of censorship in schools and libraries (*Mind Wars*). Some other studies, less well-conceived, did not make it to publication: in 1973, for example, CANLIT canvassed members of the Canadian Booksellers' Association asking for their top-ten sellers in July, but this failed because the questionnaire was poorly designed and the booksellers considered summer sales unrepresentative (Report of the Bookstore Survey, CLF). *Briefs for the Book Trades* is an assembly of publishers' position papers, reports to standing committees, commissions, and interventions in the 1970s book trade wars, designed to demonstrate the initiatives that already had been undertaken. The CANLIT group was performing substantial work on behalf of (what we now would call) Canada's cultural industries, and its members were wont to complain that government bodies were more likely to poach their findings than to fund CANLIT research.

A second strand of CANLIT publications operated from the realization that schools had a crucial role to play in forming a resistant, critically minded citizenry, as well as a new generation of Canadian readers. *Course Countdown,* from 1974, details the sorry state of awareness of Canadian literature among secondary school teachers, and was followed the next year by a clearly needed *CANLIT Teachers' Crash Course*, which later was revised and reprinted. (The title is taken from an actual twelve-hour crash course taught by CANLIT members to North York-area teachers.) The collective continued to audit progress (or lack of progress) in the development of Canadian-focused curricula, with *Contentions: An Analysis of Canadian Literature Curricula* in 1976 and an updated *Course Countdown* in 1981, as well as a survey of visual arts instruction titled *Tunnel Vision*. It provided bibliographies of media materials that could complement CanLit teaching, a poster collection of Canadian authors, and ideas for classroom projects and assignments, most interestingly in *Antitoenailimagery*, which suggests research topics, many from a sociological or materialist angle, that could be undertaken by high school or university students.[6] While the CANLIT project did not succeed in undertaking curricular studies that were binational or bicultural (the ongoing reorganization of the Quebec school system, from a parochial to a board model, was an additional impediment), the authors attempted to be representative and proactive in their selections of material for classroom use, and francophone works in translation,

"ethnic" writing, writing by women, and writing by and about First Nations/Inuit peoples feature prominently in their recommendations. They advocated the teaching of Canadian literature in ways that were relevant to young people, and often favoured iconoclastic and avant-garde writing over the social-realist classics. They also encouraged teachers to bring popular literature into the classroom, and argued for an interdisciplinary and, increasingly, a multimedia approach. Indeed, eventually they were less concerned with the teaching of works of Canadian literature than with giving Canadian students the language and cultural-literacy skills to be critical of American-generated media (thus the publication of a handbook on science fiction). As the group admitted in 1977 "At first we were concerned with the need for Canadian content, but we now realize that the substitution of George Ryga for Shakespeare is not the answer" (Donald et al. [1977], *Mix 'N' Match II* 1). The CANLIT project overlapped with the work of other scholars in the post-secondary sector, contributing to the groundbreaking *Canadian Fiction: An Annotated Bibliography* (1976) by Margery Fee and Ruth Cawker, for which Gail Donald worked in an editorial capacity. It also collaborated on a companion volume to be edited by Cawker, "Canadian Poetry: An Annotated Bibliography," which did not come to completion.

Researching Readers

The third strand of publications comes from the collective's work on readership, which may well be the most innovative aspect of its research. Throughout the 1970s the group undertook several surveys and studies designed to create a multi-dimensional picture of Canadian readers in their classed, gendered, and regional specificities. CANLIT wanted to know about book access, reading frequency, library use, the relationship of reading to other activities, and genre preferences—in short, what made Canadian readers tick. While the surveys sometimes were poorly designed and response rates were uneven, and geographically restricted to Ontario for the most part, they may well have been the most ambitious attempt to generate qualitative information about English Canadian readers in the mid-twentieth-century period.

In undertaking its imaginative and sometimes iconoclastic studies of Canadian readers and reading practices, the CANLIT collective assumed that such research was vital to Canadian publishing. This idea was not entirely new, of course—public opinion firms, newspapers, and even the publishing conglomerate Maclean-Hunter were collecting information on

readership demographics at mid-century (see Murray and Rotundo)—but the CANLIT surveys were unique in trying to ascertain the readership of specifically *literary* materials. And the alternative politics of CANLIT allowed it to approach the task of surveying in a way that differed markedly from governmental or commercial groups. However, at the outset little was available by way of usable models: trade surveys, as a rule, were fairly restricted in focus and quantitative in nature; the Dominion Bureau of Statistics had collected information on readership through its Library Survey primarily; and the detailed report on European reading habits prepared by R. E. M. van den Brink, to which the group referred, had drawn upon substantial research already undertaken. CANLIT would need to develop a methodology by trial and error. It began by undertaking an "exploratory man-in-the-street survey" (Wheatcroft [1975], *Something* 6) of one hundred blue-collar and pink-collar workers in the Kitchener-Waterloo area, and of one hundred professionals in Toronto, enlisting Don Willmott, a York University sociologist, as an advisor. It developed a two-page questionnaire to be administered on the spot, usually door-to-door, by CANLIT canvassers, with questions designed to be somewhat open-ended, so that the surveyors could explain the intent or follow through. (Some interviewees did not understand what was meant by "media," for example, a problem corrected in future surveys.) The interviewers asked about reading preferences, other leisure-time activities (including radio listening and television viewing), and access to books and other print materials. However, a number of the responses for Kitchener-Waterloo halt before the tenth and final question, which is about library use (perhaps reflecting the early orientation of the CANLIT project to the publishing trade, or perhaps indicating the waning patience of interviewees with the surveyor on their doorstep), and the library-use question was not included in the Toronto forms.

While the surveys did not generate enough usable results to be published, this pilot project let the researchers iron out some methodological kinks. They gained a sense of the difficulties in generating anecdotal or reflective responses, and of undertaking cross-class research. (Some interviewees reacted to questions about class as intrusive, or showed a divergent, or aspirational, understanding of class categories; many factory workers and most respondents who self-identified as professionals identified as "middle class.") However, the survey responses did generate some interesting results and, most significantly, alerted the CANLIT researchers to the fact that variability of book access was a key concern. In a follow-up report to

Opportunities for Youth administrators, Broten emphasized that, although unpublished, the study was groundbreaking because "the only other readers' survey conducted before to our knowledge (of book, not magazine readers) was that prepared for the . . . Readers' Club [of Canada] by Peter Martin Associates," and this, she noted, had an obvious middle-class bias (Report on the Readership Survey, CLF). (The Readers' Club survey, used by the Royal Commission, had very good rates of return but surveys had been distributed only to Club subscribers.) In a holograph addition to the typescript draft, she adds a salient conclusion:

> Most importantly, the [CANLIT] Readership Survey seems to confirm the view held by the Royal Commission and pointed out, from another perspective, by our Publishers survey: that both Canadian publishers and Canadian readers—especially those in lower-class areas outside our major cities—suffer at the hands of an inefficient book distribution system.

While Broten was referring to availability of mass-market paperbacks, the conclusion was more general: poor sales of Canadian materials were not simply the result of lack of awareness, or of interest, or of disposable income.

The CANLIT Readership Survey was followed in 1975 by a deliberately experimental project, "Something for Nothing," which aimed to expose readers to Canadian materials and to assess their responses. This later study was also (if more obliquely) intended to measure the national consciousness of the sample readers, with upbeat reasoning that ran as follows: if "there does exist in Canada a significant number of people who have removed the vestiges of cultural colonialism . . . and who feel frustrated because they do not have sufficient access to Canadian books," then this would provide an "immediate rationale" for financial relief for Canada's publishing industries (Wheatcroft [1975], *Something* 4-5). CANLIT elicited the assistance of Canadian publishers—including General, Hurtig, and McClelland & Stewart—by offering to feed back their findings, and the publishers responded with alacrity but with somewhat miscellaneous donations. In the end, more than four hundred paperback books, donated by a dozen publishers, were distributed along with a questionnaire in six demographically distinct areas of Toronto's Don Valley riding, an area that encompassed then-working-class Cabbagetown as well as prosperous Rosedale ("Something for Nothing." Survey Returns, CLF). CANLIT researchers left approximately half of the books (with postage-paid surveys) in kiosks in community centres, and distributed the rest door-to-door. However, contrary to their expectation that the project would return something for something, CANLIT researchers received only

ten percent of the distributed questionnaires (i.e., forty-two) in return. The results would have been difficult to compare in any event, since the donated books were miscellaneous, and heavily reflective of the backlist of McClelland & Stewart. Popular books by authors such as Max Braithwaite and Farley Mowat were handed out along with books by James DeMille and Catharine Parr Traill: one suspects that target readers preferred Brian Conacher's *So You Want to Be a Hockey Player* to Wyndham Lewis's *Self Condemned*. While the somewhat random nature of the distributed books reflects the haphazard state of CANLIT's resources, it also is evidence of their flattening assumption that Canadian literature, no matter the form, genre, or time period, could speak to readers in a distinctive way.

The report writers of "Something for Nothing" did their best to squeeze results from the small sample, and the group learned a lesson from the overly cumbersome procedure. More importantly, the project helped to strengthen the collective's working relationships with Canadian publishers, to which they conscientiously relayed the meagre results in painstaking and sometimes tactful detail (carefully relaying to Oberon one reader's disgusted description of George Bowering's *Flycatcher* as "filthy," and providing publishers with copious comments). The survey also helped the group to achieve broader recognition, and Jack McClelland, initially skeptical of the project although in the end supportive of it, could see its public relations merit (McClelland, CLF). That same year, McClelland & Stewart gave away paperbacks in Toronto and in Saskatoon as a promotional stunt (King 284-85), and the following year Jack McClelland returned to Saskatoon to hand out free books with a seven-question survey. While the Saskatoon survey also failed to yield much by way of results, the McClelland & Stewart promotions coordinator thought the exercise demonstrated "that it *was* possible to excite the book buyers of Saskatoon" (Drinkwater, CLF).

The 1976 survey that resulted in *The Canadian Reader I: Peterborough and Area* was the most extensive and the most successful, although the eventual project fell short of what originally was planned. As initially envisaged, "Documentary History of Literacy in a Small Ontario City" would

> focus on 5 areas: schools, libraries, bookstores, local publications, and the state of literacy as understood by local employers. . . . The research, through a search of historical documents . . . newspapers, and conversations, will trace the creation, growth, and change in reading patterns from 1825 to 1975. (Attachment, CLF)

Turned down by a number of granting agencies, despite well-prepared applications for this large-scale and historically based study, the collective

turned elsewhere, although the two thousand dollars they attracted, even supplemented by sales of CANLIT publications, fell far short of the $38,000 budgeted for the more ambitious study. More than sixty individuals and organizations provided support, including Margaret Atwood, Pierre Berton, June Callwood, Eugene Forsey, Edgar Z. Friedenberg, Stanley Knowles, Farley Mowat, Christina Newman, and Tom Symons, along with a number of public libraries, almost twenty publishing houses, and even the New Zealand Book Council. At the core of the scaled-down study was a random sampling of two thousand adults in Peterborough (where CANLIT then was located) in August 1976, using a hefty 6½-page questionnaire. This survey had a 20% rate of return—a decent figure, although some potential respondents might have been deterred by the conscientious but perhaps intrusive demographic information gathering, which included questions about religion, political party affiliation, and sociability (visits taken and visitors to the home). Unsurprisingly, well-educated adults were over-represented among the respondents, and two-thirds of the returns were from women; interestingly, more than 250 respondents also mailed back a postcard asking to be sent the eventual report. *The Canadian Reader I* makes the most of the study sample, with a well-inflected crunching of the available data, and a respectful attention to the comments of the respondents who sometimes are quoted verbatim, their spelling and grammar retained. The report highlights the declining popularity of reading as a leisure-time activity, and of the gendered differences in newspaper and monograph reading preferences. It also offers a more surprising finding, that while book-reading frequency seemed to correlate with educational levels, book purchasing itself did not, at least for this particular population. "Gossip," or word of mouth, was the primary source for book information among the respondents, they learned. And the awareness of Canadian content was lower than the CANLIT collective could have imagined: not only were many respondents indifferent to the national origin of the books that they read, but many could not distinguish Canadian from American materials in the first place, or mistook one for the other. "The large proportion of respondents who could not or would not discern Canadian content clearly shows the extent of alienation and colonialism" (55), the CANLIT authors concluded.

This latter finding motivated the follow-up study *The Canadian Reader II: High School Canadian Literature Students*, based on one thousand questionnaires distributed in high school Canadian literature classes in May 1977, across eight provinces.[7] This study was also intended to complement

a more restricted survey, of CanLit teaching in the Atlantic provinces, just published by George Crawford for the Canadian Council of Teachers of English. To how great a degree were Canadian literature courses raising the awareness of their students? Students in this case were asked not only about leisure-time reading and print access, but also specifically about their knowledge of Canadian books and their attitude to Canadian literature courses. Based on more than six hundred responses—clearly, filling in forms was mandatory in at least some schools—this study is the most qualitative in nature of the CANLIT surveys, requiring discursive as well as statistical analysis given the generous amounts of commentary provided by the refreshingly opinionated young respondents. The resulting report presents an aggregated readership profile, although the authors acknowledged that the results were too slim, and too geographically dispersed, to allow much by way of conclusion. More usefully, the responses of the students generated suggestions for making Canadian literature courses more appealing. One student had queried why CanLit had to mean "poverty stricken farmers on the snow-swept prairies" (32); others worried about a CanLit boosterism that seemed too similar to American jingoism; others wondered why Canadian works could not be taught in an international context. While *The Canadian Reader II* was not published until 1978, its more immediate effect was on the reports *Mix 'N' Match I: Ideas for Canadian (Literary) Studies*, and *Mix 'N' Match II: Reprise*, which devised suggestions for integrating the study of Canadian literature with world literatures, avant-garde writing, popular genres, and other cultural forms including music. Much of CANLIT's efforts would go into curriculum design, and into providing classroom supports for teachers, during the final years of the group's existence.

Conclusion

While the CANLIT group disbanded with a disheartening sense of the futility of its efforts, it also must have been foundering under the weight of its compendious research mandate: to develop an analytical understanding of Canadian authorship, publishing, marketing, purchasing, reading, and teaching, within the rapidly changing context of the international book trade and cultural industries. Other groups, with stronger resources, had come into being over the course of the decade to take up the work. An Independent Publishers' Association was formed in the wake of the Ryerson Press sale to represent Canadian-controlled rather than branch-plant publishers (MacSkimming 197-200); the Writers' Union of Canada

had undertaken an energetic lobbying campaign to bring CanLit into the classroom, and was developing resource guides for teachers; a Canadian Book Information Centre and the new publication *Books in Canada* raised awareness of Canadian titles (to cite only some examples). Statistics Canada had attached a separate "Reading Habits" Survey of Leisure Time Activities to its monthly Labour Force survey of February 1978, which went to some 17,600 Canadians aged fifteen and older. With an 80% return rate, this represented a gold mine of data for educators and members of the book trades.[8] A preliminary paper by James Lorimer using this material led to a commission by the Association of Canadian Publishers for a longer study, with funding from the Publishing Development Program of the federal Department of Communication. The result was the massive 1983 report (by Lorimer in conjunction with statistician Susan Shaw) titled *Book Reading in Canada: The Audience, the Marketplace, and the Distribution System for Trade Books in English Canada*. While the coincidence of this publication with the disbanding of the CANLIT group forces comparison between the more restricted and exploratory nature of the CANLIT surveys and Lorimer's detailed and comprehensive study, it is interesting to observe how Lorimer's goals echo those of the CANLIT group at its foundation: "While publishers and authors know how many copies are sold of individual book titles," Lorimer writes, "no one has known how many Canadians read books, what share of their reading is Canadian-authored titles, how they find out about the books they read or where their books are obtained" (xxxi).

From the perspective of readership research, the CANLIT project itself is equally as significant as any of its reports, representing a methodologically and politically avant-garde attempt to tease out information about specifically Canadian reading practices and motivations; to generate qualitative and anecdotal responses pertaining to book access and the reading experience as well as the particular materials read; and to make the case for the Canadian reader as a vital part of (what we now would conceptualize as) the communications circuit. With hindsight, it is possible to discern some limitations in approach that hampered its research: the dependence on Canadian book publishers for support caused an over-focus on monograph reading in its studies (as opposed to gauging awareness of CanLit through newspapers, magazines, performances, radio broadcasts, and television dramatizations, for example). The desire to serve its core constituency—authors and publishers devoted to the development of a new Canadian literature—caused a further focus on certain modes and genres at

the expense of other literary forms, even the belletristic ones of biography, autobiography, the essay, and historical writing. This categorical problem, of separating CanLit from other varieties of print Canadiana, created a shortfall in the ability of the CANLIT group to capture the attitudes of its respondents, who often listed non-fiction titles—by Peter Newman, Farley Mowat, and (especially) Pierre Berton, for example—as the most-recently-read book, and who indicated that Canadian content was more likely to influence their selection of non-fiction than of fiction. While CANLIT's intent was to be demographically inclusive, the reports tell us most about the reading experiences of Ontarians with relatively favourable conditions for book access. The limited and somewhat haphazard nature of its funding, the need to learn on the job in the absence of suitable models, and a somewhat Maoist tendency to publicly shared self-criticism meant that the surveys were restricted in scope and the reports could appear amateurish, at least to some reviewers.

But the CANLIT project was unique in its attempts to ascertain the psycho-political mindset of readers and the role of reading in the formation of an anti-colonialist consciousness. To use the terms from Margaret Atwood's *Survival*, so resonant in 1973, its participants wished to know whether and how reading could effect the transition from unaware victimhood to a creative ex-victim position. Looking back from a distance of more than forty years at a seeming effusion of cultural nationalism, what is most striking is the substantial disjunction between the activities of authoring and publishing, and the activity of reading, in the early-to-mid-1970s. That the one sector, despite logistical challenges, was vibrantly active, while the other was more cautious and constricted, was evident at the time to CANLIT researchers, just as it was apparent to the compilers of *Read Canadian*, although this gap may have become somewhat occluded over time. When the CANLIT researchers surveyed professional-class Torontonians in 1975 (Survey forms, CLF) and asked interviewees to name the most recent Canadian book that they had read, fully 29% of respondents could not come up with a title, or mentioned a book that was, seemingly unbeknownst to them, by a British or American author.

In her retrospective of the first three years of CANLIT's work, Broten humorously conjectured how the project might be remembered in the future: in an inter-office memo in a publishing house in the 1990s, or a scholarly paper in far-off 2050, or an MA thesis from the year 2000. The author of the fantasy thesis notes the strangely bifurcated situation

of the early 1970s, where the upsurge of nationalism, confined as it was to the "sphere of personal action" of authors and teachers, could not take hold at an "institutional level." "This cultural schizophrenia," writes the future scholar, "is documented in the obscure reports of CANLIT, a research group of which [little is] known" (Broten, "CANLIT" 4). In our equally contradictory historical moment, when many Canadian authors enjoy worldwide reputations, when readers scramble to secure the latest Canada Reads selections, when McClelland & Stewart is owned outright by Bertelsmann, and when students may well go through high school without ever encountering a work of Canadian writing, it is useful to look back at these earlier expositions of the literary field in Canada, and CANLIT's urgent appeal to secure—to institutionalize—Canada's cultures.

Appendix A

Chronological List of CANLIT Publications

Note: locations are given when publicly available copies are rare or unique.
Note: no copies have been located for *Progress Reports* 1, 2, 6 through 13, or after 14 (if any).

1974

Stewart, Sandra. *Course Countdown: A Quantitative Study of Canadian Literature in the Nation's Secondary Schools*. Toronto, CANLIT, 1974.

1975

Barnhart, R. B., et al. *CANLIT Teacher's Crash Course*. Peterborough, CANLIT, c. 1975.

Broten, Delores. *The Lumber Jack Report: English Canadian Literary Trade Book Publishers' Sales 1963-1972.* Peterborough, CANLIT, 1975.

"CANLIT posters": "Printed on light blue cardboard with white lettering, the slogans read: Who in their right mind would read a CANADIAN book; Try a book adventure; and, When you read a CANADIAN book you read about yourself" (*Progress Report #5*). [No copies located]

Progress Report, 3. Toronto, CANLIT, 1975.

Progress Report #4: July 1975. Peterborough, CANLIT, 1975. [Copy CLF Box 3 File 1, used as scrap paper]

Progress Report #5: December 1975. Peterborough, CANLIT, 1975. [Copy CLF Box 5 File 1]

Wheatcroft, Les. *Something for Nothing: An Experimental Book Exposure Programme*. Peterborough, CANLIT, 1975.

1976

Broten, Delores, and Gail Donald. *Contentions: An Analysis of Canadian Literature Curricula*. Peterborough, CANLIT, 1976. [Copies York University Scott and Frost Libraries]

CANLIT Poster Collection 1976
Title: Collection of posters relating to various Canadian authors including Earle Birney,

Gratien Gélinas, Margaret Laurence, Hugh MacLennan, and E. J. Pratt. 1976. 5 posters; col.; 60 x 45 cm. [University of Guelph McLaughlin Library]

1977

Birdsall, Peter. *Tunnel Vision: Looking at Art Education in English Canadian High Schools*. Peterborough, CANLIT, 1977.

Broten, Delores, and Peter Birdsall. *The Canadian Reader I: Peterborough and Area*. Peterborough, CANLIT, 1977.

Donald, Gail. *Media Materials: A Can.Lit. Collection*. Peterborough, CANLIT, c. 1977.

Donald, Gail, Delores Broten, and Peter Birdsall. *Mix 'N' Match I: Ideas for Canadian (Literary) Studies*. Peterborough, CANLIT, 1977. [Title variant: also catalogued as *Mix 'N' Match*]

—. *Mix 'N' Match II: Reprise*. Peterborough, CANLIT, 1977. [No copies located on public deposit in Canada]

Lizee, Simon, Myrtle Ebert, and Violet Lefebvre. *Oh Can(you see)ada! Can. Lit. for Junior High School Students*. Peterborough, CANLIT, 1977. [Copy Trent University Library]

1978

Birdsall, Peter, and Delores Broten. *Mind War: Book Censorship in English Canada*. Victoria, CANLIT, 1978.

Birdsall, Peter, Delores Broten, and Gail Donald. *Antitoenailimagery: Research Projects in Canadian Literature*. Peterborough, CANLIT, 1978.

Broten, Delores, and Peter Birdsall. *A Science Fiction Teaching Guide*. Peterborough, CANLIT, 1978.

Broten, Delores, Peter Birdsall, and Gail Donald. *The Canadian Reader II: High School Canadian Literature Students*. Peterborough, CANLIT, 1978.

Spying on the Book Trade. Mini-report no. 3 [sic], Victoria, CANLIT, 1978.

1979

Birdsall, Peter, et al. *CANLIT Crash Course, Revised*. Victoria, CANLIT, c. 1979.

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Appendix B

Selected materials from CANLIT fonds, MsC 221, Archives and Special Collections, University of Calgary [CLF]

Attachment in letter from Robert M. Kennedy to Delores Broten. 26 May 1976, CLF, Box 5, File 1.

Atwood, Margaret. Letter from Margaret Atwood to CANLIT. 17 July 1974, CLF, Box 3, File 4.

Canadian Readership Survey prospectus. CLF, Box 4, File 3.

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Drinkwater, Suzanne. Letter from Suzanne Drinkwater to Peter Birdsall. 4 May 1976, CLF, Box 4, File 1.

McClelland, Jack. Letter from Jack McClelland to Delores Broten. 13 Feb. 1975, CLF, Box 4, File 8.

Report of the Bookstore Survey. CLF, Box 1, File 4.

Report on the Readership Survey. CLF, Box 5, File 4.

Request for Sustaining Grant. CLF, Box 5, File 1.

Something for Nothing. Survey Returns. CLF, Box 4, File 9.

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NOTES

1 Fulford was (and remains) a cultural journalist and reviewer; Rotstein co-founded the Committee for an Independent Canada; Godfrey was then a founder of House of Anansi as well as an author. A note on nomenclature: to avoid anachronism I will use the term "Canadian" as cultural nationalists of the period would have done (but which we now would inflect by hyphenation).

2 There were other crucial developments: 1971, Sara Bannerman writes, represented the "end of an era" in copyright agreements, with copyright now negotiated as part of larger trade deals (190); and in 1971 McClelland & Stewart was so financially overextended that Jack McClelland announced his intention to sell (MacSkimming 141-43; 147-49).

3 Broten became a journalist and now is active in the environmental movement in BC. Donald was until recently the manager of CBC English Radio Archives; Stewart also became a journalist; Waller was a producer at CBC's *The National* and active in the Canadian Media Guild.

4 Items referenced in this article from the CANLIT fonds can be found in Appendix B. To avoid duplication, CANLIT sources that appear in the appendices have not been listed again in the Works Cited.

5 According to Broten (Telephone interview), this extensive study was, in the end, made possible by Statistics Canada, which paid for the data processing in return for access to the raw sales figures. Broten also recalled laborious efforts to obtain the figures in the first place. McClelland & Stewart, citing lack of personnel, invited CANLIT members to comb through its sales records, on index cards filed in boxes and stored in a safe.

6 The catchy title is taken from a well-known essay by William Gass. According to Greig Henderson, a line from Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* provided the point of departure for Gass' essay "In Terms of the Toenail."

7 The raw forms for this study are not included in the CANLIT fonds, presumably because the respondents, though anonymous, were mostly underage.

8 Also in 1978, an Ontario Reading Survey tested the impact of the Half-Back reading incentive program, and *Weekend Magazine* commissioned a telephone survey, of one thousand urbanites, about their reading tastes (Murray and Rotundo 458).

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Arleen Paré

November Rain

November Rain in the 4 a.m.

the chorusing rain so ravishing
they rush out of the house to make love
a before-dawn silvery love
the cupped radiance
streetlights bright as up-swelling joy

the rain so glamorous they light up two cigarettes
their backs puddled in boulevard grass
under bare trees they study the miniature tear-drop
chandeliers
blow collapsible smoke into felled funnels of wet

the rain so clamorous their hearts break
their breathing slows as though
they have started to live underground

this soft fizzley falling this night rain insistent as pins
the contact so unmistakable
murmurous cool the undertones
the universe falling again and again

Myra Bloom

The Trope of the Translator

(Re)Writing History in Heather O'Neill's *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* and Claire Holden Rothman's *My October*

Over the past several decades, the relationship between anglophones and francophones in Quebec has become increasingly depolarized. Immigration, globalization, and waning support for the sovereignty movement in the years since the defeat of the 1995 referendum have changed the political landscape: Sherry Simon has described contemporary Montreal as a "polyglot and hybrid culture" in which the old notion of 'two solitudes' no longer holds (*Translating* 8). In 2008, the Bouchard-Taylor commission released a landmark study of intercultural relations in Quebec entitled *Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation*, asserting, "Having discussed at great length what separates us, it is now time to explore the other facet of what we are and what we can become" (25). Given this conciliatory rhetoric, it is surprising to note the sudden proliferation of anglophone and francophone novels and films dealing with two of the most antagonistic episodes in Quebec's history, namely the October Crisis of 1970 and the 1995 referendum. While these works attest to the persistence of the old conflicts in twenty-first-century memory and imagination, an examination of fictional engagement with these divisive historical events reveals that many contemporary writers are reevaluating, rather than reanimating, narratives of cultural division.

This essay focuses on two anglophone novels, Heather O'Neill's *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night* (2014)[1] and Claire Holden Rothman's *My October* (2014). While the skirmishes that serve as their backdrop are traditionally associated with the "divided country" disparaged by Mordecai Richler in his book *Oh Canada! Oh Quebec!* (1992), I argue that O'Neill and Holden Rothman encapsulate the anglophone desire for *rapprochement* within the

context of Quebec's "shift to a form of diversity paradigm" (Bouchard 40). They do so, first, by criticizing sovereigntist ideology, which both writers depict as an outmoded and divisive product of the past. They then attempt to represent and bridge the gap between cultures through translation, which is a structuring element of *Saturday Night* and a driving theme in *My October.* While both novels highlight the dangers of misunderstanding or uneven power dynamics inherent in translation, I contend that their ultimate endorsement of translation reveals a distinctly anglophone optimism regarding the possibility of reconciliation.

Post-Sovereigntist Ideologies

Saturday Night and *My October* are products of what Linda Leith has called Montreal's "Anglo Literary Revival" (10). After a period of decline that Leith attributes to the rise of Quebec nationalism and resultant dismissal of the English language, Anglo-Quebec writers have returned to prominence and commercial success over the past two decades. While there is no common aesthetic, "nothing that could be considered a 'school,'" these writers are nevertheless united in their promotion of "a more inclusive understanding of Quebec society" (Leith 156; 166). Simon has also recently observed a "changing relationship to Quebec literature and what it represents," pointing to the proliferation and success of francophone writers in English translation, as well as "a more prominent role" for Canadian translators ("Joining"). At the institutional level, this *rapprochement* has resulted in the creation of bilingual events such as the Blue Metropolis literary festival, founded by Leith in the late 1990s, and the inclusion of translated literature in competitions such as CBC's Canada Reads, the Scotiabank Giller Prize, and the Griffin Poetry Prize. These events and awards have strengthened anglophones' awareness of their francophone counterparts, popularizing writers such as Nicholas Dickner (Canada Reads winner, 2010), Kim Thúy (Canada Reads winner, 2015), Samuel Archibald (Giller Prize finalist, 2015), and Catherine Leroux (Giller Prize finalist, 2016) in English translation.[2] By the same token, francophones "have been showing increased interest in English-language writers and greater acceptance of their place in Quebec literature," as illustrated when Mavis Gallant was awarded Quebec's most prestigious literary prize, the Prix Athanase-David, in 2006 (Leith 160). This recognition of an anglophone writer marked a shift away from the long-held conviction, expressed in no uncertain terms by the esteemed literary critic Gilles Marcotte in a 1998 essay, that no anglophone Quebecer would ever

win the award. Marcotte's prediction, as well as his further assertion that "[i]l n'existe évidemment pas telle chose qu'une littérature anglo-québécoise,"[3] have in recent years been superseded by a growing mutual recognition between the proverbial solitudes (Marcotte 6).

Many twenty-first-century Quebec writers are inscribing this burgeoning exchange in their work by revisiting historical episodes of acute antagonism between anglophones and francophones. According to Robert Dion, the prevalence of works about the October Crisis highlights the ongoing attempt to grapple with this "événement fondateur du Québec contemporain" (88).[4] Recent examples include Maxime Raymond Bock's collection of short stories *Atavismes* (2011) and director Mathieu Denis's film *Corbo* (2014), as well as the three texts discussed by Dion—Louis Hamelin's *La constellation du lynx* (2010), Carl Leblanc's *Le personnage secondaire* (2006), and the film on which the latter is based, Luc Cyr and Carl Leblanc's *L'otage* (2003). The 1995 sovereignty referendum is another "deeply divisive" event that has recently made a resurgence in contemporary fiction (Behiels and Hayday 665): *Saturday Night* joins a list of primarily anglophone titles that includes Zoe Whittall's *Bottle Rocket Hearts* (2007), Ontarian writer Elizabeth Hay's *His Whole Life* (2015), and the film *Quebec My Country Mon Pays* (2016) directed by John Walker.

Contemporary writers are not the first to have recognized the symbolic potency of these two issues, which have in fact served as ideological touchstones for writers and artists since the events of 1970. Dominique Lafon has documented the evolution of theatrical depictions of the October Crisis, finding that whereas a first wave of 1970s productions likened the FLQ members to mythological heroes, subsequent playwrights tried to bring about a "collective exorcism" of the past (31). Along similar lines, Jacques Pelletier has characterized the French-language novels of the 1970s and 1980s on this topic as "expressions involontaires d'un malaise" (180),[5] arguing that their authors inscribe their sense of ideological "failure" and "defeat" by privileging the human drama over political events (34). In the anglophone context, several scholars have shown how, from the 1960s to 1980s, fear surrounding Quebec's separation from Canada was distilled in over forty works of speculative and dystopian fiction that anxiously imagined that reality, including William Weintraub's *The Underdogs* (1979) and Hélène Holden's *After the Fact* (1986). According to Allan Weiss, these dystopian novels were particularly prevalent in two distinct periods: immediately following Charles de Gaulle's inflammatory 1967 "Vive le Québec libre!"

speech, widely understood as one of the inciting incidents of the October Crisis; and pursuant to the election of the sovereigntist Parti Québécois in 1976 (53). Weiss argues that "the motivation of fear may also explain one element of Québécois fantastic fiction that a few critics have commented on: the surprisingly small number of francophone works on this theme" (53). He notes that fear lies behind the writing of fantastic literature about Quebec separation by both linguistic groups, with one side afraid it will happen and the other side afraid that it will not. As Ralph Pordzik elaborates, "English language writers seem to feel the greatest need to explore the possible results of separation when the likelihood of its coming true is greatest" (par. 7).

The anticipatory anxiety of these earlier anglophone fictions, written in a genre that imagines future possibilities, can be contrasted with the retrospective view taken by Holden Rothman and O'Neill. *My October,* which is set in 2001, examines the significance of the October Crisis for the generation shaped by the terrorist attacks of 9/11. In the novel, the Crisis figures as a historical event: it is the subject of a high school research project undertaken by one of the main characters. Though *Saturday Night,* by contrast, is a (near) historical fiction, the gap between the temporality of the action and that of the reader establishes a structural irony. While the characters anxiously await the results of the impending referendum vote, the reader is already aware of the outcome. O'Neill mines this temporal disjunction for comedic effect in her satirical novel. The narrative is focalized through nineteen-year-old francophone Nouschka Tremblay, who communicates her culture's shared hope that her people, who "had been shit upon for generations," will finally achieve independence:

> We were packing our bags. There was nothing that they could say now. Now they were trying anything to make us stay. Like a lover who was trying to talk reason into you as you were throwing your clothes into a suitcase, they went from saying soothing, reconciliatory, sweet things to calling you a complete idiot and telling you that you'd regret it for sure. Well it was too late for all that. (279)

Here, the humour is created not only by the outlandish simile (a hallmark of O'Neill's prose) depicting Canada as manipulative lover, but also by the bathos of Nouschka's tirade, which, given the inevitable outcome, is reduced to a child's empty threat to run away from home. The sense of inevitability and powerlessness is reconfirmed when, after building up 350 pages of anticipation, O'Neill requires only two small sentences to shatter her characters' hopes: "But that night the Non side won fifty-one percent. And Nicolas [Nouschka's twin brother] woke up knowing that nothing was going

to change" (350). O'Neill substitutes humorous satire for the fearful anxiety characteristic of earlier treatments of Quebec's separation.

Though set in a period of great support for the sovereigntist movement, *Saturday Night* repeatedly undercuts this ideology by associating it with a bygone era. Overhearing a newscaster discussing the possibility of a second referendum, Nicolas exclaims, "Oh turn this shit off . . . It's so boring and repetitive. Quebec will never, ever have the guts to separate . . . Look at all those sideburned monkeys from the past" (129). Later, Nouschka describes these same political leaders as "broke philosophers in their old suits, driven by children from their small houses, in which they had been brooding over manifestoes for years" (338). This idea of sovereigntism's obsolescence is personified by Étienne Tremblay, a washed up *chansonnier* whose songs about the lonely piece of tourtière and the man with twenty-five kids are depicted as the parochial products of a former time. Deadbeat father of Nouschka and Nicolas, Étienne is "as famous for his fall as he was for his songs" (132). Though he was once a celebrated folk hero, Étienne has drunk away his money, spent time in prison, and is now leading a quasi-itinerant life of poverty. Étienne's downward spiral emblematizes the trajectory of the sovereignty movement more generally: a minor character astutely claims that Étienne and his family "were invented by the subconscious of a people prior to the first referendum. They are a direct result of a revolutionary, surrealist, visionary zeitgeist. They are wandering around now like animals whose habitats have been destroyed" (65). Insofar as Étienne embodies the cultural antagonisms of a previous historical moment, it is possible to argue that the very existence of a conciliatory novel such as *Saturday Night* is predicated on his downfall.

In *My October,* Holden Rothman offers a similar political critique using the identical conceit of a cultural icon who has passed his prime. The character Luc is a composite of famous writers of the Quiet Revolution, including Hubert Aquin and Réjean Ducharme: like the former, Luc has previously been awarded and refused a Governor General's Award for his work (56), while the title of Luc's seminal novel *Tanneur tanné* evokes the latter's famous 1966 novel *L'Avalée des avalés*, as Michel Basilières notes.[6] Since the defeat of the 1995 referendum, however, the revolutionary energy that used to animate his novels has devolved into "stiff and lifeless prose" full of thinly veiled symbols such as fatherless children and parricide (4). The plot of *My October* is animated by the clash between Luc's hardline nationalism and the values of his wife, Hannah, and his son, Hugo. By contrast with Luc's stated "allegiance

to the language of Quebec" (47), Hugo (and to a lesser extent, Hannah) encapsulates the shift to a social paradigm that, according to Gérard Bouchard, "praises diversity, warns against the tyranny of the majority, relativizes memory, tends to trivialize identity, and is somewhat critical of the nation" (17). Where his father glorifies the FLQ members as heroes, Hugo likens them to Osama Bin Laden and the terrorists who have so recently flown their "hijacked planes . . . straight into Manhattan's two tallest towers" (226); where Luc laments that "[p]eople no longer believed in things. There were no values anymore, nothing was absolute" (133), Hugo registers his concern about the second-class treatment immigrants receive in his *pure laine* French private school (146). Hugo's pluralist values place him in conflict with the worldview on which his father has built his career.

The issue of language is of course at the heart of this clash: Luc's dogmatic "allegiance to the language of Quebec" is at odds with his anglophone wife and bicultural son (47). When Hugo speaks English, he does so "in defiance of Luc" (174). During a family therapy session ironically focused on "nonviolent communication," Luc rages, in French (though his words are presented in English), at the anglophone therapist selected by Hannah:

> Did you fail to notice that the language we speak here is French? You are not a prisoner, after all. You can go back to California any time you wish. You can move to New York, or Toronto, or Halifax, or Calgary, all very pleasant locations. But if you stay in this one, if you choose to live in my city, in my nation, you will have the courtesy to speak to me in my language. Or you will not speak to me at all. (134-35)

Though this speech is symptomatic of the admittedly reductionist cultural stereotypes that proliferate in *My October*, Luc's tirade is nonetheless meant to embody a hardline stance out of step with contemporary ideas about linguistic diversity in Quebec, where pluralistic rhetoric has supplanted the dualist model of cultural interaction: the Bouchard-Taylor report outlines a social vision in which "[p]lurilingualism is encouraged, at the same time as French is the common public language. . . . It is up to each individual to . . . define as he sees fit his relationship to the common or any other language and to adopt it in his own way" (120). In fact, statistics from the Bouchard-Taylor report show that there are currently more allophones (12.3%)—i.e., people whose mother tongue is neither French nor English—than anglophones (8.3%) in Quebec (201). In contrast with Luc's linguistic purism, I contend that both *Saturday Night* and *My October* position translation as a more generative model for cultural interaction than the hardline stances they associate with the past.

Translation as Method: *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*

If, as Simon asserts, "[t]he expression 'translation without an original' stands as a richly suggestive figure for Montreal writing," then *Saturday Night* is a case in point (*Translating* 144). In Simon's view, Montreal writing bears the traces of the "bilingual or multicultural matrix" from which it emerges (*Translating* 144). This is certainly true of *Saturday Night,* which is set across the street from the events of O'Neill's first novel, *Lullabies for Little Criminals*: both plots unfold at the intersection of Rue Sainte-Catherine and Boulevard Saint-Laurent, which has long been considered the junction of the francophone and anglophone "districts" of Montreal (*Translating* 5). In *Lullabies,* language is unproblematized: characters speak English and French interchangeably, and the author has stated that "language just didn't matter" to her during the process of composition (qtd. in Freure); like her characters, O'Neill grew up straddling the two worlds. These divisions are much starker, however, in the second novel, where language is central to the identity politics of pre-referendum Montreal.

Given this context, the decision to use English—what Nouschka calls "the language of colonialism" (O'Neill 203)—to represent French-speaking characters has important ethical ramifications. According to Lawrence Venuti, all translations, but particularly those from the anglophone world, do "ethnocentric violence" to the source text insofar as they involve the "forcible replacement of . . . linguistic and cultural differences" (14). *Saturday Night* is at first glance an obvious target for such a critique, insofar as it is written in English, presumably for an anglophone audience. However, a possible defence can be found in Venuti's prescription for an "ethical" translation, wherein the "the illusion of transparency" is dispelled by what he calls the "foreignizing translation" (16). The foreignizing translation "resists dominant values in the receiving culture so as to signify the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text"; this "resistancy" (Venuti's term) can be achieved through experimentation with "lexicon and syntax, [as well as] registers and dialects, styles and discourses" (18). Though O'Neill's case is admittedly particular insofar as there is no original French source text, the "foreignizing" of language in *Saturday Night* arguably produces the same disruptive effect endorsed by Venuti (18). The anglophone reader is thus invited to "visit" the francophone world of the text, but perpetually reminded of her status as cultural outsider.

One way the novel creates this effect is by drawing repeated attention to the irony and artificiality of its central conceit. When Nouschka gets a job at

Place des Arts "despite [her] terrible English," she summarizes her telephone conversations with patrons for the reader: "There will be evening-time presentations down the line in the season that comes just after winter . . . with the blossoms in it?" (203). This stilted English, which stands out from the perfect fluency with which Nouschka narrates the rest of the novel, reminds the reader of the act of translation on which it is predicated. Though this passage is primarily humorous, the political dimension of translation is more overt in a scene that takes place at the Unity Rally, the famous gathering attended by over 100,000 Canadians three days before the second referendum. Responding to "a placard saying QUEBEC WE LOVE YOU! DON'T LEAVE US!," Nouschka quips: "They might have thought to write it in French, but what can you do?" (327). This sly remark, which recalls the real criticisms that were levelled against the "self-centred Englishness" of the rally (Warren and Ronis 16),[7] implicates readers by aligning them with the hapless placard-bearer; to a certain extent, it also accuses them, in their capacity as readers of an English-language text, of a similar cultural erasure. In both of these examples, the gap emerging from the contrast between the transparency of English for the anglophone reader and the pragmatic and political challenge it poses for the narrator problematizes the reader's position of cultural dominance.

Another instance of "resistancy" is produced through repeated occurrences of non-translation. The novel is peppered with French idiomatic expressions ("*Mais t'es complètement malade!*" [7]; "*Elle est conne, monsieur!*" [39]) and cultural artifacts (the novels *Bonheur d'occasion* and *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel*; the television show *La Petite Vie*). These references not only add texture to the novel's francophone milieu, but also confront the reader with the distinctness of Quebec's language and popular culture. A comparable effect is achieved by means of the opposite strategy, when O'Neill translates literally the religious curse words, called *sacres*, specific to the working-class sociolect of *joual*: "'My Christ of a coffee machine is broken, tabernacle of the chalice,' Loulou yelled out from the kitchen" (142). The irruptions of non-translation, on the one hand, and unidiomatic translations of *joual,* on the other, defamiliarize the text and thus resist the colonizing power of English language and culture. For the anglophone Canadian, the discomfort of encountering these unfamiliar or inaccessible references may create a sense of alienation that may in turn foster empathy for the desire of Quebec francophones to be *maîtres chez nous*.[8] Though the text's ideology is ultimately conciliatory, O'Neill nevertheless suggests that

any *rapprochement* must be predicated on the recognition of uneven power dynamics and acknowledged cultural differences.

While it can be argued that *Saturday Night* performs the counter-hegemonic work outlined by Venuti, it is nevertheless productive to complicate this reading by flagging the novel's sites of "ethnocentric violence." A key problem lies in the reduction of *joual* to a campy string of idiosyncratic expletives, which ignores the troubled history of a sociolect that evolved through colonial contact with English. As Louise Ladouceur observes in her study of translations in the Quebec theatre, the difficulty of translating *joual* is not only that there is no linguistic equivalent, but that English is, "moreover, incapable of expressing the ideological statement made by recourse to the colonized idiom" (213). The problem is illustrated in the failure of translations of Michel Tremblay's plays to retain their biting social commentary. Ladouceur argues that "once translated and stripped of the ideological implications of the use of *joual,* Tremblay's plays evoke a traditional image of Quebec, picturesque and nonthreatening, a perception more akin to what could be viewed as 'universal' from a Canadian point of view" (214). The same criticism can be extended to *Saturday Night,* both in the specific instance of Loulou's *sacres* and the novel's quaint aesthetic more generally. Though the narration, according to the author, communicates "the way Nouschka understands the world . . . the way a 19-year-old understands history, where she only remembers the catchy bits" (qtd. in Freure), the result is an undeniably depoliticized view of a society at one of the most political moments in its history. By distilling politics through the lens of an "egocentric" nineteen-year-old (qtd. in Freure), O'Neill neutralizes and universalizes the pointed political conflict that serves as the novel's historical backdrop.

While these criticisms cannot fully be dismissed, they also expose the conciliatory ethos that, I maintain, animates the use of translation in *Saturday Night*. This thesis is supported by the novel's conclusion, in which Nouschka begins a romantic relationship with Adam, an upper-class anglophone from Westmount. In the final scene, Nouschka arrives home to find Adam waiting for her on the stairs to her apartment: "After all the polemics and the debates about the two official languages of Canada, here was an English boy sitting in a stairwell, looking to be loved by a French girl" (402). This tableau functions as a metaphor for the novel as a whole, both in its substitution of the personal for the political and its ultimate message of cultural reconciliation. These qualities, and in particular the affirmative ending, mark the novel as the product of an anglophone imaginary: as Ladouceur points out, the concept

of translation has, since the Quiet Revolution, had different connotations among Quebec's anglophones—who have regarded it as "neutrally friendly, motivated simply by a curiosity for the other culture"—and francophones, for whom its colonial overtones have been inalienable (211-12). The image of potential intercultural harmony that closes the novel is arguably a product of the same sense of security that Canada's dominant anglophone culture has always enjoyed. Nevertheless, I contend that, in setting her novel in a francophone milieu, O'Neill takes aim at anglophone hegemony. By revisiting the 1995 referendum through the lens of translation—with its twinned danger of ethnocentric violence and potential to intervene—*Saturday Night* affirms the value of intercultural negotiation while remaining attuned to its complexities. This conciliatory message stands in stark opposition to the threat of separation, which the novel depicts as the desire of a former era.

Translation as Theme: *My October*

Whereas translation is the primary mode of *Saturday Night,* it is one of the major themes of *My October.* Its main vehicles are Hannah and Hugo, who straddle cultures and thus serve as counterpoints to Luc's uncompromising nationalism. Hannah is a translator in both literal and figurative senses, having built her professional and personal identity on translation between English and French. She has "won prizes" for "brick-like tomes on the lives of Gabrielle Roy and René Lévesque, . . . essays and publications about Quebec culture and history, . . . [a]nd, of course, her husband's entire oeuvre" (53). Her career was launched when she won a Governor General's Award of her own for her translation of Luc's *Tanneur tanné*, which, in contrast with Luc's refusal, she "accepted with gratitude" (56). Through this work, Hannah has helped make francophone artists and intellectuals accessible to the anglophone world.

That her professional practice is inextricable from her interpersonal circumstances, however, bears out the insight of Kathy Mezei, Sherry Simon, and Louise von Flotow that "many of the translation activities most vital to Canadian cultural life take place in zones that lie outside the realm of government and mobilize energies of a very different nature" (3). Hannah's personal affiliation with Luc enables her to traverse the solitudes but also compels her to disown key elements of her identity: she divests herself of her anglophone heritage by adopting Luc's last name (a relatively uncommon practice in Quebec), distances herself from her parents, and speaks to her son in French. This extreme divestiture recalls the "servant-translator"

paradigm that, according to Susan Bassnett, abetted the colonial aspirations of nineteenth-century Europe by establishing "a hierarchical relationship in which the SL [source language] author acts as a feudal overlord exacting fealty from the translator" (16). This power dynamic is established from the outset, when Luc takes his young protégée under his wing in defiance of his editors' desire for a more renowned translator. From that day forward, Hannah adopts the ancillary role of her husband's *porte parole,* describing herself as Luc's "official English voice" (53).

Hannah's self-effacement also recalls the "translator's invisibility" targeted by Venuti in his foundational book of the same title. Venuti is critical of translations where "the absence of any linguistic or stylistic peculiarities makes it seem transparent, giving the appearance that it reflects the foreign writer's personality or intention or . . . essential meaning" (1). There are two problems with this kind of translation: first, the illusion of transparency inhibits the experience of cultural difference, which is the basis for an ethical encounter; and second, it further marginalizes English-language translators, "seldom recognized, poorly paid writers whose work nonetheless remains indispensable because of the global domination of . . . English" (13). Hannah reveals a problematic invisibility in her reflexive use of the famous Italian phrase *traddutore tradditore*, "the translator is a traitor," which conveys the widespread suspicion of the Derridean *différance* between an original and its translation.[9] For Venuti, the recognition of *différance* creates the necessary space for creative production (Venuti 13); for Hannah, who sees her production as "derivative," it is an obstacle to be overcome (274). Though the reader is never given access to her translations, Hannah's ancillary self-perception recalls the patriarchal dynamics in her marriage, which are reinforced in several scenes where Luc bullies her into silence (Holden Rothman 114; 133-134). In both her personal and professional life, Hannah's (anglophone) voice is subordinated to that of her (francophone) husband.

Hannah eventually intuits this connection, splitting up with Luc at the end of the novel and simultaneously recognizing that "her career as a translator was over" (331). She outsources the final chapters of Luc's latest manuscript to a student in Concordia's translation program and embarks on an independent, autobiographically inflected writing project (which turns out to be the novel we have just read). Hannah's decision to escape her subservient role by abandoning both her marriage and her vocation is revelatory insofar as "the areas where translation breaks down . . . are equally important to examine" (Simon, *Translating* 9). Simon Harel has

written extensively about the need for writers to stage failed intercultural encounters in order to counteract the "lexique stéréotypique de l'harmonie interculturelle"[10] that sidesteps zones of tension and conflict (11). In depicting the failure of Hannah and Luc's marriage to "do away with the old divisions of language and culture, and make for them a space in which to live and work, side by side" (57), Holden Rothman offers a cautionary tale about the dangers of facile reconciliation fantasies.

My October nevertheless counterbalances this depiction of "failed translation," to use Simon's turn of phrase (*Translating* 74), with the more optimistic portrait of Hugo's ability to mediate between his two primary inheritances. Where Hannah has had to renounce her name to distance herself from the notoriety of her father—a famous prosecutor charged with jailing suspected FLQ militants—Hugo reclaims this heritage, choosing to call himself Hugh Stern, an anglicization of his first name plus his mother's disavowed maiden name. In revisiting the events of the October Crisis as part of a school project, Hugo will leverage his experience to relate a different story than the epochal clash of cultures that made his grandfather a public enemy and necessitated the family's flight to Toronto in the late 1970s.

Hugo is originally assigned the project as penance for bringing an unloaded gun to school, an act of rebellion stemming from his struggle to assert his identity. At the outset, he is convinced that his teacher "didn't want Hugo's thoughts on the matter. He wanted his own view of history handed back to him. Word for word" (154). Against his teacher's desire for a veneration of the FLQ militants, Hugo is determined to write a narrative of the October Crisis, and of the militant Jacques Lanctôt in particular, that will "lay out the violence so plainly that no one, not even . . . his father, could deny it" (226); a product of a post-9/11 generation "for whom the word *suicide* was, as likely as not, followed by *bomber*" (226, emphasis original), Hugo cannot accept the glorification of the FLQ by his father's contemporaries. However, he decides to switch topics when he visits his anglophone grandparents and discovers that they are old friends of James Cross.[11] Now eighty, Cross has led a life away from the spotlight but agrees to grant Hugo an interview, which he flies to England to film, assisted by his father, and ultimately screens at his school to great fanfare.

By contrast with the ideologically driven films of an earlier generation, such as Michel Brault's *Les Ordres* (1974) or Pierre Falardeau's *Octobre* (1994)—which emphasize, respectively, the Canadian government's infringement on civil liberties and the necessity of political violence—Hugo's decision to tell a

human story places him in line with contemporary challenges to nationalist narratives. His film shares traits with several recently released francophone books and films dealing with the October Crisis, including condemnation of the FLQ's violent tactics and a marked concern for its victims. This same sensibility is present in Maxime Raymond Bock's story "Carcajou" ("Wolverine") from *Atavismes,* where the abduction and torture of a federal cabinet minister is temporally shifted into the present century and divorced from its political context; the effect, as Pasha Malla correctly claims, is that "the episode becomes less an act of revolution than a purging of personal impotence and its attendant anger." Denis's biopic *Corbo* similarly undermines the nationalist narrative by denouncing violence, highlighting the senseless loss of the sixteen-year-old FLQ militant Jean Corbo, who died accidentally while setting off a bomb. The film's reproof is underscored by its focus on Corbo's identity struggles as a child of Italian immigrants: it ultimately suggests that his actions are motivated less by ideology than by the desire to fit in with his peers. Another component of Hugo's critique, likewise on display in Cyr and Leblanc's film *L'otage* and accompanying book *Le Personnage secondaire*, is the reframing of Cross as a victim. Dion has noted how Leblanc's attention to Cross's Irish identity (Cross was born in Dublin) challenges the "axiological-ideological" view of him as a figurehead of British imperialism and thus unworthy of public sympathy (96). Similarly, the Cross of Hugo's film states, "I've been a pawn . . . in your history. Maybe now, I'll be a face. Not the British diplomat, not the imperialist, but a man. A husband. A father. A human brother" (328). As in *Corbo* and *L'otage/Le Personnage secondaire*, Hugo uses cross-cultural experience as the basis for contesting a monolithic nationalist ideology.

Hugo's film, like other twenty-first-century francophone cultural products, demonstrates how depictions of the October Crisis become touchstones of contemporary cultural values. Hugo inscribes his pluralist sensibility by revisiting, and retelling, one of the sovereignty movement's foundational narratives. His bicultural heritage—emblematized in his "perfect" English, "not betraying any hint that he had been raised and schooled in French" (328)—gives him a privileged, politically neutral position from which to traverse the solitudes. Hugo presents the film in English with French subtitles, literally "translating his words into neat French print" for the francophone audience at his conservative French academy (Holden Rothman 326). Its warm reception ("everyone was on their feet, hooting and whistling and stamping" [329]) symbolizes the movement toward a more integrative social paradigm.

If Holden Rothman can be praised for her critique of the facile intercultural fantasy, as symbolized in the failure of Hannah and Luc's marriage, Hugo's hyperbolic success must admittedly be faulted for its contrasting lack of nuance. It is highly improbable that an amateur film on a historical topic would draw a "television crew from Radio-Canada" (321) and move an audience of schoolboys to near hysterics. It is equally unlikely that Cross would grant privileged access to a high-schooler and that Luc, a fervent sovereigntist, would be an enthusiastic participant in the making of such a film; as Michel Basilières rightly notes in his review of *My October,* the trip to film Cross is a far-fetched plot point that allows the author to stage a "reconciliation" between father and son. The logical leaps are, in this sense, evidence of Holden Rothman's desire for a reconciliation that extends beyond the family to encompass Quebec society as a whole. Though *My October* is ostensibly about the age-old conflicts, its ending suggests a desire to transcend these divisions.

Conclusion: A Conciliatory Ethos

Saturday Night and *My October* represent the movement beyond "the discourse of Anglo angst and outrage" that, according to Gregory Reid, typifies many texts of the pre-referendum era (64). In contrast with an earlier generation, whose discordant affects were encoded in Richler's *Oh Canada! Oh Quebec!* and numerous dystopian contemplations of Quebec's separation, O'Neill and Holden Rothman display a conciliatory ethos, channelling the political depolarization noted by Leith, Simon, and the authors of the Bouchard-Taylor report. Francophone writers are likewise registering this shift: Dion argues that recent fictions about the October Crisis use "le point de vue du *hic et nunc* pour revoir les significations qui ont été conférées au passé historiquement" (97).[12] He demonstrates how writers like Carl Leblanc and Louis Hamelin use different but related strategies to contest both the "monopoly" of historical memory, on the one hand, and the specific, ideologically driven narratives of the October Crisis, on the other (88). It is possible to make similar claims about Raymond Bock's *Atavismes* and Denis's *Corbo,* which encode their critique of ideological violence in their revisionist histories and thereby contribute to the mounting evidence of waning nationalist sentiment in Quebec.[13]

If a conciliatory sensibility is arguably implicit in the deconstructive historiographical strategies of francophone writers, it is by contrast overt in the depictions of cultural crossover that appear in anglophone novels.

The latter can be distinguished from their francophone counterparts by the recurring motif of translation, which functions as the method of *Saturday Night* and a driving theme in *My October.* The motif of translation is also present in other recent anglophone texts. Whittall's *Bottle Rocket Hearts* depicts a romantic relationship between an English-speaking woman and a French-speaking woman on the eve of the 1995 referendum. In the documentary *Quebec My Country Mon Pays,* which examines the legacy of the Quiet Revolution, filmmaker John Walker sends two young women—one anglophone and one francophone—on a blind date of sorts, with the task of discussing their differences. The prominence of translation in these works is consistent with Simon's insight that "English-language crossover figures are more numerous than francophones" because, since the 1960s, "the anglophone minority has been actively looking for ways to redefine its membership in francophone Montreal" (*Translating* 16).[14] Holden Rothman (a professional translator herself) and O'Neill (a writer who operates at the juncture between English and French) can accordingly be connected to a lineage of intrepid Montreal writers such as A. M. Klein, John Glassco, and Gail Scott, who have explored the passages between the proverbial solitudes. At the same time, the sudden visibility of translation in contemporary anglophone writing undoubtedly attests to the "new prominence" of translators and translations in Quebec culture (Simon, "Joining").

While *Saturday Night* and *My October* are diagnostic of Quebec's evolving sociopolitical landscape, their use of a translational lens to reframe former sites of conflict also has an important normative function. Prominent historian Jocelyn Létourneau has written extensively about the intimate connection between historiography and cultural understanding, arguing that "[t]he challenge Quebecers have to meet now is . . . to distinguish what in the past should be re-acknowledged and what should be 'de-acknowledged' in the name of the values and contexts of the present" (10). In Létourneau's view, Quebec can only successfully move into the future if its sheds the "trio of misery, melancholy, and re-foundation" that characterizes its origin stories (104). Though the stakes of this challenge are obviously different for the francophone audience Létourneau is primarily addressing, his call to arms resonates also for anglophone writers who revisit Quebec's foundational conflicts. By replacing the "discourse of Anglo angst and outrage" (Reid 64) with the motif of translation, O'Neill and Holden Rothman offer alternative histories that acknowledge the hardships of intercultural contact, but nevertheless affirm the desire for *rapprochement* in the present moment.

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NOTES

1 My analysis in this article builds on my previous review of *The Girl Who Was Saturday Night*, published in *The Puritan* literary magazine.
2 A nomination for a major award often has a significant impact on book sales. BookNet, which tracks marketplace data, has documented the "Canada Reads effect," noting that "[w]hile all Canada Reads contenders experience steady sales prior to the debates and a spike during debate week, there is a significant increase in unit sales and on-order quantities for the winner" (Senner).
3 "there is clearly no such thing as an anglo-Quebec literature." All translations mine.
4 "foundational event of contemporary Quebec"
5 "involuntary expressions of discomfort"
6 Luc also shares a last name with René Lévesque, the famous premier (1976-1985) and founder of the Parti Québécois.
7 Jean-Philippe Warren and Eric Ronis discuss the language politics of this incident in their article "The Politics of Love: The 1995 Montreal Unity Rally and Canadian Affection," noting the "dismay at the 'English' colouring of the rally" (16).
8 "masters of our own house"—a famous Quiet Revolution era slogan.
9 As Derrida writes, "the multiplicity of idioms actually limits . . . a 'true' translation, a transparent and adequate interexpression" (218).
10 "stereotypical lexicon of intercultural harmony"
11 James Cross (1921-) was a British diplomat who was kidnapped by FLQ militants and held from October 5 to December 3, 1970. He was later released in exchange for the safe passage of his abductors to Cuba.
12 "the point of view of the *hic et nunc* [here and now] to revisit the meanings that have historically been conferred on the past."
13 A 2016 Angus Reid-CBC survey showed that 82% of Quebec residents (and 73% of the francophone population) agree with the statement, "Ultimately, Quebec should stay in Canada"; 64% of francophones further agree that "the issue of sovereignty is settled, and Quebec will remain in Canada" ("Majority").
14 Montreal-based writer Guillaume Morissette, whose novel *New Tab* was shortlisted for the 2015 Amazon First Novel Award, is a notable exception. It remains to be seen whether Morissette is the vanguard of a larger shift within francophone literary culture, and whether translation's "new prominence" in Quebec will encourage further boundary crossings (Simon, "Joining").

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Derrick Stacey Denholm

post-cordilleran Tsmishian-Tlingit relations
(excerpt)

to avoid confusion
follow the complex, fragmented narratives
of lashed canoes under glacier
under darkness
under repeated threat
along
the *Chukachida*
across *Muskwa* up *Spatsizi* south to west
to *Kwinamass* down
to *Kaien* across *Kts'mat'iin*
through the everyday perhumid paradox
cliff-hanging submergence
and the intuition-obscured cloud cover
of the snow-sleet-driven clock
within the why and where
of the next forced retreat
across slippery gravels ticking wet
with ice nodules weeping

to walk-off despair
seek the briefest joys
with the imagined future utility
of this handful of blue feathers
combed along the uplift amphitheatre
echo of redcedar-tilting place

with every alien
river crossing attempt
    to decode or navigate
    the miscontextualizations of denial
    cast into a form of cinderblock history
the downstream futures of canadian poetry
    drift in tiny white triangles
    to obfuscate the perhumid horizon
    of hypermaritime growth cycles
    disrupting the Indigenous climate
    with the polite-heavy precipitate death
    of every myopic pastoral line
    scribbled by a hot rod polaris
    seeking to physically dominate
    all gently undulating
    lyric terrains

Ana María Manzanas-Calvo

Hosting the Crosser
Janette Turner Hospital's *Borderline*

> The border between two nations is always indicated by broken but definite lines, to indicate that it is not quite real in any physical sense but very real in a metaphysical sense.
> —Joyce Carol Oates, "Crossing the Border"

In his 1997 *Border Matters*, José David Saldívar called attention to the "anti-immigrant hysteria" of the times and to the gradual centrality of border matters in American studies (x). In the midst of mass migrations, border crossings, circulations, and renegotiations, the reconceptualization of the border and border zones has contributed to the identification of new topoi, new actors, and an overall "worlding" of American studies that has instilled a new transnational literacy in the US academy (Saldívar xiii). This reconsideration of the border as a paradigm of multiple crossings has also contributed to the understanding of culture in terms of material hybridity (instead of purity), which disrupts and customizes the imagined community of the nation (Saldívar 19). Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), figures prominently as the seminal exploration of a *mestiza* consciousness that moves between and among cultures, but what remains understudied is how the crossing of borders affects the allegedly stable identity of the community directly or indirectly involved in the process of hosting the crosser. It is possible to claim that the imagined stable community of the host nation, to echo Saldívar's invocation of Benedict Anderson, becomes "disrupted and customized" (19) as a result of the contact with a borderland subjectivity/ontology.

This article reroutes Saldívar's observations about American studies in the 1990s to the Canadian context in the 1980s. Although the US-Canadian border is not the birthplace of border studies (Roberts 191), an analysis of this particular border region, as Gillian Roberts has argued, "allows us to engage more comprehensively with a critical borderlands practice" (191)

and consciousness. Although the border in the Canadian imaginary has traditionally functioned to reinforce a *cordon sanitaire* separating Canada from the US (Roberts 9; Sadowski-Smith 12, 120), novels such as Janette Turner Hospital's *Borderline* and Jane Urquhart's *Sanctuary Line,* as well as Guillermo Verdecchia's works, among many other examples, clearly beg a reconsideration of Canada in the context of hemispheric borders. Canada is gradually taking a central stage in border literature, as the country situates itself at the crossroads of myriads of borders that are by definition mobile, fungible (Brady, "Fungibility"), unpredictable (Braidotti), and divisible (Derrida, *Aporias*). This repositioning of the border from marginal to central, to go back to Saldívar's words, has contributed to the "worlding" of Canadian literature, and has instilled a new transnational literacy in Canadian criticism. The shift, I argue, is manifest in Hospital's *Borderline* (1985). In *Discrepant Parallels*, Roberts claims that Hospital's novel rearticulates the significance of the border by overlaying the forty-ninth parallel with the Mexico-US border (195). In turn, the novel overlays the US-Canadian/US-Mexican border with other geopolitical boundaries, such as that between Quebec and English Canada,[1] thus providing a multidimensional border landscape. What are the implications of this overlapping and the ensuing creation of a borderscape?[2] If we assume Walter Mignolo's definition of "border thinking" as "the moments in which the imaginary of the modern world systematically cracks" (23), it is possible to examine how, in *Borderline*, Hospital offers a disruptive border thinking, a multidimensional border consciousness that brings the border within. The crosser is changed in the process, but so are those who accidentally host the crosser.

Significantly, Hospital herself has a borderline status in Canadian literature, for both her biography and publication history exist on the borders of a national literature. Born in Australia, Hospital lived in South Asia, Britain, and Canada, and now lives in the US. She is, indeed, an outsider to many places (Neild 34). Like her boundary-crossing characters, the writer moves between national affiliations and multinational perspectives, and has been frequently left out of the Canadian literary canon (Sadowski-Smith 126). Hospital, in short, has not enjoyed the full hospitality of Canadian literary criticism. Transnationalism and border crossing, prominent features of the writer's background, filter down to her novels, which are populated by alienated and fractured characters. Published in 1985, *Borderline* is Hospital's third novel and the first set in Canada. The

novel plays out this sense of dislocation in the borderlands between Canada and the US. Set in the midst of the Civil War in El Salvador in the 1980s and Canada's Sanctuary Movement, the novel originated in the actual discovery of dead Salvadoran refugees in a truck that had been abandoned in New Mexico after crossing the Mexico-US border. Hospital realized that there was a connection between these incidents and "the underground railway from the Rio Grande to the Canadian border" (Sadowski-Smith 127). In *Borderline,* the writer relocates another group of refugees from El Salvador to the Canadian border, the site where exclusion and hostility will collide with inclusion and hospitality. Significantly, the same two impulses which were paramount in the 1980s and that we see so clearly in *Borderline* are still fundamental to understanding contemporary responses to migration and the (un)welcoming of the Other in the first decades of the twenty-first century.

In this article I explore the multilayered space of the US-Canada border as experienced by three characters: Felicity, a historian and art curator in Boston; Gus, an "*Anglais*" insurance agent from Montreal; and an unnamed immigrant woman from El Salvador who is alternatively known as Dolores Marquez, La Salvadora, La Desconocida, and La Magdalena. The crossing is chronicled by Jean-Marc, Felicity's son-in-law, a piano tuner and host to the different narrative accounts in the novel. He is in charge of making sense of Felicity's and Gus's messages and telephone conversations in the aftermath of their encounter with the migrant woman and their subsequent disappearance. In this border thriller, Jean-Marc reveals how the boundary will mark Felicity and Gus forever. Both will ultimately join the ranks of the *desaparecidos*, the victims of the violence traditionally associated with Central America, as they become enmeshed in clandestine Salvadoran networks. In this article I lay out the novel's different vectors converging on the geopolitical boundary and explore the border's multiple dimensions and ontological differences. Hospital anatomizes the space of the border as a complex site of collision between and among different narratives and laws (or the absence of them). Drawing from Giorgio Agamben, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, and Emmanuel Levinas, I claim that the border is the site of abjection as well as exception, the space that produces the figure of the *homo sacer*, in the sense that Agamben uses it. At the same time, the border is the stage of an act of hospitality, following Derrida's theorization of the concept. Both Felicity and Gus respond to a silent summons in the face of the migrant woman and, on an impulse, take her to Felicity's cottage outside Montreal. Through their hospitable act, Felicity and Gus eventually turn into figures

of the guest, homeless and persecuted, until they become the *desaparecidos* themselves, the missing ones, another illustration of the (un)dead. Thus the novel comes full circle, as it illustrates that exception is a contagious category that knows no borders or demarcations.

I. Abjection at the Border and the Encounter with the Other

> [Y]our backyard is now a border and the metaphor is now made flesh.
> —Guillermo Verdecchia, *Fronteras Americanas/American Borders*

Nothing prepares the novel's accidental protagonists, Felicity and Gus, for their encounter with the Other/crosser and their initial role as accidental hosts. Felicity is on her way from Boston to Canada to find peace and quiet over the weekend at her cottage outside Montreal. Gus experiences habitual "border nervousness," but does not expect trouble. Quite to the contrary, he anticipates that the Canadian border officer would share his relief at homecoming. Both Felicity and Gus represent the type of safe crossers for whom clearing Customs is a formality. The US-Canada boundary is, after all, a less securitized border, compared to the problematic and heavily policed southern boundary. Yet, Hospital's writing reverberates with ominous echoes. In the opening pages of the novel, Felicity has a dream of being trapped in a painting and trying to escape. Her escape is described as a border checkpoint between two realities. But there is something wrong with her passport or visa and she is pasted back onto the canvas. The border-painting connection will shape Felicity's vision of her encounter with the refugee woman. To Felicity's border dream, the narrator adds these comments: "At borders, as at death and in dreams, no amount of prior planning will necessarily avail. The law of boundaries applies. In the nature of things, control is not in the hands of the traveller" (11). In Hospital's novel, border-death-dreams are threaded together in passages that imply loss of control. And indeed, powerlessness is inherent in what can be called the dynamics of the border. Borders are, after all, spaces of selection that open or close depending on the crosser, who can be rejected at the slightest provocation, as Luis Humberto Crosthwaite reminds us in *Instrucciones* (2002). Oppositional forces, deeply charged historically and culturally, are arrested at a standstill, a caesura in time and space as each crosser goes through the checkpoint (cf. Chapin 4-6). This caesura plays out the encounter between the inclusive narrative of the nation-state and its simultaneous restrictive practices. In this space of collision between ethical imperatives and national narratives, the border may mutate into what Agamben calls a "zone of indistinction," "an extra-political nowhere while

the sovereign exercises a decision" (Salter 370). The law of boundaries applies, as Hospital's narrator cautions, but there is nothing certain as to its logic. The logic, or lack of it, may refer to the fact that the line is intermittent, as Oates writes in "Crossing." The border works as an impenetrable system that deals out instances of exception but also examples, as Agamben explains:

> [T]he exception is situated in a symmetrical position with respect to the example, with which it forms a system. Exception and example constitute the two modes by which a set tries to found and maintain its own coherence. But while the exception is . . . an *inclusive exclusion* (which thus serves to include what is excluded), the example instead functions as an *exclusive inclusion.* (21, emphasis original)

This chiastic formulation clarifies how the crossing will work for Felicity and Gus, on one hand, and the "illegal" crossers, on the other. The former, although legal and unproblematic, will become the examples that are eventually excluded; the latter will become the exception that is included. Both example and exception will end up inhabiting a similar zone of indistinction characterized by the absence of law, where the individual is abandoned, "that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable. It is literally not possible to say whether the one who has been banned is outside or inside the juridical order" (Agamben 28-29).

Initially, however, the checkpoint in *Borderline* only distinguishes between safe crossers and a suspicious refrigerated van. There is nothing extraordinary about this specific crossing, for humans and goods traverse similar lines, even if the latter find fewer difficulties than the former. However, the border authorities have been tipped that the van may be carrying "illegal" migrants, as an official later confides to Felicity, and thus perform an inspection. As the doors open, Felicity and Gus are privy to its contents: "a roiling curtain of carcasses. Steers. Gutted, obscenely lanced on thick hooks, the lapels of their slit underbellies flapping and gaping like eyelids around empty sockets, they swayed in the sun" (30). The image, while disturbing, is of the kind of perfectly safe goods regularly expedited through the border. But, as the narrator continues, there is more to the scene and different cargo inside the van: "a group of people, perhaps ten of them, men and women, huddling together from cold. They gazed out like exhumed relics of another world. Like animal things still warm and faintly bleating in the midst of an abattoir's carnage" (30). The van holds the living, or rather the (un)dead, and the dead, in an ontological doubling right at the geopolitical border. The unreality of the vision makes Felicity think of cave dwellers, "refugees from another time and place—the

Ice Age, say, or the age of myth" (31). The association automatically primitivizes the migrants and sets up a troubling dichotomy between North Americans (portrayed as modern) and southern immigrants (portrayed as primitive). Whether envisioned as peculiar travellers or as the contemporary version of the "huddled masses yearning to breathe free," the group illustrates how "the metaphor" of the distant, southern Other, to use Guillermo Verdecchia's words in the epigraph above, has become flesh, and has appeared at Canada's doorstep.

The sudden visibility of the refugees, as Gus and Felicity register, is hard to accommodate in the formalities of border crossing. Even if Felicity keeps a file about the disappeared in Central America, on death squads and corruption, the vision seems totally out of place in a continent, as Felicity remarks, "where no one believed in the unpleasant" (31). It is a hard readjustment, for the formalities of an easy transit are overlaid with the violence peculiar to the southern border. It is not only South superimposed onto North, but also the abject-grotesque onto the pleasant, the inanimate onto the human, an alleged remote age of cave dwellers onto the present. In another context, Agamben has attributed the source of the shock immigrants introduce in the order of the modern nation-state to the fact that by breaking "the continuity between man and citizen, *nativity* and *nationality*, they put the originary fiction of modern sovereignty in crisis. Bringing to light the difference between birth and nation, the refugee causes the secret presupposition of the political domain—bare life—to appear for an instant within that domain" (131, emphasis original). Situated at the geopolitical boundary, the group of Salvadoran refugees illustrate the fall from just such a hyphenated continuity. They overlay the concept of the border through their own liminal identity, since, for Agamben, the refugee is "nothing less than a limit concept that radically calls into question the fundamental categories of the nation-state, from the birth-nation to the man-citizen link" (134). Their sudden appearance/birth as bare life brings forth the emergent ruptures within the nation-state.

After the migrants are "herded" (32), Hospital adds another vision within the extraordinary. Time seems to stand still, but this spell is broken when a man comes out to impound the van. When he revs the engine the carcasses begin to jostle one another in agitation: "The unfastened doors flapped to and fro, the hanging carcasses swooped up and out like playground swings. When the van gunned suddenly forward there was . . . [a] stampede of dead cattle: thump after thump, the grotesque smack of butchered flesh on pavement" (35). Such accumulation of dead flesh is the setting where Hospital situates the next crosser, this time not only in close proximity to a carcass but

inside one. As Felicity and Gus stare at the carcass nearest them, they realize it has an unzippered front like a caesarean wound around a fetus. Furthering the surreal or magic-realistic quality of the vision, they realize there is something or someone in there: "A woman. Across her forehead hung a tendril of intestine, ghoulish curl. Her knees were hunched up and her arms were crossed over her breasts like a careful arrangement in a coffin" (35-36). The scene presents a grotesque delivery at the border. The migrant woman emerges from dead, slit flesh, from a symbolic and life-producing border-space, with the ghoulish curl as a reminder of her intimacy with the womb/corpse. Felicity, however, seems to aestheticize the gore and can only think of Perugino's *La Magdalena*.[3] The birth marks the inscription of different borders: the carcass opens to deliver a migrant woman right at the geopolitical boundary, thus emphasizing the correlation between body/corpse and national boundaries. It is a correlation reminiscent of that spelled out by Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horror*, where she states that the abject is "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4). Hospital overlays the symbolic potential of the geopolitical border and the ritual regulation of the national body with a grotesque body opening in another representation of a bleeding wound, an *herida abierta*, in Anzaldúa's words. Revealingly, Hospital anticipates Anzaldúa's conceptualization of the border as the open wound where the "Third World grates against the first and bleeds" (3). Thus *Borderline* prefigures Anzaldúa's elaborate theory of the border-line as a paradigm of multiple crossings before border studies came into being as a field of study and research in the US.[4]

Mary Pat Brady has argued that as migrants are "incorporated" into the host country, they go through an "abjection machine" that metamorphoses them into something else, into "aliens," "illegals," "wetbacks," or "undocumented," and renders them "unintelligible (and unintelligent), ontologically impossible, outside the real and the human" (*Extinct Lands* 50). What Hospital tackles, however, is how abjection starts right at the border. The huddled crossers, together with the unnamed woman, are situated next to the carcass, one of the primary representations of the abject. Ontological boundaries between the living and the dead-inanimate blur as the van exposes different layers of the abject. For Kristeva, the abject is "ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated" (1), for, she argues, the abject and abjection are our safeguards, "the primers of my culture" (2). In placing the migrants next to and in

cohabitation with the carcasses, the van reveals a contagious abjection, for the corpse is the utmost manifestation of abjection. Etymologically, corpse or cadaver comes from the Latin verb *cadere*, to fall, as Kristeva notes (3). From the perspective of the host country the migrants are not physically dead but are socially dead, fallen from any social texture. The spatial contiguity between the carcasses and the migrants suggests what Agamben spells out as the act of falling (or *cadere*) from the continuity "between man and citizen, *nativity* and *nationality*." The description of the slit flesh brings into focus the image of such discontinuity. What happens, Hospital questions, when migrants are jettisoned as abject matter from such correlations? The novel illustrates that there is no land of refuge for these migrants; there is no unconditional hospitality, just as "[o]n maps of the world, at least, there is nowhere for anyone foreign to the order of states to go, no refuge and nowhere to retreat" (Baker 20). The refugee or asylum seeker, unable to return to his or her own country of origin and transformed into an "illegal" in the target country, becomes *de facto* stateless, "a new living dead man" (Agamben 131), an updated version of the *homo sacer*, living in a blurred zone of included exclusion.

Thus the nation-state gives and takes away legal protection. As the targets of exception, the migrants are banned and abandoned in an unknown territory, on a threshold, as Agamben claims, in which "life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable" (28). Are they inside or outside the law? It is hard to say, for the law keeps them inside to extricate them from its domain. Canada, the novel reveals, is not ready to provide any form of political hospitality that does not imply the transformation of the migrant into an inanimate object. Sadowski-Smith has argued that Hospital does not acknowledge the fact that in the 1980s many Central American refugees did find sanctuary in Canada (130). Hospital's departure from the historical record, however, can be read as part of her destabilizing the monolithic version of a welcoming Canada as she unveils the deeply ingrained stereotypes of southern migrants (Roberts 201). The way the incident is chronicled in the fictional *Montreal Gazette* reflects a predominant version of Canada's vision of migrants:

> *Canadian-U.S. border*: A group of illegal aliens was apprehended at the border today following an attempt to smuggle themselves into Canada in a refrigerated meat van. Two of the aliens subsequently died of hypothermia. The remainder, officials say, will be extradited back to the United States, where they had already been served deportation papers, following all necessary medical treatment.
>
> All the aliens come from El Salvador, a spokesman said. (50)

The newspaper paragraph is paradigmatic in its portrayal of hostility: migrants are represented as "illegal aliens" with the agency to smuggle themselves into the country. Their apprehension is followed by extradition, always mediated by the humane medical treatment. Extradition means that the immigrants are abandoned to their lot in the US, which, in turn, will banish them to El Salvador, a place which, in Gus's assessment, is more terrible than the fear of slow death through refrigeration (108).

Transformed into witnesses to this border birth, Felicity and Gus automatically react as responsible hosts/parents and settle the immigrant woman in one of the cars. After doing so, they go through their own crossings. The immigration officer describes the particulars of the border incident to Felicity: the authorities were tipped off from Boston to watch out for a group of migrants that had been served deportation papers and were looking for sanctuary in Canada. The conflicts of the South are spreading to the North and Central America appears at Canada's doorstep. Nothing, the border official claims, will stop the flow: "They'll cross twenty states . . . bribe their way out of anything" (38). The official even ventures the alleged causes for migration: "Fear of death, they try to tell you, but it's green stuff they want" (38). The fear of death, in fact, came from the Civil War that ravaged El Salvador in the 1980s. Since the country was a US ally, refugees were often deported. The Sanctuary movement emerged in the 1980s to allow the entrance of refugees across the Mexico-US border. If migrants were served deportation papers, like the group in the novel, the networks transported them to Canada. Once in the country, the refugees would apply for asylum only if they entered the country legally. Entering the country illegally, like the group of refugees in the novel, meant a speedy return to the US if they were caught (Sadowski-Smith 127-128). Hence the guard's description of his role in the game: "Round them up" (38) (like cattle), if he can catch them.

When Felicity's scrutiny begins, she finds that her destination, a cottage outside Montreal, is immediately questionable because of her point of departure, Boston, the city from which the refrigerated van departed. Even if viewed as an American and as a safe crosser, Felicity falls into the hermeneutics of suspicion that is inherent to border crossing (Chapin 5) because she was born in India. She is, indeed, challenging the "Border Catechism No. 1": "Question: What shall constitute a legitimate and acceptable human being" (Hospital 40). "Answer: A person, preferably of Anglo-Saxon stock, with the decency to have been born in a country familiar to the presiding official, and respectable in his eyes" (40). This is

the first instance that even distant or remote contact or association with the migrant Other makes Felicity a suspect, and that example and exception are not too far apart. Once both Gus and Felicity are waved through, the narrative voice details the most apparent changes and differences the eye can list on the other side of the border: interstates mutate into *autoroutes*, miles become kilometres. Other changes, however, are intangible (42). It is these other changes that the rest of the novel will unfold. The trio has finally and successfully crossed a geopolitical boundary which will reveal complex and far-reaching consequences. The boundary, Felicity and Gus will find out, can repeat itself endlessly and unexpectedly as the dynamics of border suspicion are turned loose.

II. The Reckoning of the Other and Border Indistinctions

> The Other becomes my neighbor precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question.
> —Emmanuel Levinas, "Ethics as First Philosophy"

> I do not think of the notion of the 'border' as an empirical quantity or a fixed denomination, or indeed in the spatial sense of the term. Borders are always within, inside social space, which is not smooth, but is multi-linear, discontinuous and punctured (*troué*).
> —Rosi Braidotti, *Transpositions*

Levinas claims that there is a silent request in the face of the Other that awakes one's responsibility towards him or her. For the philosopher, the subject is unique and irreplaceable in his or her obligation or duty, an absolute responsibility for the Other and for the Other's welfare. This taking charge stands before any other commitment; it is asymmetrical and nonreciprocal. The relation between the I and the you is not one of reciprocity, but there is an inherent "inequality, a dissymmetry" (*Of God* 150). In *Borderline* this reckoning crystallizes in an act of spontaneous hospitality in spite of the abject birth witnessed by Felicity and Gus. Felicity and Gus debate over whose car would be less suspicious for safely accommodating the woman. Gus is Canadian and born there too, but his nervousness makes Felicity suggest her car instead. Gus picks up the woman, "the soft bundle and cradled it against his chest as though it were his first-born, the one he had never held" (37). Significantly, the woman is portrayed as a newborn, and Gus, immediately transformed into a surrogate father, proceeds with the rituals of welcoming her into the world: "He brushed the matted black

hair from her cheeks, her head in the crook of his left elbow. . . . Delicately, like a nervous father during a first bottle feeding, he let the whiskey trickle over her tongue" (46). Like a devoted father, Gus holds her head against his shoulder, rocking back and forth with her. It is the beginning of his summons and his ensuing transformation into a responsible father figure, a *pater* unequivocally associated with a superior moral stand as opposed to the infantilization of the adult migrant woman. This new relationship is therefore complex and problematic from the start, and replicates the hierarchies inherent to the hospitable act: the host is portrayed as *pater* and the guest is depicted as a child.

The automatic and unconscious acts of hospitality of Felicity and Gus bring to the fore the discrepancy between what Derrida calls the Law and the laws of hospitality. The Law of universal, unlimited, and unconditional hospitality clashes with the laws of conditional and limited hospitality designed to maintain the stable social order within the community. Under the laws of hospitality, the Law would itself be illegal, "outside the law, like a lawless law" (Derrida, *Of Hospitality* 79). Whereas the Law of hospitality is premised on blurring the lines between self and Other, the laws serve to mark the limits of how the stranger can be received. Inadvertently, Felicity and Gus are guided by the Law of hospitality, by an imperative to respond to the interpellation of the Other, as Derrida describes it: "absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner . . . but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them" (*Of Hospitality* 25, emphasis original). By receiving and sheltering the Other, Felicity's and Gus's sense of self is immediately called into question. In the process, all the routines that structured their lives will be left behind. Hospitality, Judith Still writes, is more than a legal contract or a verbal agreement, for it is "overlaid with crucial affective elements" (12), and the guest and the host may be utterly changed by the experience. As Felicity says, it is a lifetime decision that you cannot reverse or undo (59). Through their hospitable act, the migrant woman, "categorised as 'outside,' as not necessarily *by right* or legal contract, part of the 'inside,' is temporarily brought within" (Still 11). The consequences of this bringing within are far-reaching, and offer a chiastic revision of the hospitable act: not only is the outside brought within, but something that was categorized as "inside" or legitimate (Gus, Felicity), as by right or legal contract, is also brought without. This being brought without is subtle and does not manifest itself openly at first, but will create a powerful conceptual crossing in the novel.

The cottage that was supposed to provide peace and quiet turns into the space of hospitality in the novel. This physical space of hospitality, however, contrasts with the fictions each host creates in order to integrate the woman. Felicity takes Father Bolduc to the cottage and offers a hesitant narrative of the migrant as Mary Magdalene and as a victim of rape. Similarly, as Gus returns home and, at least initially, gives the border incident a happy ending, he imagines what the woman's life will turn out to be: at the priest's intercession, the woman—virginal in spirit—would receive a work permit; she would not be deported, and would marry a doctor; her son would become Prime Minister or Supreme Court judge and then would die after a full life (70). These fantasies of inclusion, however, turn out to be narratives of sameness where Felicity and Gus project their own subjectivities. Neither host seems ready to host the woman's radical difference unconditionally, either physically—they abandon her in the cottage—or narratively. Their hospitality, therefore, falls into the realm of the limited and conditional welcome of the Other. The laws of conditional hospitality finally determine and undermine the Law of hospitality.

When Felicity returns to the cottage with Father Bolduc, she finds that the woman has disappeared. In Felicity's assessment, she might have been rescued by friends, relatives, a church group, "something like the old Underground Railroad for runaway slaves" (126). Significantly, the novel suggests, nineteenth-century slaves are the immigrants of the twentieth century. Both, slaves and immigrants, seek Canada as a land of refuge against slavery or deportation. Similarly, the geopolitical boundary separating the US from Canada, like the nineteenth-century boundary separating slavery from freedom, is elusive, and may become manifest anywhere, anytime. Neither the migrant woman nor the "legal" crossers will be safe from the recurrence of this repeating line. After her disappearance from the cottage she becomes a ghostly presence for Felicity and Gus. Felicity imagines her sitting on her passenger seat "[w]ith a flamenco swirl of her torn black skirts" (88). The fact that flamenco does not belong in El Salvador may be another indication that Felicity does not know how to fully accommodate the dimensions of difference the woman brings into her world, just as how, upon seeing her, Felicity can only think of her as the embodiment of Perugino's Magdalene. How far-reaching is Felicity's commitment to the Other? Felicity is relieved to hear the spectre of the woman say that even if she is "inconvenient" she will not "coerce" (88). Yet Felicity feels the threat of the guest taking over the host, now transformed into a disquieting ghost

threatening to gobble her up (88).[5] The spectrality of the guest respects no boundaries, and Gus hears the woman's scream in the middle of his work routine. Like Felicity, he also projects his subjectivity on to the migrant, and thinks he hears her admonition not to abandon her.

But the woman is being tracked down by a host of other groups, as Leon-Angelo, a refugee, explains to Felicity. For the migrant woman, as well as for all of those like Felicity and Gus who come into contact with her or try to protect her at some point, there exists no Border with capital B. Crossing the border in *Borderline* does not equal safety, since the border fragments itself into unpredictable border encounters repeated in different locations and at multiple times. This fragmentation of the physical border into myriads of boundaries makes it unexpectedly unstable, and allows us to envision a borderspace that is explicitly present nowhere and yet can make itself evident anywhere. The consequences of this recurrent line provide instances of what Jean-Marc enigmatically calls "the law of boundaries" (11) at the beginning of the novel and give the novel its thriller-like quality. The law of boundaries becomes the law of indistinction, as the principles of example and exception become blurred. Similarly, the two sets of characters at the beginning of the novel become impossible to tell apart. The migrant woman is a fugitive, but so are Felicity and Gus; she is a "guest" but so too become her two former "hosts"; she is banned and abandoned, but so will be the formerly safe crossers.

There will be no more home for Gus and Felicity. Felicity is eventually placed under constant surveillance by two alleged FBI agents who materialize in her office and ask her to identify the photo of a disfigured woman whose body, they falsely claim, was near the cottage she owns. Her name is Dolores Marquez, alias La Salvadora, who was under government protection (134). The fact that Felicity has a collection of newspaper clippings about Central American migrants and that she was driving behind the refrigerated van makes her automatically a suspect to these so-called investigators. The two men are especially interested in a clipping about a group of migrants jumping off a bridge in Texas when a freight train ploughed through the railway trestle. Some of the survivors managed to escape and ended up in the refrigerated truck at the Canadian border (138). But Felicity is also contacted by Sister Gabriel, a member of the Sanctuary movement. As in the nineteenth century, the line separating slavery from freedom can repeat itself unexpectedly, whenever nineteenth-century slave catchers or twentieth-century FBI agents and immigration authorities manage to catch up with fugitives. But in the 1980s, the FBI agents in the novel turn out to be a cover for illicit operations,

and the novel takes pains in identifying the different groups—extreme right or left, or simple death squads—which weave an inescapable circle of terror around the characters. Felicity is right in her assessment that she will never be safe. The feeling of insecurity intensifies after her interview with Leon-Angelo, who used to be legal in the US but is now threatened with deportation to an unavoidable death in El Salvador. Even if "Felicity had crossed more borders on more continents than anyone would want to keep a file on" (11), as Jean-Marc remarks at the outset of the novel, towards the end of the novel she feels overwhelmed by an encroaching border that seems to have travelled to the heart of Boston. Significantly, during her conversation with Leon-Angelo, the narrative voice depicts her drawing a thin line between herself and Leon-Angelo (205). Her efforts to distance herself are ultimately unsuccessful, however, for in having the conversation she has already implicated herself in Boston's secret immigrant network.

Even if Felicity wishes she had not crossed the border when she did, she finds herself in the midst of a border nightmare, an expanding site of exception where no rule of law applies, everyone is suspect, and nobody is safe. Trapped within this lawless site, Felicity, Gus, and Dolores each embody the figure of the *homo sacer* since the three become abandoned beings that live outside the law. There is no sanctuary for Felicity or Gus, just as there is no sanctuary for the migrants after the border incident, just as there was no sanctuary for the original group in Texas. There is no waking up into the past before crossing the border. Even if Felicity wants to convince herself that all this was about a painting, about Perugino's rendition of *La Magdalena*, border realities drag her into a different side of the real, one of bodies piled up in ditches and garbage dumps. None of it, Leon-Angelo admits to Felicity, is possible. "None of it's real. But it happens" (211). This sense of encroaching reality catches up with both. Leon-Angelo is finally turned over to immigration authorities to be deported, and Felicity is last seen going into her apartment before the building burns down.

Similarly, there is no sanctuary for Gus. Abandoned by his family, he starts living in his car and ends up taking quarters in shabby boarding houses. Unsurprisingly, and given his failure at risk assessment, he quits his job as an insurance agent and takes a dishwashing job, the kind of position traditionally filled by undocumented workers. He eventually finds Dolores in a restaurant kitchen. Gus finally becomes fully responsible for her. Following Jean-Marc's instructions, he tries to drive her across the border to the safety of New York. At some point the car is smashed and

charred with two unidentified bodies inside. Jean-Marc and Kathleen, Gus' daughter, imagine Gus still running errands of mercy across the border, a Robin Hood in a Chevy, a borderline saint. Felicity and Gus become the absent ones, *los desaparecidos*, another version of the undead, just as the group of immigrants inside the refrigerated van. *Los desaparecidos* rings with irreality, for, as Kathleen reasons, "This isn't Latin America. Things happen in Latin America that couldn't happen anywhere else" (283). This discrepancy between the assurances of the nation-state and the factual eruption of violence marks the ultimate conceptual crossing of the novel: the strangeness of the South is brought within and South overlies North. Here lies the chiastic work of the border: it approximates the alien at the same time that it defamiliarizes the immediate. The violence of El Salvador feels strangely present in an apartment building in Boston and on the lonely roads of upstate New York. There is no respite and no sanctuary, no place of hospitality in the face of this spreading violence. Conversely, the US and Canada feel strangely remote, embodying promises of safety and asylum neither country can keep. In her rethinking of national borders, Hospital shows how the imaginary of the modern world cracks. Concepts like refugee, migrant, asylum, and hospitality are pulled apart for inspection as if undergoing a conceptual checkpoint, a border crossing where received meanings collapse. Hospital manages to bring the border within. As a consequence, the imagined communities and narrations of the US and Canada are disrupted by a borderland subjectivity and an unpredictable border that create zones of indistinction. Demarcations, sides, and binaries dissolve through the power of juxtaposition. Stable and monolithic identities, or at least the illusion of such stability, disappear.

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NOTES

1 Significantly, the novel was written in the aftermath of the 1980 Quebec referendum on sovereignty-association, which reinforced a political boundary within Canada.
2 The term "borderscape" refers to a "zone of multiple actors and multiple bodies" (Kumar

Rajaram and Grundy-Warr xxix). Similarly, Chiara Brambilla argues that borderscapes are "multidimensional and mobile constructions" (Pötzsch).

3 La Magdalena appears as a projection of Felicity, just as Felicity herself appears, in Seymour's assessment, as an idea of his.

4 Margarita Cota-Cárdenas' novella *Puppet* (1985) similarly anticipates Anzaldúa's identitary revision in *Borderlands*.

5 In *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, Derrida claims that the absence of identity, the empirical invisibility of the Other, accounts for its "spectral aura" (111).

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Alan Hill

Endangered Species

Struggling on the sand in discount swimwear
thigh chaffing Walmart extra large

I tripped over the Monk Seal, six feet of it
cradled in the whiskered chops of
an oversized Mexican wrestler

in the stillness, closed eye completeness of
a twitter free Trump
opioid, beach ball headed Buddha, vice president

wearing its medal of red tracking tag, a small inlet of
hi tech plastic
a present from Shanghai, California.

It lay silent, complete in its otherness, in
its need be alone.

Later when I returned, this time with my kids
it had gone

It had left an indentation, mould, about my size
that I pressed myself into, while my daughter
took photographs.

Emily Ballantyne

Colonial Cosmopolitanism?
Resistance, Aesthetics, and Modernism in Patrick Anderson's Prose

Philip Holden refers to the modernist cosmopolitanism in the work of Canadian poet and travel writer Patrick Anderson as an "exemplary failure" (483) that he considers significant not because of the flaws of the particular text or author, but instead because of the larger theoretical problems with the modernist project that the work seems to encapsulate. In Anderson's travel writing, cosmopolitanism adheres to colonial systems of power. As a result, Holden argues that Anderson acts as an exemplary failure because, "despite [his] ethical commitment" (491) and "his best intentions" (492), his writing is "ultimately conditioned by his position within inescapable colonial discourse and colonial structures of governance" (492). Indeed, Holden's criticism of Anderson highlights the salient problem of cosmopolitan vision associated with modernist writing at mid-twentieth century. Modernist writers often think globally, incorporating into their literature a utopian desire for cross-cultural communication and globalized ethics; however, this impulse is somewhat undermined by the logic of economic and cultural imperialism. This paper turns to Patrick Anderson's travel writing to interrogate the way that Anderson's form of modernist cosmopolitanism becomes a strategy for questioning colonialism. Focusing on the unstable narrative voice in Anderson's travel memoir of Singapore, *Snake Wine*, I consider the limits of Anderson's expression of cosmopolitan vision. Anderson's writing exemplifies a critical engagement with modernist cosmopolitanism's colonial impulses, and identifies the centrality of self-reflection in confronting and resisting internalized colonial attitudes.

Cosmopolitanism as a concept has been criticized by some postcolonial theorists as a tool of Western imperialism. A global ethics defined by the

West and promoted by the West outside of itself bears similarities to colonial mandates to "enlighten" using ethnocentric standards. To acknowledge these weighty allegations and to retheorize a global ethics that moves beyond the colonial/elite origins of cosmopolitanism as a concept, other theorists have offered alternative, local-based readings. These include Homi K. Bhabha's "vernacular cosmopolitanism" (43) grounded in local communities that translate and speak back to the West, and James Clifford's "discrepant cosmopolitanism" (108) that acknowledges the diasporic and travelling nature of cultures that operate within power relations around the world. Indeed, even Kwame Anthony Appiah's frequently cited "rooted cosmopolitanism" (232) brings together a sense of universal humanity that should govern ethical interactions with an individual or community's "roots" that privilege relations between some individuals or groups over others.

But, these qualified neo-cosmopolitanisms have yet to substantially nuance the coexistence of cosmopolitan vision and colonial ideology in works of literary modernism. Recent scholarship on modernism and cosmopolitanism suggests that one of the main contributions literary writers make to cosmopolitan studies is a critical assessment of individual and cultural responses to difference through questioning or criticizing their own biases. Rebecca L. Walkowitz argues that literary writers engage in acts of "critical cosmopolitanism" by "comparing, distinguishing, and judging among different versions of transnational thought; testing moral and political norms, including the norms of critical thinking; and valuing informal as well as transient models of community" (2). She demonstrates how modernist style is caught up in significant critical acts, including "double consciousness, comparison, negation, and persistent self-reflection" (2). Walkowitz's thinking is in line with that of Cyrus R. K. Patell, who advocates for "cosmopolitan irony"; he suggests that literary writers scrutinize cultural assumptions by cultivating a critical distance in their work (15). From this critical assessment, modernists can then conceive of relationships with others in new ways. As Jessica Berman suggests, cosmopolitan attitudes in modernist writing can also be linked to alternative community formation: "modern narratives of community arise in the movement and translation of foreign experience (whether of the past or of a geographically distant place) into common experience and the concomitant and never-ending movement back towards the foreign experience that this process entails" (19). Modernist scholars see great potential in literary works for representing complexity, resisting colonialism, and articulating new forms of communal engagement.

While modernist critics identify colonial resistance in modernist writing, conventions of genre complicate this resistance. Colonial resistance is particularly fraught in travel writing, a genre that has been integral to the discursive formation of empire. When colonial subjects travel and write about colonized places, their acts of writing risk authenticating the imperialist desire both to know and control others.[1] Debbie Lisle argues that colonialism and cosmopolitanism "exist in a complex relationship with one another—sometimes antagonistic, sometimes symbiotic, sometimes ambiguous" (5). She finds value in travel writing's ability to offer "incomplete articulations of power that offer compelling moments of resistance" (23). Anderson's travel writing, while inherently shaped by his privilege as a white, male, settler-colonial subject, also clearly articulates how modernist visions of cosmopolitanism make space for resistance to the systemic power of colonialism. Building from Lisle's work, I explore the potential value and limitation of reading Anderson's travel writing as what I call "colonial cosmopolitanism." Colonial cosmopolitanism is a form of cosmopolitan thought that brings its inherent contradiction to the fore. Anderson's travel writing, with its inward gaze, self-critical narration, and engagement with difference, suggests that one of the central contributions Anderson makes in this period is defining colonial cosmopolitanism in the genre of travel writing. In this article, I demonstrate some of the ways that Anderson's colonial cosmopolitanism is critical of cosmopolitanism, while continuing to tease out the "exemplary failure" (Holden 483) of colonial cosmopolitanism to extricate itself from colonial ideology.

Early Cosmopolitanism in Anderson's Modernist Prose

As Bridget T. Chalk demonstrates in *Modernism and Mobility*, national identity and its administration cannot be separated from mobility and cosmopolitanism in works of literary modernism; changing notions of nation dovetail with new conceptions of cosmopolitanism. So, cosmopolitanism in Canada can be better defined comparatively and historically—as an engaged reflection on the interrelations between the local, national, and international. By understanding these interrelations, Canadian cosmopolitanism encourages an ethics of awareness and connection that links disparate people and places and their various collective identities, including national and artistic identities. In this section, I present Anderson's initial cosmopolitan vision in the context of the Canadian modernist tradition to which his work contributes in order to better trace the development of his colonial cosmopolitan vision after travelling to Singapore and encountering competing notions of national identity.

"Cosmopolitan" is a quality that was introduced by poet-critic A. J. M. Smith to discussions of modern Canadian poetry and some of its poets in the 1940s, initially as a part of a debate about two competing styles of modern poetry in Canada.[2] Poets who he categorized as "cosmopolitan"—including P. K. Page, F. R. Scott, and Patrick Anderson—"made a heroic effort to transcend colonialism by entering into the universal, civilizing culture of ideas" (5). Smith emphasized the intellectualism of these writers, as well as their familiarity with modernist works from Anglo-American poets. The other style, which he dismissively called "native," was viewed by Smith as implicitly inferior, derivative, and colonial. However, the narrative of opposition between nationalist and cosmopolitanist traditions was radically challenged, particularly by poets associated with the native tradition, and was subsequently revised.[3] The nature of being "colonial" was hotly debated. On the one hand, poetry too invested in Canadian content, nature poetry, and realism was derided for being colonial, as in navel-gazing and uninteresting to international modern writing. On the other hand, poetry that drew too heavily on Anglo-American modernist influences was also derided for its own colonialism—being derivative and not focused enough on Canadian qualities.[4] From the 1940s onward, cosmopolitanism and colonial identity have been entwined in the Canadian context; while both terms shift uneasily over time, the tension between them has remained central to Canadian modernist cosmopolitanism.

One of the central publications associated with this iteration of cosmopolitanism was the little magazine *Preview* (1942-1945), edited by Patrick Anderson. In addition to serving as the general editor, Anderson contributed poetry, journal entries, editor's notes, short stories, reviews, and articles. Throughout *Preview*'s run, Anderson was its most frequent contributor, with forty poems, nine short stories, and five reviews and articles (Precosky). From this diverse body of work, several cosmopolitan themes emerge: ethics of war, alienation from political and social structures, desire for common values, and acknowledgement of individual and cultural difference. These themes are particularly evident in the magazine's poetry. In the inaugural issue of *Preview*, for instance, such themes appear in several of Anderson's poems. In the first, "New Dead," the speaker reflects on the relationship between poetry and victims of war: "I think of those who falling between my words, / burn out unnoticed."[5] The speaker acknowledges his own distance from the atrocity of the unfolding war and sees a disjunction between the creation of a poem and the destruction of life. These actions

are counterposed, but they are also treated in relation. He compares death to the difficulty of a poem when he describes victims of war thus: "they are changed strangely by pain's metaphors, / yet leave an unread book, who die for culture." The speaker troubles the idea of dying for culture, but also indicates the social and cultural losses of war. Put differently, he reinforces the relationship between global cultures and politics, seeing them as two parts of the same whole. Cosmopolitanism in this poem manifests itself as a desire to twin politics and culture and show how the fate of one is enmeshed with the other.

In addition to bringing together world politics and culture, Anderson's cosmopolitanism includes dense imagery and direct language—a cool self-awareness that blends subjective interpretation with rich intertextual references and intellectual difficulty in poems like "Capital Square," also published in the inaugural issue of *Preview*. This poem emphasizes the danger and coldness of the built environment, exploring thematically the modern city as a symmetrical but abstract space that resists its inhabitants. The built environment is ominous and violent; the stone architecture is described as a "boxing brute," the facades are "punishing," and the statues keep "No upon their lips." The images build on one another to recreate the dense, impenetrable walls described in the poem. It also uses the second person to develop the impact of the city on the individual. The stone coldness of the square's statues allows "you [to] understand / you are a pigmy held in a stone hand. // No warmth is here, only an abstract good." So, the speaker makes a connection between himself and his addressee. The speaker extends and projects his own reading and interpretation of the city to others, suggesting that the city is ominous and unforgiving to all. This is where cosmopolitanism meets modernism: the modernist concern with the representation of alienation in the face of change couples with the cosmopolitan desire to relate or share experiences between and across difference.

Though Smith initially framed Canadian cosmopolitanism in his discussion of modernist poetry, cosmopolitanism was also an integral part of Canadian modernist prose. What is interesting in this body of work—which shares the very same pages of *Preview* as the poetry—is the way that it engages with authority in modernist writing. In Anderson's prose, the narrator is often highly self-aware, and yet is often extremely superficial.[6] This heightened self-awareness of the role that the narrator plays in subjectively shaping and positing him- or herself in relation to the text counteracts the impersonal remove associated with an omniscient narrator. Thematized in modernist

writing, and in particular, travel writing, is a questioning self-awareness through an emphasis on self-reflective narration. Anderson carefully crafts artist personas that are sensitive, observant, and acutely aware of those around them. Don Precosky describes this persona as "a narrator who is intensely alive to even the most delicate sensations." For example, in the short prose piece "Dramatic Monologue," an artist-figure attempts to teach a boy about the power of metaphor but does not succeed, bringing about crisis; in "Remembering the Village," a college-aged poet describes a friendly refuge offered by "Miss P.," a woman whose "enthusiasm was almost over bright," and whose poetry is "too sentimental" for his "dreadfully obscure" taste. Anderson's narrators read other characters through their own perceptions, recording detailed aesthetic sketches of their behaviour and description.

Then again, Anderson tends to let his narrators dominate, and often underdevelops the other characters in his work, or allows secondary characters to stand as foil characters. For Precosky, "the narrator is more important to the stories than any action which takes place in them." For example, in "The Americans," Anderson's narrator asserts his own cosmopolitanism by contrasting his behaviour at a summer hotel in Quebec with that of some American guests. In the story, the Americans are described as the core of the Canadian summer hotel industry, valued for their money and power. Their privilege gives them power, but does not endow them with a cosmopolitan sensibility. Indeed, the Americans are racist and quick to shame the narrator for his open-mindedness. They generalize and justify their mistreatment of others: "Then, as though from an infinite wisdom she were producing a beautiful ethical truth: 'You know, you can't change human nature. Why, there'll always be wars. There'll always be some people who are rich and enterprising and those who are no darn good at all. Of course there will!'" (10). The American characters' speeches and displays of blatant racism and anti-Semitism throughout seem to illustrate the wrong way to interact on the world stage. In contrast, the narrator presents his own views humbly; he relies on negation to present Canadian attitudes toward class and racial difference as morally superior, determining that unlike the Americans, he and his wife Peggy "were quite objective" because "we based our opinions on what had been our experience" (10). Cosmopolitanism—here presented as informed politeness—contrasts starkly with the Americans' aggression, rudeness, and bigotry.

Further, the closing lines of "The Americans" offer a hopeful demonstration of cosmopolitan ethics in action. The narrator celebrates the dual cultures of

Canada by taking on the language of the hotel operators. The story ends with a celebration of a return to proper cosmopolitan order. As the Americans leave, the narrator and his wife "were busy ordering breakfast from Rita—orange juice, fried eggs and coffee, in jubilant French" (11). The narrator's final joyous act, speaking the language of his environment instead of insisting that the hotel operators conform to his language, speaks to simple and everyday ways of embracing cultural difference. Often, Anderson's ethics are cosmopolitan and forward-looking—but his tendency to generalize and stereotype shows his limitations.

Preview lays important groundwork for Canadian cosmopolitanism, both as it has been understood collectively in Canadian literary studies and as it was practiced by Anderson specifically. In a retrospective piece on the magazine, Anderson makes his own summations of the ways cosmopolitan ethics manifested in *Preview*. He writes, "our subjects—the poor, the deprived, the young and uncertain, the decadent bourgeois, the members of minority groups, the conscripts—bulk larger than any question of formal aesthetics or even, indeed, of forging a Canadian literature" ("Introduction" iv). Thus, it is through the choice of subjects—primarily those without power—that he presents the heart of the magazine. Beyond this, he summarizes the interest with cosmopolitanism in *Preview* as being informed by the French-English dualism of Montreal: "I cannot but think that our proximity to the French kept our characteristic mixture of nationalism and internationalism alive. Certainly a Canada without its complementary culture was unthinkable" (v). The comparative nature of living and working in two languages and cultures is at the core of Canadian cosmopolitan thought: the tension and celebratory possibility of bilingualism and biculturalism encourage Anderson to write comparatively. However, this perspective becomes limiting when the comparisons are binaristic, or do not consider the power, privilege, and bias of the narrator doing the comparing.

In the relatively limited scope of the Montreal magazine, Anderson and his contemporaries practiced a modernist cosmopolitanism that largely left its colonial underpinnings unquestioned. The projects of both settler-colonialism and empire building were implicitly accepted. Thus, cosmopolitanism in the context of a literary magazine, circulated among peers in a small Montreal-based community with similar backgrounds in terms of education, class, and race, allowed its proponents to assume (however incorrectly) a likeness among their experiences that allowed for a particular construction of what is universal or shared among different people

and places. However, when Anderson created travel writing in the period following, his assumptions about commonality and universal attitudes became increasingly problematized. His critical reflections about such assumptions in his travel writing nuanced his articulation of cosmopolitan ideology for the better. Instead of treating cosmopolitanism as a singular set of shared global values, in his travel writing he recognized difference as a positive part of cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

Self-Representation and Narrative Authority as Cosmopolitan Engagement in *Snake Wine*

Moving across international borders, and in particular, from the settler colony of Canada to the colony of Singapore, brings into sharper focus Anderson's totalizing urges. Through travel, Anderson productively confronts his own prejudices and assumptions, even though he does not usually resolve them. Canadian modernist cosmopolitanism is tested against other, competing notions of how to live and define oneself. For Anderson, travelling to Singapore partially readjusts his literary persona and assumptions; but this new context also reveals how inextricably his cosmopolitan worldview is vested in colonial power. Turning to narrative voice in *Snake Wine* allows me to engage with Anderson's articulation of cosmopolitanism by exploring his treatment of collective identities, nation, and colonial privilege.

Snake Wine, published in England in 1955, is based on Anderson's journals from his two years working in Singapore as a lecturer at the newly formed University of Malaya from 1950-1952. The text, written from Anderson's perspective, narrates his observations about Singapore's culture, city life, academic structure, and political strife, with an emphasis on the way these things impact him. Anderson uses inconsistent self-representation in the novel to critically engage with the limitations of his own cosmopolitan vision. The work is a kind of modernist collage—bringing together parts of the travel experience without creating coherence or unity. The first third of the text is constructed as long, unaddressed personal letters, and the rest is written episodically, relaying key moments in his trip. The move from the unstructured personal letters to the more structured narrative anecdotes is abrupt and unexplained, and speaks to a blatant disregard for the conventions of the linear travelogue. Rather than follow a typical travel narrative plot structure, the text controls subjective experience through a carefully developed narratorial persona in a way that both illustrates the subjective nature of the account, and also subtly reveals the author's narrative control.

If we read the changes in tone from beginning to end as intentionally modernist, the structure of *Snake Wine* reverses expectations—fragmentation and stream of consciousness do not follow structure, but instead come first. The text draws attention to its own construction and composition; the changes in structure point to the degree of editing and manipulation of experience from the raw, more visceral journals to the more stylistically contained short story vignettes. The turn toward a more structured narrative pattern, perhaps, speaks to a reining in of authority from a text that is starting to get away from its author. The narrator's uneven presentation of authority, his blend of uncertainty and blunt assertiveness, reveal a subject attempting to reconceptualize his relationship to others while trying to critically engage with his own sense of self.

In the journal section of the text, Anderson's persona is quite self-indulgent.[7] He is concerned with his self-perception and wants to appear as a comfortable and successful man to his fellow passengers on his voyage to Singapore. From the beginning, Anderson is focused on fashioning himself as cosmopolitan:

> Two things give me the confidence to imagine that I am a man of the world and an experienced traveller: the phrases uncoiling inside my head and seeming more and more apt as drink succeeds drink; the timeless solitude in which, with no immediate preoccupations, I can flatter myself with the facts of my private existence until they acquire a beautiful if fatuous significance. (12)

Anderson reflects ironically on his own social anxieties to overcome the insecurity that underlies his most assertive statements. This initial frame for cosmopolitanism is shallow at best—well-travelled, worldly—and presented by a narrator experiencing imposter syndrome. When Anderson's narrator is most vulnerable, the colonial privilege he relies on for his cosmopolitan attitude is made most apparent. While anxious, Anderson also asserts a kind of exuberance. He expresses his brief biographical details:

> How astonishing to be thirty-five years old! How extraordinary to be an adopted Canadian, especially when this involved a 'professorship,' however minor, at McGill University in Montreal! And how intoxicating this new freedom is, sailing away to take up a reasonably senior post in the English Department of the University of Malaya! (12)

The overly ebullient statements combined with the multiple exclamation points seem over-compensatory; he comes across as trying to earnestly perform the role of a cosmopolitan gentleman.[8] Anderson is consciously aware of his inability to fully embrace displacement, and yet we see him attempting

to identify and perform a cosmopolitan identity to try to familiarize the foreign and construct a more certain and positive identity for himself. For Anderson, cosmopolitanism is presented as an eagerness for adventure, and a comfort with it, all expressed with self-assertion and authority.

In these early pages, Anderson's narrator seems caught up in the desire to *appear* cosmopolitan—he introduces himself with a list of his social capital, which specifically includes his chosen (thus "adopted") citizenship as a Canadian. Anderson's nationality here is a marker of elitist cosmopolitanism; both his freedom of movement and his relatively straightforward immigration are rooted in his status as a subject of the British Empire moving through its colonies. Anderson treats his Canadianness as a kind of affectation, an almost aesthetic quality. Indeed, as Robert Druce describes in his short memoir of Anderson, Anderson's nationality "was a status in which he took great pride throughout all his remaining years of self-chosen exile from Canada" (243). Anderson uses his nationality as a marker of difference from his fellow British subjects in Singapore. By choosing to identify himself as Canadian (he became a Canadian citizen in 1945 and lived in Canada for ten years), Anderson conflates his cosmopolitan assertiveness with modernist aesthetics, relying on his colonial power while reorienting himself in empire as a different type of citizen. The social capital associated with cosmopolitan attitudes and ethics is part and parcel of Canadian modernist cosmopolitanism. It is a way of understanding and valuing knowledge and culture that is, in great part, colonial in its expression and attitude.

Anderson relies on colonial assumptions to frame his sense of the cosmopolitan, which reveals cosmopolitanism's complicity in asymmetrical power relations. His narrator explores the power he has gained as white settler-colonial subject in a colonized country, and does not question the colonial structures he encounters. He anticipates "the kind of life [he] can expect [in Singapore]" by daydreaming: "[*W*]*hat sort of a servant shall I have*? Shall I have a Malay, or an Indian, or a Chinese? And shall I be able, through him or her, to grapple with the country, understand it and love it? (Of course, romantically, I love it already)" (26, emphasis original). In his desire to really "understand" the country, Anderson is eager to use colonial relationships to help him. Embodied in his romanticization of the servant is an obvious Orientalist mindset—the East is both seductive and submissive to colonial power. The servant acts as a synecdoche for the country as a whole. Anderson's desire to "know" Singapore is undermined by his colonial desire not actually to acculturate, but instead to control and represent this new

space from his own authoritative position. Clearly, then, Anderson interprets the servant as a marker of cultural capital, as a "symbol" that is meant to help him develop his own subjective responses to the East as a modernist artist. He relies on tropes of modernist primitivism,[9] and its link to the romantic past, to avoid directly confronting this reality.

Cosmopolitanism can also be read as a kind of cover for Anderson's sexuality. Though Anderson was closeted at the time,[10] his queer identity is given some expression via cosmopolitanism. Because he desires a romanticized, primitive subject, Anderson hires a young boy as his servant. He openly acknowledges his own paternalism and desire for control in his selection of fifteen-year-old Ah-Ting, "whose boyishness is not purely professional, who is in fact prodigiously small, young even to pathos and ferociously efficient" (42-43). Anderson's many and lengthy descriptions of Ah-Ting are also grounded in eroticism. In a passage purportedly describing the control Ah-Ting has as holder of the household keys, Anderson turns abruptly to the sensual, as he notices:

> [H]is brief shorts into which his smooth pale thigh disappeared only a few inches from my face, flesh at once taut, plump and reticent, so that it possessed its own locked-up look, for it neither varied in surface tone like a white man's skin, nor did it secrete, as do the gleaming skins of Tamils and Malays, a deeper intensity of purple or a series of shifting yellows and mauves. (77)[11]

Anderson's voyeuristic description is sexualized and idealized. Ah-Ting's body is aestheticized and Orientalized in order to allow Anderson to express desire that would otherwise be seen as deviant or pedophilic. The servant fulfills a number of representative roles for Anderson—colonial dominance, romantic primitivism, and acceptable homoerotic sensualism and desire.

The aestheticization and Orientalization of Ah-Ting are tactics used by the narrator to deny Ah-Ting, and the servant class more generally, status as fellow humans. Anderson fully recognizes this practice, excusing it as an "elaborate personal indulgence[]" (202) in an ironic, self-reflexive passage:

> I like people and things for the way they look. But liking them is dangerous, demanding contacts and action and leading often to disappointment, and so it seems to me that I tend to scurry back with my visual images to my cell . . . . And then, to spiritualize what is appropriated in this vivid but lonely fashion, I turn my experience into a symbol and, since symbols last when impressions fade and die, I approach the world again with a whole set of imaginative preconceptions. (202-03)

Anderson understands his appropriation of others for his visual pleasure as a modernist practice that makes his life more pleasurable and keeps him from

feelings of isolation and loneliness. In fact, this passage suggests that aesthetic symbols are preferable to real contact—reinforcing his notion that the superficial is easier to control and to enjoy than a sustained, mutual relationship.

Anderson's framing of the foreign as aesthetic symbols compromises his commitment to cosmopolitan ideals. As Holden rightly points out in his criticism of Anderson: "If this technique releases him from the prisonhouse of colonial discourse, it also effectively prevents any real knowledge of others, and ultimately produces a form of solipsism" (490). On the one hand, Holden suggests that aestheticization and an emphasis on the superficial can work to resist colonial writing techniques such as ethnography that interpret and pass judgment on what one sees. But, on the other hand, to avoid this knowing, Anderson retreats from it at all by withdrawing into himself. However, I argue this inward gaze can itself be productive. Modernism and cosmopolitanism do not work together to completely overcome the structures of knowledge produced by colonialism; rather, they are revealed to be dual agents, working alongside colonialism, all the while questioning it and criticizing its ethics. In my reading of *Snake Wine*, Anderson continues to cultivate a critical cosmopolitan consciousness and subsequently takes ethical responsibility through engaging in acts of critical self-reflection that resist colonial impulses.

Textual Resistance: An Alternative Response to Colonial Cosmopolitanism

A careful reading of resistance within *Snake Wine* suggests a more complex engagement with both cosmopolitanism and colonial bias than the narrator's initial elitist, Orientalized cosmopolitanism. While *Snake Wine* makes use of colonial privilege and modernist primitivism as strategies for interpreting Singapore, the text also engages more fully with the broader implications of Canadian modernism as an international project that reinforces colonialism. Anderson's narrator is critical of his own colonial presence, and the other characters in the text often act as anti-colonial agents who question the narrator's authority.

In Singapore, anti-colonial resistance, both violent and non-violent, forces Anderson's narrator to confront the markers of identity that have allowed him to freely travel and teach his cultural canon in a colonized classroom. Though *Snake Wine*'s journal entries assert Anderson's power, this power is resisted in several ways. Most notably, Ah-Ting's agency immediately questions the absolute representational power of Anderson's narrator. In small and large actions, Ah-Ting intentionally fails to adhere to Anderson's desires and expectations. For example, Ah-Ting refers to Anderson as "sir,"

which frustrates Anderson because it does not provoke the same pleasure "of the more romantic *Tuan* which the *amah* had always used" (43). As their working relationship develops, Anderson is less and less successful at asserting his will—Ah-Ting refuses to live at the house (45), is a poor pupil of English (86-87), and chooses when the house will be locked and when dinner will be served even if Anderson expressly states otherwise (88). At the same time, Anderson's students radicalize at the university, and he finds himself sympathetic to their cause; he visits student detainees from his modern poetry group, including future lawyer and activist James Puthucheary (243). Even other colonial agents actively question Anderson's stance. One colleague directly criticizes Anderson, saying, "'It is not wholly impossible . . . that Singapore was produced for a different purpose than the satisfaction of your romantic ego'" (170). Anderson presents characters who question the legitimacy of colonial ideologies. The resistance of Ah-Ting and other Singaporeans suggests that, even if incompletely, *Snake Wine* presents colonized individuals with agency and some power to resist colonialism.

Though Anderson's narrator frequently chooses escapism and superficiality, the political upheaval in the city requires that he engage indirectly with anti-colonial sentiments and Singapore's ensuing political unrest. Far from being a place that exists to fulfill Anderson's desires, *Snake Wine*'s Singapore prompts Anderson to become more politically aware. Anti-colonial events demand a more thoughtful engagement with cosmopolitan difference. For example, during a night out drinking, Anderson's narrator is caught up in the Maria Hertogh riots.[12] Having provided the reader with almost no political context for Singapore, the narrator starts a new entry: "It's odd to think that three days ago I came quite near to being killed" (58). As part of a violent response to anti-Muslim sentiment amongst Anglo elites, Anderson was physically threatened. After being trapped in the bathroom of an expatriate bar, he was pushed out the back door by the bar's colonized owner just as a busload of rioters arrived to hunt for Europeans. He was followed up the street, and only lost his pursuers due to the darkness of the alleyway. This anti-colonial encounter realigns Anderson's privilege, and causes him to assess his feelings of natural superiority. He reflects, "what was most frightening about it was that it tapped hidden reservoirs of hatred toward the Europeans . . . And of course my conventionally romantic attitude toward the Malays has suffered quite a set back" (67). While this statement still implies a strong colonial bias, the event will ultimately lead Anderson to reflect on colonial privilege and his own tendency to use romantic stereotypes.

The riots are a turning point in the text; after this recounting, the narrative quickly shifts to the self-contained episodes that can be seen to question or underline the narratorial objectivity and confident articulation of colonial privilege. Further, the narrator's behaviour is also impacted by this change, as he employs new strategies for connecting with his place; he moves to the outskirts of the jungle, seeks out the company of the locals, and begins to engage with his students more personally, encouraging their attempts at modern poetry and creative writing. He retreats from participation in university society parties, and attempts to disappear into what he determines to be a more "authentic" Singaporean lifestyle, explaining that he desired to "plunge in deeper, not merely to observe but to become personally involved" (106). While this could be read as an act of self-preservation following the riots, Anderson's actions can also be read as a partial ideological realignment. Anderson's confrontation with anti-colonialism reveals the powerful agency of the Other as his colonial privileges are threatened at both a real and a symbolic level.

Later in the text, Anderson productively grapples with the implications of his colonial identity. His roles as an educator and settler-colonial implicate him in the social structures he attempts to escape; these identity markers firmly entrench him within the colonial project. In a self-reflexive passage, he remarks:

> It is very difficult in a colony to be just an individual—you are always an individual-minus, a representative of something no longer very clear or very confident . . . while you are out on your own, and probably disclaiming your privileges as a European, you move under the glamorous spotlight given to you by your colour. Life with your fellow white men is dull; life with the natives too mysterious and flattering to be quite secure. Nobody likes the British as a ruling class any more, except perhaps for some hero-worshipping Malays—least of all the British themselves. (156)

Here, Anderson's narrator confronts the ways he must negotiate his privilege and his marked body as he moves through the various social spaces of Singapore. He wants neither the responsibility nor the burden of guilt that he acknowledges is associated with his colonial position. These moments of critical self-reflection are as integral to the text as Anderson's superficial readings; his experiences in Singapore provoke a crisis of identity and force him to reflect on his complicity in Empire.

Furthermore, Anderson's narrator openly criticizes colonial servants in his chapter "Profile of a City," where he describes Singapore as beyond his grasp and encapsulates the ways in which the city is on the verge of change and redefinition. He expresses the loneliness and isolation of the settler-colonial,

coming to realize "we're all Colonial servants, all insuperably white and money-making and child-breeding and ultimately irrelevant" (163). Further, he begins to break down the concept of the cosmopolitan as inherently worldly:

> People who have never lived anywhere more glamorous than Surbiton, never been abroad, certainly never embraced the cosmopolitanism of an Arnold or T. S. Eliot, suddenly find themselves regarded as *Europeans,* for this is the official recognition of anyone with white skin; your Identity Card declares it to be your 'race'. Even Empire Builders prefer not to call themselves British. (158)

Here, Anderson's narrator acknowledges that much of the privilege he associates with whiteness is unearned and undeserved. Likewise, the narrator represents Singapore as indicative of a larger experience of cosmopolitan isolation: "Singapore is a city where nobody really belongs, where no culture is indigenous, no memory authoritative, no attitude other than immature" (153-54). Though this is a generalization, it brings up a central truth for Anderson: his position as a settler-colonial keeps him from knowledge, experience, and belonging, even though he remains in a position of power.

In these reflections, once more, Singapore resists Anderson's attempts to control it and make it his own. He states: "You can't become a functioning member of the community, but you can imagine yourself *hiding* in its attractive foreignness, *intuitively understanding* the primitiveness or innocence or vitality of which you feel it to be the expression, and *drowning* in an atmosphere where aesthetic stimulation suggests deep significance" (198, emphasis original). The flourish of italics emphasizes that Anderson is aware of the effects of his own aestheticization. He remains lost in aesthetic stimulation, not in this real place, which he determines is not fully accessible to him because of his colonial identity.

The various representational practices Anderson adopts in *Snake Wine* serve as an important contact zone between two vastly different responses to modernity: colonial and anti-colonial cosmopolitanism. At the margins of this text, anti-colonial sentiment colours Anderson's narration, and ultimately leaves him unsatisfied with his experience. Such reflexive tensions do not extend to an assessment of what it means to be a settler-colonial in Canada, however; it is only in Singapore that Anderson sees himself as a colonial agent. Although Anderson does not overcome his urge toward modernist primitivism and romanticized Orientalism in *Snake Wine*, the book's structure and its rendition of anti-colonial resistance undermine the narrator's authority and criticize his colonial privilege in significant ways.

Patrick Anderson's work highlights the central tension between colonialism and cosmopolitanism in modernist travel writing, revealing the complicity of the two concepts. As Holden asserts, "Anderson's predicament makes us reconsider contemporary valorizations of modernism as political practice and the limits of literary cosmopolitanism" (491). Cosmopolitanism in and of itself is not inherently good; good cosmopolitanism is inherently critical and relational. So, modernist cosmopolitanism should be read as a complex political-aesthetic project that sometimes attempts to understand and make sense of difference using observation and experience to draw connections between people across geographic and colonial boundaries. Via travel writing, modernist cosmopolitanism is able to realize more of its vision. Intercultural contact, resistance, and exposure to decolonization are shown to improve and challenge cosmopolitan ethics in a work like *Snake Wine*. Patrick Anderson's travel writing exemplifies Canadian modernist cosmopolitanism, and elucidates the need for a more concerted study of travel writing and its contribution to the complexities of modernist cosmopolitanism.

NOTES

1 See especially Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes*.
2 See *The Book of Canadian Poetry* (Smith 1943) and its revised introductions and reframing of the concept of cosmopolitanism in 1948 and 1957.
3 The best-known criticism of the division came from John Sutherland's introduction to *Other Canadians*. In the context of Canadian modernism criticism, see Philip Kokotailo and Anouk Lang. For more on how these debates fundamentally affect Canadian literary studies, see Cynthia Sugars. For discussion about the codependency of cosmopolitanism and nationalism in Anglo-American modernism, see Bridget Chalk and Jessica Berman. In broader cosmopolitan studies, see especially Cyrus R. K. Patell.
4 For a summary of the arguments and texts of this debate, see Louis Dudek and Michael Gnarowski.
5 There are no page numbers for the first seven issues of *Preview*.
6 For Stacy Burton, modernist travel writers question "the presumption of narrative authority" (30). She suggests, quoting from Pericles Lewis, that modernists "transform 'the individual protagonist into the narrator (or to look at it another way . . . the narrator into a character)'" (30-31).
7 Anderson's self-focus is consistent with the time period. Brian Trehearne remarks that Canadian modernist writing in the 1950s underwent an "inward turn," and began to engage more strongly with "the right to individual consciousness and individual liberties" (*Canadian Poetry* 440). He notes that "this inward turn was not a retreat so much as a determination to rediscover the grounds and stability of individual consciousness and belief" (440).
8 These assertive exclamations resonate with, and possibly allude to, Joseph Conrad's short story "Youth," where a similarly naive and uncertain man named Marlow travels east to

begin his first adult job. Like Anderson, Marlow exudes "Fancy! Second mate for the first time—a really responsible officer! I wouldn't have thrown up my billet for a fortune!" (4). It also features a shifting narratorial stance and draws attention to the discrepancy between the younger, more romantic Marlow and the comparatively crusty and ironic older Marlow.

9 Primitivism offers modernist authors "metaphorical escapes from modernity" (Rossetti 124). The use of this trope, and in turn, "primitive" non-Western subject matter in one's art, helped to remove the artist from their own socio-political conditions.

10 See especially Justin D. Edwards, Robert K. Martin, and Brian Trehearne.

11 This attentively described homoerotic male body has strong resonances with Anderson's *Preview* poem "The Drinker" that is used as the basis for John Sutherland's accusation of homosexuality (again see Edwards and Martin). The poem implicitly describes an act of fellatio while explicitly describing the body of a worker drinking in order to connect everyday actions with homosexual desire.

12 On December 11, 1950, a Singapore court ruled that a child adopted and raised by Muslim parents should be returned to her Dutch Catholic biological parents after only minutes of deliberation. Given that the court was part of the colonial legal system of Singapore, the Muslim parents determined (rightly) that the legal system was biased against them, which resulted in a riot targeted at Europeans and Christians. Over three days, eighteen people were killed, including seven Europeans and Eurasians, and 173 were injured. Two buildings were burnt to the ground and 119 vehicles were damaged. The death toll for these riots was the highest of any violent incident during Britain's rule in Singapore. See especially Syed Aljunied and Edwin Lee.

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Renée Sarojini Saklikar

from The Book of (A)bigail, from the long poem, *Thot-J-Bap*

—all their offices—

and took all their how-evers, their in-so-fars
more-over, thus
and, at once—

The Tale of the Three Invaders

Those country fairs,
herbaceous borders, names banned.

A pocket knife, those taverns, carved mantel
where women sang—

his broad shoulders
narrow waist
his deep voice
hands strong enough
to—

Midnight, outside the Theatre

—there was blood everywhere, he said

of un/known origin

Squandered, the camps, a blacksmith found her name
Imprinted, those spurs, hunt, rowel, straightened
Teeth cut, rims parallel: the word went out
They would bring fireside, evergreen leaves
Etched in blood, sandpapered, still legible
Daphne Laureola: he painted, brushed
Stroke-upon-stroke, blended, smudged, eyes downcast
That winnowing fork, tuned, they would stand, stare
That threshing floor, saw-dusted, his knee pushed
This was in the Before-Time, these two kneeled
Papers folded, a potters' wheel, clay, ink—
Midnight, a train heads east, his gaze as she—
The way when she looked up, his eyes, their look—
This fire unquenchable, his name, hers.

Hecho en

How to get used to it, the street choirs sang
Inside that room, those hooded men questioned
And so the year ended they could not hope
All her mirror-lookings, she'd break beauty
The knives stored casket-deep, just beyond reach
Destiny, Chance, Fate: these three gates opened
After the first catastrophe, the lists—
That November changed to December, risked
Supple, slender, smooth, arms beckoned, replete
Cardamom, ginger, cloves, crushed, hoarded mounds
I am here, crooned Mrs. Maria, cut
Those long-ago days, they'd kneel, heads bent low
That tension, to name/un/name, cherished, gone
And called out, moments: when he, and she, they—

Rebekah Ludolph

Humour, Intersubjectivity, and Indigenous Female Intellectual Tradition in Anahareo's *Devil in Deerskins*

It is the spring of 1926 in Doucet, northern Quebec. The trappers are coming into town to present their furs to the local buyer at the general store. Among them, nineteen-year-old Gertrude Bernard makes her first appearance in town following her inaugural winter alone in the bush with her trapper boyfriend, who is eighteen years her senior. Gertie is anticipating "much fun and frolic" after the solitude of camp life (Anahareo, *Devil in Deerskins* 59). But her reputation as a woman living with her lover has preceded her, and she is "given the icy shoulder" at the town's celebrations because of her unmarried living arrangements (60). To show her "contempt" for the judgmental townspeople, Gertie retreats to her hotel room and decides to get drunk for the first time (60). What ensues is a humorous account of Gertie's first experience of becoming, as she says, "completely 'swacked'" (60). The whisky, or "liquid fire," "just refus[es] to pour down" her throat (60). "[W]ith the determination worthy of a better cause," she manages to down the bottle only to find she cannot tell everyone "to go to hell" because her "equilibrium [has gone] haywire" (60). She sees her "bed rise ceilingward" and she is left hanging onto the blankets for dear life (60). Finally, Gertie comes up with a brilliant drunken plan to get her hands on her boyfriend's gun and "sh-shoot the works" (61). Luckily her boyfriend is unco-operative and, joking about how difficult it would be to dispose of so many bodies when you live on bedrock, he kills time until Gertie passes out. The next morning, Gertie bemoans what she deems the "physical wretchedness" of a hangover and the "mental and spiritual suffering" of morning-after shame (61). If this weren't enough, Gertie fights with her boyfriend, who annoyingly

insists she either marry him or return to her father's home. Fed up with her limited options, Gertie grabs a hunting knife and stabs him in the arm. Upon seeing blood, Gertie "be[comes] hysterical, running and screaming from tree to tree" (62). She spends the next days in dejection, fearing for her boyfriend's safety in her presence, and agreeing with a townsperson who declares she "ought to be shot" (62).

How do we read this episode of comic drunkenness from Mohawk (Kanien'kehaka) writer and conservationist Anahareo's 1972 autobiography *Devil in Deerskins* about her life with legendary conservationist, writer, Englishman, and Indigenous impersonator Archibald Belaney, more commonly known as Grey Owl?[1] A reader familiar with the stories of Anahareo and Grey Owl cannot miss the darker side of what Sophie McCall calls Anahareo's characteristic "deadpan humour" and "impeccable" comedic timing (202). Both Anahareo and Grey Owl struggled with alcoholism, and Anahareo lost custody of her daughter because of public attitudes and law enforcement that discriminated against unmarried Indigenous mothers (Gleeson, *Anahareo* 161). More broadly, Indigenous communities continue to struggle with alcoholism and violence as part of a colonial legacy. Why, then, does a woman who "openly reject[ed] or quietly ignor[ed] [the] prevailing images" and negative stereotypes of Indigenous women include this episode of a drunk and violent younger self in her autobiography (Gleeson, "Blazing" 287-89)? And how might contemporary readers reconcile Anahareo's legacy as a trailblazer known for being fiercely independent and counter-cultural with her own descriptions of her younger self as extremely naive and, at times, conforming to the media's Romantic image of her relationship with Grey Owl?[2]

To take a closer look at these questions, this article considers *Devil in Deerskins* and its reception alongside recent theories about Grey Owl as persona, the history of literary and media depictions of Anahareo, autobiographical theory, the generic expectations of Romantic nationalist reading practices, and Deanna Reder's call to read Indigenous autobiography as nation-based intellectual production. I view Anahareo's text as both contesting and capitalizing on her Romantic public image popularized through the works of and about Grey Owl. I suggest that Anahareo deliberately uses humour to engage with and refute the dominant literary depictions of Indigenous women and, in the process, models an Indigenous female intellectual tradition of autobiographical self-representation. My reading is prompted by the 2014 reissue of the text. As the inaugural

publication in the University of Manitoba Press' First Voices, First Texts series, which "aims to reconnect contemporary readers with some of the most important Aboriginal literature of the past" (Cariou), the 2014 critical edition of the original *Devil in Deerskins* contains few changes. However, editor Sophie McCall's afterword frames Anahareo's text as an "underrecognized narrative of Indigenous history in Canada" (190), and the inclusion of forewords by Anahareo's daughters emphasizes a female family lineage.

Though Grey Owl's writings and filmography made Anahareo famous, the 2014 edition of *Devil in Deerskins* and Kristin Gleeson's biography *Anahareo: A Wilderness Spirit* (2012) provide more information about her life. Anahareo, née Gertrude Bernard, grew up in Mattawa, Ontario, with her non-status, off-reserve Mohawk/Algonquin family. Both the tutelage of her grandmother, who practiced Catholicism while carrying on traditional Mohawk and Algonquin ways of life (Gleeson, *Anahareo* 6), and the supervision of a domineering aunt influenced Anahareo's rebellious life choices. According to McCall, Anahareo's family situation meant that her understanding of her Indigenous identity was "based not so much on her connection with a single land-based community, but more on the stories, skills, and a sense of history passed down to her from her grandmother" (192). At that time, Mattawa was segregated by race, with most of the Indigenous families (though not her own) living in what was degradingly dubbed "Squaw Valley" (Gleeson, *Anahareo* 9). Gleeson depicts an adolescent Anahareo who defies the race and gender norms of her religious middle-class town (*Anahareo* 8-11). In 1925, at the age of eighteen, "Gertie," as she was called, met "Archie" at Camp Wabikon, where she was working for the summer. In February 1926, she accepted his invitation to visit his bush camp. Though she intended a short visit, she would not return to Mattawa for nearly thirty years (Gleeson, *Anahareo* 202). Anahareo's family, in particular her sister Johanna, disapproved (Gleeson, *Anahareo* 22); it was a choice that would affect Anahareo's relationship with her family for decades.

Anahareo's chosen partner, Grey Owl, remains a controversial figure. His world-renowned lectures, articles, and books about animal rights and wildlife preservation changed the face of conservationism in Canada. Arriving in Canada from England at the age of eighteen, Archie learned to survive in the bush from trapper Bill Guppy, but he acquired Anishinaabe language, skills, and cultural knowledge from his first wife, Angele Egwuna, and her Bear Island community. He continued to explore Indigenous worldviews through

trapper friends and the Espaniel family (Anishinaabe) who took him in when he returned from the First World War. With his newfound knowledge and a flair for satisfying the popular thirst for Romantic depictions of the Canadian wilderness, Grey Owl would use his adopted (but widely assumed to be "authentic") Indigenous identity to passionately convey his conservationist message. Upon his death, the revelation of his English heritage threatened to overshadow his life's work and cast suspicions of collusion on his supporters.[3] Today, though his contribution to environmentalism is recognized, mixed feelings remain about Grey Owl's adoption of transcultural Indigenous identity (Billinghurst; Braz; Chapin), about his relationship to the Romantic tradition of the "noble savage" (Gleeson; Ruffo; Smith), and about how to read his authenticity (Fee, "They Taught"; Loo; Polk).[4] Anahareo's role in the making of Grey Owl's persona is also contested. According to Gleeson, Anahareo never questioned Archie's proclaimed Scottish-Apache heritage, and learned how to survive in the bush from him. She also convinced Archie to give up trapping for furs; initiated his literary career; satisfied the media's desire for a Romantic image of Grey Owl; played mother to their beaver companions in Grey Owl's wildly popular films; gave birth to one child, Shirley Dawn, during their time together; and argued with him about pursuing her dream of becoming a prospector. Throughout their relationship, Anahareo fiercely opposed mainstream conventions of marriage and family, living independently for long periods, even after the birth of their daughter. However, Grey Owl's biographer, Donald B. Smith, presents Anahareo in a different light, emphasizing the roles Archie's English wife Ivy Holmes, his Aunt Ada, and his mother played in his career (62, 83), and detailing his long-held interest in conservationism and "playing Indian." From this perspective, Anahareo is more of a muse and media figure than the motivational force behind Grey Owl.

Either way, Anahareo retained the media designation of Grey Owl's wife for the remainder of her life. After her split with Grey Owl in 1936, Anahareo struggled as a single mother and through a second tumultuous marriage. But in her later years, she used her public persona to speak in support of the conservationist movement linked to Indigenous rights; she won the Order of Nature (1979) and the Order of Canada (1983). Over the course of her long life, Anahareo's persona has been met with a range of reactions, from confusion and Romanticism in the 1930s, to enthusiasm in the context of 1970s activism. More recently, Anahareo has received belated attention as an important but overlooked Indigenous literary voice.

Anahareo as Persona

Current critical and creative explorations of Grey Owl have tended to approach Belaney's cultural transformation as a performance that transverses multiple identities. Armand Garnet Ruffo's *Grey Owl: The Mystery of Archie Belaney* (1996) has been celebrated for its exploration of Belaney's liminal identity and trans-ethnic transformation (Kádár), and it also considers how Anahareo's persona is produced through a negotiation of identity constructs. Ruffo presents Lovat Dickson, Belaney's publisher, reflecting:

> [Anahareo] may be in reality
> a product of Grey Owl's own imagination,
> in other words, his own creation, which may not
> have anything to do with the flesh and blood
> of the woman. (114)

In Ruffo's poem "You Ask," Archie identifies Anahareo as intimately "part of [his] fiction," while recognizing that the fiction he has created is comprised of the very real embraces, words, and moments they shared (115). Ruffo shows Archie losing himself to the fiction of Grey Owl, while at the same time claiming that "[His] body, [his] spirit" are one with his work (115). In Ruffo's poetry, Anahareo, too, exists in this liminal space where body, spirit, fiction, and performance both merge and diverge as she and Archie perform for each other and the public.

Albert Braz's book *Apostate Englishman* (2015) describes the role Anahareo's persona played in supporting Grey Owl's public Indigeneity. Braz argues that "what troubled many people was not so much that Grey Owl had fooled them about his identity and embraced the North American Indigenous way of life but the fact that he had forsaken English culture. That is, he had committed cultural apostasy" (1). Braz examines Belaney's engagement with ethno-cultural passing and the ways Belaney's writings, performances, and, significantly, his choice of romantic partners formed his transcultural identity. Braz highlights Grey Owl's public emphasis on Anahareo as his wife (although he had four). Though Angele was Belaney's first intimate link to his Indigenous persona, Anahareo, who "believed" in his identity, proved most publicly beneficial to him; "Thus," suggests Braz, "for the overwhelming majority of his readers and the public at large, there is only one woman in the conservationist's life: Anahareo" (92). Braz considers "class, education, and aesthetics" as well as Grey Owl's role in fashioning Anahareo's persona as factors that made her the appropriate mate (93). Braz reviews both of Anahareo's autobiographies as growing out of the persona created for and by her as the partner Belaney

needed for the success of his message. My examination of Anahareo's texts follows the trend of examining both Grey Owl and Anahareo as carefully crafted, interdependent public personae; however, I suggest that *Devil in Deerskins* is also important as an independent autobiography that pays tribute to one Mohawk woman's fascinating life.

Two Autobiographies: 1940 and 1972

Following a lifetime of media attention, and after having her first autobiography, *My Life with Grey Owl* (1940), heavily edited by its publisher, Anahareo was motivated to publish *Devil in Deerskins* by her desire to control her public representation. By the 1960s Anahareo, no doubt, had a different perspective on her years spent with Grey Owl; she had re-established family ties in Mattawa, had the support of her adult daughter Shirley Dawn, and was living in a time when environmentalism provided a new audience for her story. With Dawn's help, Anahareo began reworking her autobiography to craft a narrative about her years spent with Grey Owl that focused on her own life story (McCall 205). The result is an older and wiser narrator who tells of her youthful adventures, her heritage, and her coming of age. Life writing scholar Julie Rak characterizes the act of speaking autobiographically as a metonymic substitution in which the subject substitutes for themselves the recognized identity of the "autobiographical self," which "guarantee[s] authenticity and legitimacy in Western discourse" (2). Both of Anahareo's autobiographies can be read as attempts to wield the cultural assumption of unmediated autobiographical truth in order to reassert control over a public persona that was most often associated with Romantic images of the "Indian." However, disentangling the narrative voice of a female Mohawk writer from the pre-existing expectations of publishers and readers proved to be difficult. The Romantic writing of authors such as Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and James Fenimore Cooper represented the aesthetics and values of the 1930s publishing industry (Gleeson, *Anahareo* 121), including the stereotypes of the *noble savage, Indian princess*, *easy squaw*, and a *vanishing Indian race.* Romantic stereotypes also pervaded the popular romances and films, predisposing readers to identify Anahareo as a Mohawk heroine within a generic love story rather than as the subject of a groundbreaking autobiography.

As Janice Acoose (Nehiowe-Métis-Anishnaabekwe) argues, Romantic stereotypes not only shaped literary values but also "dangerous cultural attitudes that affect human relations and inform institutional ideology" in Canada (40). The revelation of Archie's English origins in 1938 had prompted

a flood of media attention calling Anahareo's credibility into question and, as Gleeson indicates, her public "image began to deteriorate" (168). One infamous article insinuates that Anahareo, abandoned by Grey Owl, had fallen into prostitution. The truth of these suspicions, which Anahareo never addressed, still haunts discussions surrounding her (Braz 108); what is of interest here is not Anahareo's actual sexual choices but rather the consumability of a Romantic depiction of an Indigenous woman, abandoned by her now-known-to-be-English lover and fallen into immorality and poverty.

Simultaneously, Grey Owl's publisher, Lovat Dickson, a Canadian expatriate living in England, was attempting to salvage Grey Owl's image. This included publishing a biography of Grey Owl called *Half-breed: The Story of Grey Owl* (1939) in which Anahareo appears as an Indian princess from a vanishing race. Dickson introduces Anahareo as a "beautiful young Indian girl," in "rough clothes [that] fitted her slim figure perfectly, the well-cut breeches and the long boots emphasizing both the slenderness of her waist and the long perfectly shaped legs," who falls in love with Archie's noble savage demeanour (176). According to Dickson, Anahareo and her siblings are afflicted by a haunting melancholia: "[c]haracteristic of their race they felt themselves friendless and alone in an alien world. They sat then like lost little spirits, grief and an inarticulate and inexpressible longing filling their hearts and making their soft brown eyes large and moist" (178). While attempting to offer a positive counter to the negative images of Anahareo in the press, this depiction of Anahareo's family still relies on Romantic stereotypes rather than biographical research. The lively description of Anahareo's family in *Devil in Deerskins* (37), as well as the stories Gleeson collected in partnership with Anahareo's family (*Anahareo* 203-05), provide a startling contrast to Dickson's paternalistic assumptions.[5]

The publication of *My Life with Grey Owl,* soon after Dickson's *Half-breed,* provided minimal opportunity to correct Dickson's narrative due to his involvement in the editorial process. From the outset, Anahareo was subject to content restrictions; primarily, she was not allowed to discuss Archie's background. McCall's archival work suggests that the anonymous introduction to *My Life with Grey Owl*, which frames Anahareo as a Romantic heroine, as well as the first two chapters, were not approved by Anahareo (204). The introduction highlights Anahareo's vivacious temper, her "slim, iron-muscular figure," and her feminine "large and softly sentimental" heart (Davies viii-ix). As the narrator asks, "Why mention these things? Because what follows is a love story" (ix). Despite the actual content

of the text, this introduction firmly places Anahareo's story in the romance genre, laden with Romantic stereotypes. Deeply dissatisfied with the book's representation of herself and Grey Owl, Anahareo ripped out the first pages from any copy she could find (Gleeson, *Anahareo* 179).[6]

The cultural expectations of the Romantic tradition and the romance genre influenced the publication and reception of Anahareo's first biography and continue to influence the reception of her second. In her article on "The Politics of Representation: Some Native Canadian Women Writers," Barbara Godard draws on Fredric Jameson's argument that "genres are essentially literary *institutions,* or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact" (qtd. in Godard 185, emphasis original). Writing in 1990, Godard contends that within the Canadian publishing industry, Indigenous authors seeking publication have no choice but to emulate or contest the limits of Western literary conventions; this includes navigating the slippery slope between autobiography and romance when the author is an Indigenous woman. Indigenous women authors have continually contested the drastically unequal power dynamics within the editorial process. Yet, Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm (Anishinaabe), founder of the Indigenous press Kegedonce, writes that there remains "intense pressure to conform to imposed mainstream publishing values, aesthetics, and goals" (31). Though Anahareo wrote *Devil in Deerskins* on the brink of the "renaissance" of Indigenous writing in Canada, the cultural expectations of the romance genre and the Romantic tradition continued to influence the way she was (and is) read and, given her past experiences, how she would choose to make her story heard.

Romantic Nationalist Reading Practices and Genre in the 1970s

In once more taking up the cultural capital of autobiography in the 1970s, as Gleeson suggests, Anahareo successfully took advantage of the environmental movement's renewed interest in Grey Owl;[7] *Devil in Deerskins* was a bestseller. However, the 1970s reception of *Devil in Deerskins* suggests that the environmental movement's nostalgia for idealized pre-contact worldviews, combined with the surge of cultural nationalism surrounding Canada's centennial, helped predetermine that *Devil in Deerskins* would be read through Romantic tropes.

In 1987, Margery Fee argued that "[n]ationalism . . . [was] the major ideological drive behind the use of the Indian in contemporary English-Canadian literature" ("Romantic" 17). In Romantic nationalist texts, the

protagonist moves from "immigrant to native" through a transformative relationship with an Indigenous person or stand-in "object, image, plant, animal or person" who passes on their legitimate connection to the land (16). This "literary land claim" circumvents the dilemma that "Old World" nationalism, dependent on a racial group's connection to the land and possession of a native language and mythology, does not fit the "New World situation" (17). In 1989, Terry Goldie demonstrated that the Romantic preoccupation with an unattainable indigeneity is often satisfied though the sexual exploits and violence of the romance genre. The indigene functions as a signifier that becomes collapsed with the idea of nature, with the land itself, and is always only a representation of "suitable ground for the cultivation of [the settler's] indigenization" (40). For Goldie, the female indigene signifier "represents the attractions of the land but in a form which seems to request domination" (65); romantic conquest of the indigene female is used to resolve Romantic nationalist anxiety. Similarly, alliance with the eroticized, "instinctual," "animal" indigene appeases environmentally motivated nostalgia that desires a "bridge to the freedom of the non-man in nature" (25). At a period in Canadian history in which discourses of cultural nationalism and environmentalism were ascendent, the semiotic field into which Anahareo was writing presupposed the "loaded" signifier of the indigene (4).

Readers expected Anahareo's narrative to provide them with the "wife's-eye view" of what it meant to be Grey Owl (Mayse): i.e., the successfully indigenized settler (Goldie 215). Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Grant MacEwan's 1972 introduction to *Devil in Deerskins* explicitly frames the text as a new perspective on Anahareo's husband (x). When read as inside access to Grey Owl's life, Anahareo's text stands in for the figure of the "Native" in Canadian Romantic nationalism: "[I]mpelled by a strong desire to know more about the past" and beset with nostalgia for a time of environmental purity (Fee, "Romantic" 16-17), urbanite Canadians could consume *Devil in Deerskins* as a way of indigenizing themselves and reforging an idealized connection to land lost through immigration and industrialization. Anahareo's text is particularly adept at facilitating a reader's "transformation" from dispossessed immigrant to naturalized inheritor of ancestral knowledge, since her narrative details her own transformation from a town girl to a self-sufficient woman of the wilderness. Ironically, it is Gertie's "inauthentic" Native identity, forged by her family's history of forced displacement and dispossession, which allows readers to enact their transition from "immigrant to native." Archie's indigenization facilitates

Gertie's indigenization, which facilitates the white Canadian reader's indigenization. The only source of authenticity is the sign of the indigene Grey Owl evokes.

In search of indigenization, readers in the 1970s continually identified *Devil in Deerskins* as a love story and Anahareo as the corresponding idealized Indian heroine. In 1978, *The Globe and Mail* published a spoof called "The Great Canadian Romance Kit" by Heather Robertson; the article begins, "It was late in the summer and I was at Wabikon . . ." (A5). These opening lines are taken directly from the first page of *Devil in Deerskins*. Robertson identifies Anahareo and Grey Owl as *the* quintessentially Canadian romantic protagonists who "arouse the erotic fantasies and secret passions of the nation" (A5). While Robertson is satirizing the public's thirst for Canadian Romantic nationalism, she simultaneously identifies Anahareo's text as a romance, as did more than one reviewer.

Popular reviews that emphasize the romantic plotline of *Devil in Deerskins* highlight the parts of Gertie's character that reiterate Romantic depictions of Indigenous women. Reminiscent of portraits of the Indian princess, a review in *Outdoor Canada* describes Anahareo as "strong, patient, and brave," suffering for her love of Grey Owl (34). In stark contrast, *Windsor Star* reviewer Bruce Blackadar's version of events casts Anahareo as the beautiful Indian girl of questionable morals who leaves her father to join her white lover in the Romantic wilds of the North. Other reviewers align with Blackadar and feature Anahareo as beautiful, yet violent, promiscuous, and irrational. An extreme example is Kildare Dobbs's review entitled "A Wild Man and His Wild Woman." Citing the knifing in Doucet, Dobbs emphasizes that Anahareo's "violence and pestilence" is dangerously Romanticized under the guise of a "tempestuous" heroine. Dobbs simultaneously critiques Anahareo's text for emulating Romantic conventions and claims that it is an accurate picture of "the Canadian North." As a result, Dobbs's review illustrates a bind that characterizes the reception of Anahareo's autobiography: the conventions of Romance distort the authority of autobiography, while at the same time, readers only recognize Romantic depictions of Anahareo as authentic.[8]

Humour and Intersubjectivity

Gillian Whitlock argues that the female subject in colonial discourse takes up the subjectivities made available to her, and through an intimate process of "intersubjectivity and negotiation" produces an autobiographical narrative that the reader will accept as "truthful" and "authentic" (9). Approached from

this perspective, *Devil in Deerskins* uses the cultural capital of autobiography to mobilize the literary tropes of the Romantic tradition and the romance genre in order to draw attention to the contradictions inherent in the dominant literary depictions of Indigenous women and to control the way Anahareo herself is represented.

When Anahareo's autobiography is read as upholding the tenets of Canadian Romantic nationalism, the text is performing earnest work for the reader, and this earnestness denies the narrator her sense of humour. As Kate Vangen notes in her article on "defiance and humour" in Indigenous literature, "[o]ne of the first stereotypes that has to be debunked by any Native writer who wants to be taken seriously—yet does not want to be taken *too* seriously—is that Indians are stoics, totally lacking in humour" (188). As early as the anonymous introduction to *My Life with Grey Owl*, humour is identified as a key aspect of Anahareo's writing style. The introduction apologizes for the confusion that may ensue from Anahareo's unrefined tendency towards humour even as it acknowledges that the text is meant to be funny (viii; x).

Today, Anahareo's text finds a place in a larger literary tradition of Indigenous humour. Vangen identifies Maria Campbell's (Métis) use of humour to mediate tragedy and tell the truths of loss while "keeping a safe distance from both despair and cynicism" (203). Likewise, Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo) describes how in the poetry of Indigenous women in the US, "[h]umor is widely used by Indians to deal with life . . . the horrors of history . . . the continuing impact of colonization, and . . . the biting knowledge that living as an exile in one's own land necessitates" (157-58). Anahareo's use of a humorous tone to describe the antics of her younger self contradicts the stereotype of the serious and silent noble savage who acts as a vehicle for "literary land claim[s]" (Fee, "Romantic" 17). Simultaneously, the text's mocking of any of Gertie's actions that might validate the racist stereotypes of *noble savage*, *Indian princess*, or *easy squaw* refutes the legitimacy of these dangerous categories.

For example, Anahareo's depiction of her budding relationship with Archie, which received so much attention in the press, does portray young Gertie in search of romance. However, Anahareo engages the tropes of the romance genre with a tone of self-deprecating humour. The opening lines of Robertson's *Globe and Mail* article mention Gertie's awe for the "Godlike" Archie and describe him as the noble savage "in brown deerskins stepping with the speed and grace of a panther from a canoe" (A5). However, Robertson skips over the opening paragraph of *Devil in Deerskins* in which

Gertie, exhausted and steaming in "disgust," watches Archie plod easily on ahead of her during her first trip into the bush (1). The humorous contrast between Gertie's disgust and Anahareo's description of her immediate infatuation with Archie pokes fun at her youthful ideas about romance. In a similar vein, Anahareo frames Archie's offer to take Gertie away from school and into the bush as an offer to help her "escape from the convent" (11). Gertie is "thrilled" by the "prospect of being rescued" (11). The narrator remembers her fascination with Archie's tales of violent heroism, her "mounting excitement," her eagerness for "the prospect of more blood and thunder," and her final disappointment when the only crime Archie commits is giving "the station agent a couple of swings" (8). The text draws attention to the ridiculousness of young Gertie's enthusiasm for violence; Archie teases, "I'm sorry I didn't kill the guy because I know how much you would have enjoyed that" (8). The narrator's tongue-in-cheek response to her younger self allows the text to mobilize the literary conventions traditionally associated with depictions of the indigene while at the same time poking fun at the desire to sensationalize Gertie and Archie.

Yet, Anahareo's text takes quite seriously the work of denying the stereotype of the promiscuous Indian woman. Though often characterized as a romance, the text is almost devoid of displays of physical affection. And, as Braz details, in comparison to her first autobiography, Anahareo is less outspoken about her opposition to traditional marriage (98-100). Still, Anahareo's humorous tone is vital to understanding the way she guides the reader's perception of her younger self. When, for instance, Archie comments on Gertie's short skirt, she exposes the double standard inherent in his statement, joking: "Since you are so clothes-conscious, why are you wrapped in that awful oilskin? It isn't raining, you know" (5). And while Gertie is drawn to Archie for his sense of adventure and danger, early in the narrative she reveals that the only crime Archie is wanted for was actually committed in protection of a young girl's virtue (6). While mocking conventional romantic plots and idealized heroes, Anahareo also defends her own reputation by painting herself and Archie as honourable in character.

Moreover, Anahareo presents young Gertie as naive, while concurrently cataloguing her rather impressive feats of independence as a running self-deprecating joke. The description of Gertie's naiveté works to counteract the suggestion of promiscuity. For instance, Gertie is oblivious to Archie's attempts to profess his love for her and has not seemed to contemplate *why* he might have asked her to come stay at his camp (50). Even when the priest

is infuriated with Gertie's insistence that she has no sins to confess after living unwed with Archie, the narrator responds with a humorous display of sympathy, stating: "Since this painful scene I have discovered that the good Father had a perfect right to his fury because . . . 'It looks like hell from the road for a girl to be going with a man, even into God's own country, without a chaperone'" (56). Anahareo's depiction of Gertie's naiveté acts as an excuse for flouting social norms, while the narrator's self-deprecation mocks society's obsession with the sexual behaviour of Indigenous women.

My reading of *Devil in Deerskins* suggests that Anahareo's text models an Indigenous female narrator who deploys humour in order to engage and refute the stereotypes present in the dominant literary depictions of Indigenous women and who, as a result, manipulates the way her life story is read. If we return to my preliminary questions about how to approach *Devil in Deerskins* in a contemporary context, the scene in Doucet might be read as satire of the savage and promiscuous Indian woman. Presented with the limited options available to her as a young, penniless, unconnected, Indigenous woman in the North, Anahareo is so vehemently opposed to her prospects that she becomes violent and enacts a wild return to the woods. Importantly, she is no victim; rather, she is the one knifing Archie. Her extreme self-loathing after unsettling the townspeople and stabbing Archie becomes part of her self-deprecating and self-protecting running joke about her independence; after all, she does marry Archie, but at a Cree ceremony and long after the episode in Doucet. The scene in Doucet not only reveals the pressure on Anahareo's text to navigate prevalent stereotypes of Indigenous women, but also critiques the widespread settler acceptance of Romantic stereotypes. In implicating the structure of Doucet social life and the available options for young Indigenous women in Gertie's displays of self-loathing and anger, Anahareo subtly addresses the connection between settler-Indigenous relations, literary depictions of Indigenous women, and her lived reality.

Through her use of humour, Anahareo meets stereotypes on her own terms. She chooses to omit many tragic life events from her book, including her alcoholism, losing custody of her daughter, and her poverty, among other things. While there are personal reasons for these choices, the result is a predominantly *happy* book, a contrast to texts that use humour to tell a story of horrors and ultimate survival. In 1972, the self-deprecating and ironically humourous narrator who reflects back on their misspent youth was a convention commonly associated with a white male literary voice, not the Indigenous female writer. Anahareo's choice to depict a young woman

who lives through her mistakes and has a long, influential, adventurous life defies dominant literary depictions of Indigenous women and Romantic nationalist reading practices that cannot but perceive an Indigenous woman subject in relation to the genre of romance or of personal tragedy.

Autobiography as Intellectual Tradition

Contemporary interpretations of Anahareo are still at risk of falling into stereotypical traps. The most obvious example is Richard Attenborough's 1999 cinematic representation of Anahareo, which McCall characterizes as combining the tropes of the Indian princess and the 1950s damsel in distress (210). But even Braz's intervention into settler hang-ups over "authenticity" shows signs of preoccupation with Anahareo's sexual choices (107-08), her unconventional approach to motherhood (109), her Indigenous identity as an urban dweller (93, 110), and her dependence on Grey Owl (94). However, contemporary reviewers are also asking new questions of *Devil in Deerskins* as an *Indigenous* text: how do we read Anahareo as a role model who "counters negative hegemonic stereotypes" (Mitten 2), or how can we understand *Devil in Deerskins*' "literary historical value . . . within the larger corpus of Indigenous writing in Canada" (Cabajsky 117)? While reading *Devil in Deerskins* in relation to Romantic nationalism helps to tease out the ways in which Anahareo astutely managed her public persona, such a reading also threatens to reduce her text to an act of resistance.

The text does contain such resistance, but it is more important to locate *Devil in Deerskins* as part of an Indigenous intellectual tradition, according to Deanna Reder's use of the term. In response to the Canadian critical tendency to focus on Indigenous life-writing as a genre, rather than Indigenous autobiography as Indigenous intellectual tradition, Reder emphasizes that autobiography works to "preserve Indigenous knowledge and specific tribal understandings for their descendants and subsequent generations" (170). While writers of Indigenous autobiography have "absorbed, adopted, and appropriated" various literary practices "in order to tell Indigenous stories," Reder claims "there is more to the politics of self-determination than resistance to oppression" (172). If critics view Indigenous authors' engagement with Western literary traditions only as evidence of assimilation, they "fail to see what cultural work it continues to accomplish" (173). I suggest that while Anahareo's text manipulates dominant Western literary conventions to her advantage, the text itself depicts female autobiography as an inherited Indigenous intellectual tradition.

One of the significant portions of *Devil in Deerskins* that was not included in Anahareo's previous autobiography, but emerges as an important component of the 1972 and 2014 editions, is Anahareo's grandmother's narrative of her family history (McCall 205). Anahareo notes that these stories tracing her family history from first contact with Europeans to her birth in Mattawa were "told and retold" by her grandmother, and she specifies that in cross-culturally communicating her stories to Archie she risks "first unraveling the story as it came to [her]" (33). As a result, Anahareo's text locates the practice of speaking autobiographically as both a female Indigenous intellectual practice and one that is situated within Anahareo's grandmother's understanding of her Mohawk/Algonquin culture formed through tradition, resistance, and displacement.

In the face of racial and gendered violence against Indigenous women, female Indigenous writers have spoken about the importance of reclaiming and maintaining Indigenous traditions of representing femininity. Lee Maracle (Stò:lō) cites her grandmothers as her centring force when she began writing and "erased invisibility as a goal for the young Native women around [her]" (6-9). Similarly, in her poem "I Am an Indian Poem," Rosanna Deerchild (Cree) tells of the importance of finding a place among a lineage of Indigenous female authors who "stand behind [her] . . . Holding the story" while Indigenous language and cultural practices are systematically silenced; these women, as Deerchild comments in the essay "My Poem Is an Indian Woman," wrote her alive while Canadian literary tradition was "writing [her] dead" (242; 241). In light of national literary institutions tied to the erasure, silencing, disappearance, and murder of Indigenous women in Canada, texts and authors that reaffirm the continual strength of female Indigenous intellectual traditions of self-representation are a powerful statement. From this perspective, Anahareo's practice of writing her self is not merely an appropriation of Western literary practices; it is a vital continuation of her grandmother's inherited practice of female self-representation.

Reading *Devil in Deerskins* from this celebratory perspective is not without its own dangers. Daniel Francis argues that the popularity of "Celebrity Indians" reflects the desire of "non-Native Canadians to understand and admire what *they* considered to be the virtues of Indian-ness" (155, emphasis mine) and, admittedly, the platform from which Anahareo speaks is built on the settler desire to consume narratives of a particular form of Indigeneity. As Braz points out, Anahareo's voice is privileged over the voices of Angele and her Bear Island community (93). Anahareo's literary success is based on her ability to engage with and navigate the publishing industry, attained

through her choice to ally herself to Grey Owl over her home community. This does not devalue Anahareo's contribution, but it does demand recognition of the power dynamics that allow Anahareo's voice to be heard over other Indigenous voices. Nonetheless, the publication of the First Voices, First Texts 2014 edition of *Devil in Deerskins* offers a fresh chance for audiences to engage with Anahareo's witty and astute persona.

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NOTES

1 I refer to Anahareo as Mohawk, rather than Kanien'kehaka, because that is how Anahareo proudly referred to herself. See Sophie McCall's afterword for the history of displacement that resulted in Anahareo identifying as Mohawk.
2 I use *romance* to refer to love, emotions, sexual desire, and the romance genre; *Romance* refers to the Romantic tradition and the idealization of the Indian that is prevalent in Romantic nationalism.
3 For biographical information on Grey Owl see Billinghurst, Braz, Dickson, Gleeson, Smith, and "They Taught Me Much" by Fee.
4 Debates over "authenticity" surround both Anahareo and Grey Owl. As Fee argues, the obsession with Grey Owl's authenticity has often obscured his conservation legacy and his relationships with specific Indigenous communities ("They Taught" 190). Anahareo has at times been viewed as inauthentic for not living up to the Romantic image which Grey Owl so successfully performed.
5 Dickson's second biography of Grey Owl (1976) is *more* faithful to Anahareo's story as told in *Devil in Deerskins.* This suggests Anahareo's 1972 autobiographical intervention could not be ignored.
6 Other Indigenous autobiographies were also being published at the time, and, as was the case for Anahareo, their authors' lack of control in the editorial process was pronounced. See Karell and Ledwon.
7 See Braz for discussion of Anahareo's shifting relationship to conservation.
8 Both McCall and Gleeson also highlight the positive impact of the press in identifying Anahareo as an important historical figure (190; 96), and Elizabeth Samson's review of *Devil in Deerskins* on CBC's *Our Native Land* depicts the text as "more of an autobiography of Anahareo" who is cast as an early Indigenous "women's libber."

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Two Views from the Giller

Mona Awad
13 Ways of Looking at a Fat Girl.
Penguin Canada $20.00

Zoe Whittall
The Best Kind of People. Anansi $22.95

Reviewed by Christina Turner

As its title indicates, Mona Awad's 2016 Giller Prize-nominated debut novel, *13 Ways of Looking at a Fat Girl*, is a study in perspective. Over thirteen linked yet autonomous vignettes, we learn the story of Lizzie, then Elizabeth, then Beth, as she navigates her relationships with friends, lovers, parents, and the "shadowy twin" who personifies all of her complicated feelings about her body. The novel's different perspectives on fatness are provided by Lizzie's evolving views as she moves from her Catholic high school to college and to a series of unfulfilling temp jobs, and from illicit (and questionably consensual) sexual encounters in suburban parking lots to marriage in a drab southwestern American city.

Perhaps intentionally, Awad never provides us with numbers; we never learn Lizzie's dress size or body mass index or specific pounds gained and lost, lest readers judge Lizzie against their own arbitrary cultural standard for what constitutes fatness. Instead, we have to take Lizzie's word for it when she insists on winning "the fat argument" with her best friend, and even when she loses weight and can fit into the tight clothing that previously eluded her. In this sense, *13 Ways* is primarily about Lizzie's seeming inability to love herself in her own body.

Lizzie's constant struggle to feel comfortable in her own skin could risk sliding into cliché if Awad were not such a master of tone and ambiance. She expertly captures the social milieux Lizzie moves through across the novel—first the deadening ennui of life in suburbia, followed by the enforced cheerfulness of plus-sized clothing stores (where the curtain to the change room is a "Lynchian portal to hell"), and finally the vampiric joylessness of the gym in her condo complex.

Two chapters are written from the perspective of men in Lizzie's life, serving to establish that, while Lizzie focuses obsessively on her size, others barely notice it. By contrast, we never hear from the other women Lizzie knows, perhaps because *13 Ways* is interested in demonstrating how women can be cruel to one another by holding up punishing cultural standards of beauty and size. But the novel also contains fleeting moments of kindness from Lizzie's perspective, where she expresses empathy, admiration, or even something "almost electric, like love," for the women she professes to hate. *13 Ways* concludes in this way, with Lizzie on the edge of a revelation that just might release her from her prison of limp salad and privation, but one which is ultimately deferred.

Like Awad's novel, Zoe Whittall's 2016 novel *The Best Kind of People* is an experiment in perspective on an important, yet contentious, contemporary issue. (Like *13 Ways*, it was also shortlisted for the

Giller Prize.) *People* tells the story of the Woodburys, an elite American family whose patriarch, George, is accused of sexually assaulting students at the prep school where he teaches. The novel's central conceit is that readers never hear from George directly; he remains a cipher throughout the novel, his guilt or innocence never entirely confirmed. (George's alleged victims likewise remain silent.) Instead, George becomes a Rorschach blot for the novel's different characters, alternately depicted as a wealthy man who used his influence to cover up his crimes, as a "man very detached from his body," for whom such crimes are unthinkable, and as the victim of "institutionalized misandry," as declared by the men's rights activists who leap to his defence. More than establishing a hard kernel of truth about George, *People* is interested in demonstrating how the broad spectrum of sexual violence bleeds into and shapes its characters' everyday lives.

Because George Woodbury functions as the novel's absent centre, much of the narrative and characterological emphasis is placed on his immediate family. Joan Woodbury, the matriarch, is the novel's most complex and compelling character, and her alternating states of rage, disbelief, and despair at her husband's actions and at the ensuing scandal are convincingly rendered. The Woodbury children sometimes appear flat by comparison. Whittall sometimes chooses to list the emotions her characters are feeling rather than attempting to describe their inner states, and her detailed explanations of hyper-contemporary references (such as one line referring to Dan Savage's It Gets Better Project) sometimes feel unnecessary.

People isn't necessarily meant to lead its readers to the conclusion that rape culture and sexual violence are complex issues. They are, to be sure, but complexity is often invoked to excuse the persistence of misogyny and victim-blaming in the courts, the press, and the culture at large. Instead, by removing the alleged perpetrator from the action yet retaining his influence on the central characters, Whittall has crafted a novel that registers the echoes and reverberations of sexual violence through time and space.

Yearning to Break Free

Carleigh Baker
Bad Endings. Anvil $18.00

Diane Bracuk
Middle-Aged Boys and Girls. Guernica $20.00

Reviewed by Jodi Lundgren

Women's fraught relationships with men and their conflicting desire for autonomy feature in both Carleigh Baker's and Diane Bracuk's debut collections of short stories. Bracuk's *Middle-Aged Boys and Girls* highlights the psychological damage women suffer when they internalize the precepts of ageist sexism. In *Bad Endings*, Baker's themes range more broadly from breakups to beekeeping to being a "half-blood," but in several stories, women try to escape their male partners' condescension, scorn, or physical violence.

A subset of Baker's characters depends financially or emotionally on successful men: "I didn't have to work or cook or clean or worry about anything," explains one internally bankrupt narrator. Another tries to please her man "like a lame fifties housewife," but when she admits defeat, the dated gender dynamics resolve themselves in distinctly contemporary terms: she swipes at profiles on Tinder in "a preemptive search for somebody new." Equating abandonment with progress, Baker's characters leave partners, roommates, and even a canoe tour in stories that often end in images of forward motion.

Non-traditional relationships, like that between two outpatients from a mental health facility, drive Baker's most engaging

work. Defined other than through marital status, these characters, whether neurotic or sassy, reveal more depth and self-awareness than the earlier group of "Westside ex-wives," and they express themselves with verve. Standouts include "Last Call"—which depicts amusingly dysfunctional workers at a mental health call centre on the night before Valentine's Day—and "Chins and Elbows," narrated by Carmen, a recovering meth addict who refers to herself as a "half-blood city girl." Carmen volunteers with a "salmon enhancement" project in which "humans cut eggs out of bellies, and squirt fish sperm into plastic bags." One of the other participants, Lucky, an inmate described as a "First Nations woman," self-consciously navigates and sometimes subverts the stereotypes that she is mired in. Lucky teases Carmen by calling her "Fishing Bear," an epithet that horrifies the white program coordinator but that prompts a mixed response from Carmen: "Half of me is horrified too, the other half kinda wants to laugh." In this scene and many others, Baker deftly captures nuanced and complex interactions. Whether in moments of genuine human connection or in quirky solo epiphanies—as in "Grey Water," when a bushed Gulf Island resident gradually unseats the "powerful and lifelong misconception that [she is] not a part of nature"—Baker's prose shines.

In Bracuk's stories, the belief that self-worth erodes with age controls the inner lives of most female characters. A former television executive faces a typical loss of relevance: "Donna wasn't a parent, or a producer, or a boss, or a wife, or any of those women's roles that came with a purpose or a perspective"; others, she imagines, see her as an "aging, single woman, once considered glamorous, running out of options." Struggling to adhere to socially prescribed ideals of femininity drains women of their vitality, yet in "Dirty Laundry," the narrator—childless and married for twelve years—resists conforming at her peril: "[I]n my mid-forties, I was tired of the articles on how to please men. . . . The need to be relentlessly alluring at all times had passed, and for me, it was a relief." When her husband takes a pair of their litigious young tenant's panties from the shared laundry room, however, her relief turns out to be premature, and she must weigh staying with him against starting over "as a single woman in her forties."

Perhaps the saddest variation on this theme occurs in "Valentine," in which the divorced protagonist (who also fears "starting to date again at an age well past her 'best before' date") is alienated by her fourteen-year-old daughter's budding sexuality. When the mother finds her daughter's erotic selfies, she convinces herself that the girl is "scaling the peaks of sexual cunning" and has "judged her mother as not up to the challenge of keeping a man." Offsetting this depiction of destructive maternal insecurity is the mother in "The Girl Next Door," whose protective love shields her daughter from grave harm.

While Baker favours open endings, Bracuk embraces narrative closure, resolving predicaments, or emphasizing epiphanies near the end of most stories. Though the closed endings often mirror women's entrapment within social norms, redemption takes place in the aptly titled "New Ground," in which the protagonist draws inspiration from a mentor at the dog park and, after "months of listening" to the woman's "firm, even voice," gains the strength to leave her abusive husband. Like Baker's artistry, Bracuk's narrative skill and linguistic control make for consistently well-crafted fiction.

Two Modernisms, Plural Solitudes

Emily Ballantyne, Marta Dvořák, and Dean Irvine, eds.
Translocated Modernisms: Paris and Other Lost Generations. U of Ottawa P $39.95

Richard J. Lane and Miguel Mota, eds.
Malcolm Lowry's Poetics of Space.
U of Ottawa P $34.95

Reviewed by James Gifford

Like a palimpsest, *Translocated Modernisms* and *Malcolm Lowry's Poetics of Space* overlap each other, past events, and prior writings. Both could be read as products of notes interleaving with other books, with each other, and with themselves. As edited collections, it's inevitable. It's also part of the excitement. It also traces an unstated question. The internal conversations between chapters are the excitement, particularly in Ballantyne, Dvořák, and Irvine's *Translocated Modernisms* with the colloquy between Linda Morra's and Adam Hammond's readings of Sheila Watson's Paris journals, in which they not only discuss each other's work but also cite each other's chapter in the collection. This is the excitement made possible by a conference proceedings based on the post-presentation discussion and lengthier conversations than the original Paris event afforded participants in 2012. An unstated question likewise links both books: what conversations occurred in another room? Mota and Paul Tiessen write on Lowry in both books, but outside of annotations, theirs is the only nod to Lowry in *Translocated Modernisms*. It is doubly surprising to then find Mark Goodall's detailed study of Lowry's influence on the Parisian Situationist International and Guy Debord opening Lane and Mota's collection.

Both books will find ready readerships. The University of Ottawa Press excels with its Canadian Literature Collection, recently adding several Lowry projects, including *The 1940 Under the Volcano*, *Swinging the Maelstrom*, and *In Ballast to the White Sea*, the last of which Mota and Tiessen discuss in *Translocated Modernisms*. Their argument at the 2012 Paris conference is obviously preparation for the 2014 scholarly edition. Both collections are also concerned with the construction of canonical works and scholarship. *Malcolm Lowry's Poetics of Space* extends his literary legacy through the archival recuperations and by working through the troubles of a largely biographical body of scholarship. *Translocated Modernisms* seeks a wider canon for Canadian modernism but builds from the assumption of a later beginning to Canadian modernist works complicated by bypassing modernism for the postmodern. While the contributors whom Ballantyne, Dvořák, and Irvine collect all assert a postwar Canadian modernism, in large part through the conceptual revisions of the New Modernist Studies, they share a reluctance to find Canadian voices of the 1920s through the 1940s to be "modernist." Elizabeth Smart appears once in passing, though not in the index, and Watson and Mavis Gallant pull the time frame forward in tension against Morley Callaghan and Wyndham Lewis (the four most frequently cited writers in the collection). The scholarly canon, however, is settled. The normative understanding of Canadian modernism from Brian Trehearne to Glenn Willmott to Dean Irvine to Gregory Betts is traced a number of times, most overtly in the introduction and the engaging coda from Kit Dobson. Who does and does not appear tells a story here.

Both books are entangled with problems of space, place, and borders, with all the troubles of national identity, colonial privilege, and regionalism that confront Canadian literature generally. The poetics of spatiality and gestures to psychogeographies have an established legacy in studies of

modern literature, and all contributors to *Malcolm Lowry's Poetics of Space* are keenly aware of the challenging overlap between regional obsessions in Lowry's works and his capacious imaginative links across the spider's web of a global migration. The same problem confronts the "lost generation" of Canadians in *Translocated Modernisms* with Ernest Hemingway, Wyndham Lewis, and Sheila Watson all moving between Toronto and Paris, even if not overlapping. Hence, both books implicitly disrupt the concept of "Canadian" in their plural modernisms.

The reader's task, then, parallels Dobson's challenge to the modern through Bruno Latour. That is, if both collections reform and form canons, scholarly and aesthetic, they aptly engage in the characteristic struggles of modernist studies and its "Men of 1914" and "annus mirabilis" of 1922—demarcating what *is* and *is not* Canadian modernism. It's a process of punctualization for Latour. But if a symmetrical understanding between art and scholarship calls both into relation, then depunctualization reveals their conflicted investments and interests. For many, this is the signal critical move of the New Modernist Studies: to reveal not only what modernism (or modernism*s*) might mean but also the conflicted interests through which they come to mean differently at different times and places and for different purposes or as expressions of different commitments. The problematic in these strong collections, then, is still "where is here"—*here* is still the nation-state, the *Canada* in "Canadian modernisms," yet both terms define each other based on their definitional alliances and needs.

Narrating Black Canada

Paul Barrett
Blackening Canada: Diaspora, Race, Multiculturalism. U of Toronto P $29.95

Harvey Amani Whitfield
North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in the Maritimes. U of British Columbia P $29.95

Reviewed by Andrea A. Davis

North to Bondage, by Harvey Amani Whitfield, and *Blackening Canada*, by Paul Barrett, offer compelling and timely reconfigurations of the Canadian historical past and present that situate the experiences of black Canadians firmly within the contours of the nation. The books upset dominant images of Canada as a benign democracy and multicultural haven, tracing the roots and routes of anti-black racism from slavery to the contemporary period even as they articulate the role and function of black people's agency in the narration of alternative national possibilities.

North to Bondage provides a powerful interruption of the historical silencing of slavery in Canada, detailing the complex origins and intricate social relationships that formed the basis of slavery in the Maritimes. The book thus functions as an important corrective to Canadian narratives of slavery that have functioned largely to erase black presence and suffering in Canada by encouraging a belief that slavery was either non-existent, benevolent, or economically unimportant. These narratives have tended to privilege Canada's role in the Underground Railroad and its service as a sanctuary nation for refugee slaves from the American South—without paying attention to the racism and economic marginalization refugees faced upon their arrival. In attempting to correct this bias, other historical accounts have focused on the arrival of black Loyalists and refugees of the War of 1812 who relocated to British North America as free people to signal their political agency and to provide

evidence of black people's extensive contributions to the country.

Shifting the focus from the black Loyalists to the 1,500 to 2,000 forgotten slaves who came after the American Revolution as the property of American Loyalists, *North to Bondage* provides a rare view into the practice of slavery in a specific Canadian region and at a specific historical juncture. In tracing the transition of black people from slavery in the US to slavery in the Maritime colonies, Whitfield focuses on the ways in which slaves (both incoming and already present) used a period of flux and instability to negotiate their terms of existence. The presence of a growing number of free black people and the absence of a statutory basis for slavery provided the means by which slaves could undermine the system by running away or seeking legal redress. These conditions helped eventually to erode the foundations of slavery, encouraging a gradual movement toward indentured servitude. Still, the book concedes, the presence of slavery in the Maritimes until at least the 1820s contributed to the deep entrenchment of anti-black racism in Canada. Rather than propelling most black Maritimers to abscond from the nation (a minority returned to the US or relocated to Sierra Leone and the Caribbean), their social exclusion led to the creation of religious, economic, and political organizations that provided the social framework through which black communities could survive.

Blackening Canada, a book of literary criticism and black cultural studies, offers an equally compelling intervention into Canada's self-narration of egalitarian democracy through a new reading of Canadian multiculturalism. Going beyond a simple critique of Canada's national policy, the book offers a nuanced reflection of how black diasporic literatures in Canada employ multiculturalism's ambiguity and contradictions—the very slipperiness identified as the source of the policy's weakness—to re-narrate and expand the terms of the nation. The flux and instability of slavery's transnational exchanges that Whitfield identifies as a moment of historical creation in *North to Bondage* are thus repeated unexpectedly in Barrett's multicultural and diasporic ambiguities. Barrett situates his analysis of multiculturalism and critique of Canada's democratic racism in a specifically Canadian reading of W. E. B. Du Bois' "double consciousness." Identifying black subjectivity as both diasporic and local, Barrett argues that the poetry and fiction of black Canadian writers Dionne Brand, Austin Clarke, and Tessa McWatt function to "blacken the nation," reconstituting it as the very site of diaspora. In bringing black diasporic absences into direct tension with Canadian narrations of nation, their fiction and poetry not only unsettle Canada's use of multiculturalism in the service of a homogeneous and stable whiteness, but also deploy that moment of instability into one of possibility where other ways of being in Canada may be articulated.

Most of *Blackening Canada* is devoted to an analysis of Brand's poem *Thirsty* (2002) and Clarke's novel *More* (2008), and of the texts' narration of the 1979 death of Albert Johnson at the hands of the Toronto police. Offering a close reading of both texts, Barrett identifies Brand's use of the Canadian long poem and Clarke's appropriation of the Jonah narrative as explicit literary instances in which the writers blacken the nation. By reconstituting these quintessential Canadian forms and motifs, the texts offer a representation of black diasporic experiences and characters as specifically Canadian. In his reading of McWatt's novel *Out of My Skin*, Barrett expands his literary analysis of race and citizenship to include an examination of the intersections of the histories of black Canadians, First Nations people, and francophone Canadians in Quebec. His use

of the "metaphor of nation-as-family" situates the protagonist's futile search for family and stable identity alongside a critique of Canadian multiculturalism's emphasis on "heritage" as the basis of shared community. The inability of Canada's "untidy" multiculturalism to provide a singular, stable sign of national identity, however, opens up precisely the spaces for new black possibilities. The "surprise and wonder" of black presence in Canada, Barrett suggests, allow for a rewriting of a tragic history into a kind of redemptive narrative.

North to Bondage and *Blackening Canada* thus provide a critical interruption of Canadian cultural and literary historiographies by contesting the abjection of black people from the nation. In so doing, they contribute to a more complete narration of Canada's past and present. While the insistence on the power of black people's agency and creative praxis sometimes rings hollow alongside the texts' portrayal of their continued and violent exclusion from the nation, both books are powerful in their insistence on the function of the presence and memory of blackness in pushing Canada toward a more honest engagement of the politics of difference.

Telltale of Two Cities

derek beaulieu and rob mclennan, eds. *The Calgary Renaissance.* Chaudiere $37.95

Trevor Carolan
The Literary Storefront: The Glory Years: Vancouver's Literary Centre 1978-1985. Mother Tongue $29.95

Reviewed by David Eso

The Glory Years and *The Calgary Renaissance* represent two distinct urban literary scenes in dramatically different fashions. Trevor Carolan's *Glory Years* comprises a detailed cultural history of Vancouver's Literary Storefront—its rise and fall—whereas *Calgary Renaissance* gathers writers who have orbited such experimental writing venues as Calgary's *filling Station* and *dANDelion* magazines. Each book conveys the intimacy of grassroots literary communities; one tome emphasizes process, the other, product.

Carolan charts The Literary Storefront's development into a bohemian "nerve centre," which in part responded to the monopoly that Vancouver's academic institutions had held over the city's literary calendar. Founder Mona Fertig modelled the institution after Sylvia Beach's Shakespeare and Company, Frances Steloff's Gotham Book Mart, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights Books. By tracing the involvement of innumerable writers with the Storefront, the author shows how Fertig shifted Vancouver's literary focus away from the male domination of the 1960s/1970s. Early leaders with the project included Jane Rule, Beth Jankola, Judith Copithorne, and Leona Gom. The book focuses on grant-writing and network-building labours that made the project a success in the 1970s ("chugging along indomitably toward the Word"), before turning to its dissolution. When Wayne Holder and Tom Ilves (future leader of Estonia) took over as new management, they focused on international names—Edward Albee and Czesław Miłosz, for example. Costs associated with hosting such iconic writers ultimately led to the grassroots institution's collapse. Unfortunately, author Carolan falls prey to the same impulse that led to the Storefront's closure. His narrative only passes over the involvement of Canadian writers (Purdy, Livesay, bissett, et al.), while it follows international writers (such as Stephen Spender and Tennessee Williams) through airports, taxis, restaurants, and hotels. In allowing these figures to draw his attention away from local talents who supported the Storefront for years, the author fails to heed the admonishments of Spender, who chastised the Storefront's audience for preferring foreign literary gossip to poetry.

Contrastively, *Calgary Renaissance* runs short on details about the contexts that united a diverse range of writers, those on and off the experimental spectrum. This anthology includes well-known writers like Christian Bök and Weyman Chan alongside many lesser-known figures. Bök's trans-species compositional methods (in "Colony Collapse Disorder") and Chan's mystically scientific synaptic leaping (in "Unboxing the Clone") challenge our receptions of literary meaning. The book also represents Calgary writers who produce comparatively graspable work but who have participated in their city's experimental writing community by helping to develop its nexus of venues and events—Jani Krulc, Sharanpal Ruprai, Naomi K. Lewis, and Aaron Giovannone. The narratives and verses of these writers stand in sharp contrast to the dense columns of texts by Nikki Sheppy, an evasively signifying opera by Larissa Lai, or a comedic lipogram by Susan Holbrook. Such diverse voices demonstrate that, like Fertig's Literary Storefront, Calgary's experimental writing community draws no strict borders around inclusion. Here, too, energies spent forging community far outstrip the camp-making distinctions between conceptualism/lyricism or postmodernist/romantic technique. Citing both Fred Wah and Aritha van Herk as important mentors in Calgary, editor rob mclennan reinforces this infidelity to expectation. Although the editors only briefly describe the institutions around which this community coalesced, poetic exchanges from Natalee Caple to Sandy Pool and Nicole Markotić suggest the intimate networks formed at local reading series and through the city's universities. *Calgary Renaissance* offers an introduction to those contemporary writers who have sought to transform the resource-extraction-head-quartered metropolis on the prairie into a hotbed of language experimentation.

By welcoming non-experimental writers into the fold in *Calgary Renaissance* and by complementing chapters with chronologies of wider historical context in *Glory Years*, these books refuse any narrow sense of literary community. Reading them side by side, they demand a pairing, a mating, a hybridized love-child genre that would fuse the eclectic selections of literary anthologies with the context-revealing prose of cultural historians. As it stands, *Glory Years* contains only one creative piece, "An Evening Spent With Ferlinghetti" by Nellie McClung. That choice, of all literary materials performed at the Storefront, or reproduced within its newsletter, confirms the emphasis placed by Carolan on international figures. A greater sense of the work performed at the Storefront would usefully augment the fine intermural history that Carolan provides. Instead, extensive photographs and reproductions of promotional materials provide a sense of the Storefront's happenings. beaulieu and mclennan, to a different effect, only hint at the mechanisms that led to the expansion of Calgary's experimental writing community and at the traditional literary stratagem against which its writers compose.

New Historical Novels

Claudine Bourbonnais; Jacob Homel, trans.
Métis Beach. Dundurn $19.99

Joan Haggerty
The Dancehall Years. Mother Tongue $23.95

Reviewed by Heidi Tiedemann Darroch

Two new novels, each spanning several eventful decades of Canadian and American history, offer ambitious accounts of how individual lives are shaped by the shifting social context. Evolving gender roles and the impact of wartime internment policies on four intricately connected families are examined in Joan Haggerty's *The Dancehall Years*. Conflicts of the mid- to late-twentieth century, including the rise of Quebec sovereignty, the Vietnam War, and 9/11, are

touched on more lightly in *Métis Beach*, a recently translated first novel by Quebec journalist Claudine Bourbonnais.

Haggerty's book was shortlisted for the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize, and in many respects it is a quintessential British Columbia novel, firmly rooted in particular places, a landscape of trees and berry bushes, mountains and water. It is set largely on tiny Bowen Island, and the author's obvious affection is conveyed through her careful attention to details as the island evolves from a summer community for Vancouverites to the full-time home of a motley group of hippie quasi-homesteaders in the 1960s and 1970s. During the Second World War, a Japanese Canadian family is wrenched apart by internment, their beloved house and garden sold at a bargain price to self-justifying white neighbours who imagine they are caring for the property as a gesture of respect for their friends. This act of betrayal is partially rectified many years later, in a symbolic act of racial and familial reconciliation that brings a granddaughter, the offspring of two of the families, back home. Haggerty handles this potentially sentimental resolution in an understated manner, and her characters' upheavals are treated with sympathy.

The novel's other settings, including Vancouver, San Francisco, and, in a concluding section of the novel that is one of its strongest segments, the Northwest Interior region of the Bulkley Valley, also receive close attention. Haggerty's descriptive passages are markedly lyrical. At some points, the substantial number of characters (whose relationships are summarized in the helpful family tree that precedes the text) and Haggerty's unusual approach to an intimate form of third-person narration where shifts in perspective are not always immediately clear, make for a demanding reading experience. The ensemble cast of characters is portrayed effectively, however, and even minor characters are carefully drawn. Perhaps the most vivid portrait is of intelligent and energetic Gwen, who grows from a talented swimmer protective of her timorous brother to a university student infatuated with her professor. After marrying and moving with him to San Francisco, Gwen is absorbed by her young daughters and, periodically, by the teaching work she loves. Wrenching herself away from a crumbling marriage, she returns to an austere existence with her girls on Bowen, and the 1960s and 1970s countercultural West Coast milieu is explored through her struggles to remake her life.

Bourbonnais' first novel, translated from the French by Jacob Homel, has a narrower focus on one man's somewhat melodramatic rise to Hollywood success after a gritty childhood in a rural Quebec family. The community resentfully services the needs of the influx of affluent English-speaking summer residents. The two groups rarely mix socially, but the outsiders have a particular appeal to Romain Carrier. As he grows up, he grapples with his uncomprehending working-class parents, and endures the aftermath of several traumas, including the suicide of an abused fellow student at the Catholic seminary he attends as an adolescent.

Like Bowen Island, the Gaspé Peninsula's Métis Beach is a seasonal home for many residents, but its visiting residents are wealthy Anglo-Montrealers and Americans, the "Anglais" who control pre-Quiet Revolution Quebec economically. Romain is mentored by a young widow. Dana is a glamorous New York feminist writer; she shelters him and supervises his education after he flees his home in the wake of a spurious rape allegation. The turbulence of the Civil Rights movement and the Vietnam War protests affects Romain deeply, and he smuggles a war-resister friend across the border to Canada. Committing himself to life as a writer, the Anglicized and Americanized "Roman Carr" experiences increasing career success that also instigates

personal tragedies. Bourbonnais' writing style tends toward the florid in some passages, particularly those peppered with exclamation marks, and the novel's coincidences pile up. A somewhat casual use of history as a backdrop for Roman's quest for success can occasionally trivialize the larger events, despite the author's careful use of realistic detail.

Kink, Pink, and Ink

Nadia Bozak
Thirteen Shells. Anansi $19.95

Meredith Quartermain
I, Bartleby. Talonbooks $14.95

Martin West
Cretacea & Other Stories from the Badlands. Anvil $20.00

Reviewed by David M. J. Carruthers

Martin West, bursting onto the CanLit scene with his 2016 short story collection, *Cretacea & Other Stories from the Badlands*, delivers a rip-roaring carnivalesque exposing the seedy underbelly of a rural Red Deer River community rife with reactionary right-wing gun nuts; mouldy pot-smoking paranoiacs; swingers, tramps, and maniacs; pharmaceutical-fuelled sex parties; a macho, alcoholic, sharpshooting, porn-reviewing hobbyist paleontologist; a cunning blonde Amazon lady constable; kink of all kinds; and (yes, probably) dinosaurs! West is the master of prestidigitation, leading his reader through complex yet concise narrative schemes, carefully constructing expectations before betraying them time and again, only to the reader's repeated and elated defeat and frustration. He baits his audience with ridiculous but likeable characters—innocents, even in their fetishistic neuroses—driving them into compromising scenarios before either rapidly careening to deliver justice, or to avoid love—or disaster-presumed-inevitable—or eclipsing from his audience the information most desired. Was Trisha's death, in "One on One," a suicide motivated by the jealousy and heartbreak of a baneful love triangle, an auto-erotic asphyxiation taken to the utmost limit, or even a murderous plot driven by one Domme's drive to manipulate the narrator? And is the thing the men dredged from the River, in "My Daughter of the Dead Reeds," the corpse of a drowned child or the fossil remains of a Pteranodon, and why is the mother so unmoved?

A warning to more sensitive readers: the recurrent hyperbolic machismo of this collection, albeit caricatured to the point of satire, risks participation in a misogyny that, despite the overt humour of the stories, some readers will not find funny. This said, the collection treats trans- and BDSM-related topics with a respectable indifference, and the female characters, however disposable, mad, and ridiculous, are no more so than any of its men. Readers, nevertheless, will find themselves taken for a wild ride through the risible horror-show that is the Albertan badlands, its arteries coursing with the same toxicity that defines the neo-Gothic relationships encountered in this almost fictional storyland. West signs his name F-U-N in oil, blood, beerpiss, and buckshot on the dustbowl grit, and everyone should look out for his new work, a novel, *Long Ride Yellow*.

Nadia Bozak's *Thirteen Shells*, however, makes a study of disappointment. The some three-hundred page novel-in-stories traces the course of young Shell's life from the late 1970s to the late 1980s. The child of European immigrant artisans living in a modest rental on the cul-de-sac of Cashel Street in the fictional town of Somerset, Ontario, Shell struggles growing up with the seemingly incessant feeling that she deserves something greater. Such disappointment is the only unifying purpose of the thirteen stories that make up the young girl's life—whether at not receiving lace-up

roller skates for Easter or being forbidden the coveted corporate cereal, whether at her friend Vicki and her family due to body-shaming and classism or at her parents' separation, at her first sexual experience or due to her constant comparison of her own material conditions to others'.

Unfortunately, such disappointment doesn't stop at the limits of Shell's life, but extends to the reader's experience of the novel—a surprise given the relative success of Bozak's first two books, *Orphan Love* (2007) and *El Niño* (2014). The predominant emotion expected of the reader toward Shell, I suppose, is pity, and yet the stories produce neither a protagonist capable of evoking sympathy nor struggles great enough to do so; Shell's life is plain and, though certainly not lavish, without real trial. This said, however, it is this very *commonness* of Shell's life and character that defines the work as a relatable, if mundane, expression of the struggles encountered by girls in their journey toward adulthood in the West.

The greater value that arises from *Thirteen Shells* comes in its chronicling of the *scene* of Canadian culture in the 1980s: it is something of a diary of the concerns and attitudes of a lower middle-class family; a tabloid of the music and fashions that decorate their lives; a now-dated tourist map of the shops, markets, and landmarks of Toronto; and even a menu of the multicultural cuisine of Canada. Likewise, and were this text marketed as a Young Adult novel, *Thirteen Shells* might serve a melodramatic teenage audience relating to the *petite* catastrophes of Shell's life by offering up hope and optimism: the novel's climax and conclusion provide the promise that *it gets better*. After all, with university on the horizon, this sad young girl will finally be afforded the perfectly bourgeois life she has always coveted.

I, Bartleby, Meredith Quartermain's collection of prose poems, histories, and short stories, loosely thematized around Melville's scrivener, is nothing short of brilliant. These wandering reflections, straying like the sweet musk of an opiated daydream, carry their reader from the letters on the page to deep immersions in sensory experiences of shape and colour, texture and sound—exotic escapes through city streets, over mountains and glaciers, across oceans and continents; to the Orient; to pure thought; and to the microcosmic, the microbial, and the molecular; but always returning to the very word, to the letter, to typography and calligraphy, the utterance, reminding the reader of the trick, the magic power that forgave some scratches on pulp to transport one so far from the immediate, embodied experience of reading. Resembling as much Jorge Luis Borges in subject matter and metafictionality as William Carlos Williams in its stream-of-consciousness imagistic prose, with perhaps the beautiful simplicity, playfulness, and frenetic unpredictability of a Tao Lin, *I, Bartleby* is an astonishingly sophisticated collection demonstrating a poetic spirit whose quality of writing is surpassed only by the breadth and depth of its reading. Quartermain, like all great poets, breaks language, cleansing the font of its impurities by burning off any threadbare cliché or tired usage, and admittedly so:

> why not a manifesto of the sentence? Crossbreed every kind with every other kind—twist and turn the thought shapes—so many butterfly nets. *Une manifestation* of clamouring motifs. Unsentencing the sentence. Smashing the piñata of complete thought to clouds of recombining viruses.

After Sorrow, What?

Laura Broadbent
In on the Great Joke. Coach House $18.95

Alyda Faber
Dust or Fire. Goose Lane $19.95

Genevieve Lehr
Stomata. Brick $20.00

Reviewed by Alex Assaly

Poetry often tends toward the "unsayable": the intensely personal or the radically spiritual. The poet stretches and strains language in his or her attempt to put these evasive subjects into words. But language is fragile. Words "slip, slide, [and] perish," as T. S. Eliot writes, and frequently crack under the pressures of articulating the inarticulate. Three recent collections of poetry call on word, syntax, and form to perform in the domains where they most often break down: trauma and grief, empathy and rapture. While at times their poetry-making ends in banal sentiments or trite verse, at others, it reaches the unsayable with craft and sensitivity.

Genevieve Lehr's second collection of poetry, *Stomata*, is a poignant study of loss and grief. In the long poem that opens the collection, "The latter half of the third quarter of the waning moon," Lehr takes the reader through a number of personal trials. Death, marriage, parenthood, disease, disability, and madness leave her speaker fractured and often desperate. Even everyday circumstances become unbearable under the weight of her adversities: a car ride, for example, turns into an occasion to contemplate how "sorrow is concentric, a sea blooming around the shoreline of her eyes."

But, if sorrow is concentric, then hope is linear. Pathways and lines of poetry supply ways out of loss and grief. In "Committal," the speaker's walk down a "long driveway" encourages her to reflect on her friend's death and to memorialize him in poetry. Even when Lehr's lines become histrionic, the reader senses that any utterance, no matter its poetry, has a near-mystical ability to recuperate its speaker. In the most impressive piece of the collection, Lehr considers the transformative power of language in a public setting. "Residential," a prose poem filled with Mi'kmaq words, recovers the voice of a boy who has been forced into silence by the English-speaking residential school system.

Alyda Faber's *Dust and Fire* also takes family and misfortune as its subjects. Faber constructs an incredibly honest picture of her familial history across the four parts of her collection. In the first, she includes Frisian epigraphs for each poem, which she then translates somewhere in the poem itself. This process of translation provides an interesting mirror to Faber's expressive poetics, a poetics driven by translating hidden sentiments into written language.

Faber's transcription of her family history reveals her father to be a particularly complex figure. In "Leeuwarden Train Station," he is at once ferocious in his treatment of his family and sensitive in the overwhelming sadness he feels at the loss of his wife. Though Faber's honesty is often moving, it does intermittently fall into stale self-expression. Faber is at her best when she finds an objective correlative for her personal emotions. "Goldfish," for example, is her most lucid and successful poem. A goldfish, its mouth agape as it prepares to eat, sparks a moment of introspection:

> Was I once so round in expectation?
> Mouth open for the nipple
> breaking the surface of my own dark
> without a glimmer of thinking.

Here, Faber effectively abstracts the personal—she *shows* or *symbolizes* it, rather than *describing* it—to translate it into poetry.

Laura Broadbent's *In on the Great Joke* is the most interesting of the three collections and the most nuanced in its treatment of

language. In her introduction, Broadbent turns to the Tao Te Ching to support her claim that "language is a limited system": it reduces even the most mysterious things into empirical and systematic signifiers. Broadbent's poetry gets its strength by playing with the tension between the finiteness of language and the infiniteness of reality. Her most effective device is bathos:

> Denial and repression
> represent our chief
> creative forces.
> Create a shrine to them,
> leave offerings of
> incense and Gatorade.

In moments such as these, Broadbent exposes the precariousness of language by using bathos both to undercut her efforts at a metaphysical claim and to recontextualize a consumer product so as to render its signifier absurd.

In the latter half of her collection, Broadbent does redeem language. Literature, she writes, has the potential to be the site of a "radical empathy": an "alchemical" process in which an empathetic reader and a writer (as signified by his or her words) combine in the mind of the former. When the writer's words enmesh themselves in the mind of the reader, the writer, text, and reader blend without differentiation or hierarchy—a perfect correlative to the accomplished genre-blending of Broadbent's collection.

Ways of Looking Backwards

Stephen Brockwell
All of Us Reticent, Here, Together. Mansfield $17.00

Edward Carson
Knots. McGill-Queens UP $16.95

Weyman Chan
Human Tissue. Talonbooks $18.95

Pier Giorgio Di Cicco
My Life without Me. Mansfield $17.00

Reviewed by Patrick McCann

Riding the line between universal and personal, these four collections of poetry discuss the intricacies of knowledge, memory, and the self, and the multitude of emotions that accompany such topics. In *Human Tissue*, Weyman Chan, the most experimental of the four poets, explores a vision of humanity in a technologically charged world. Stephen Brockwell's *All of Us Reticent, Here, Together* delves into experiences and relationships in a candid and often humorous fashion. *My Life without Me*, the latest collection from Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, while still saturated in personal matters and beliefs, emphasizes the creative process of the poet. Love, the mind, and memory are the subjects of Edward Carson's formalistic *Knots*. Each collection demonstrates a unique perspective on the introspective nature of poetry.

Human Tissue, the fifth book by Calgary poet Chan, exudes a sense of immediacy and simultaneously displays a modernist influence. Although it deals primarily with contemporary issues and concerns, like the effect of technology on the psyche, navigating a rather unenjoyable house party, and multiculturalism, *Human Tissue* includes excerpts of Franz Kafka and Gertrude Stein (whose style is visible in many of Chan's poems), hearkening back to certain poetic modes of the twentieth century. Many of the poems' titles are simply numbers, ordered in a seemingly Wittgensteinian manner:

"11.1," "11.84," "0.0089." Technological terms, academic topics, and scientific language blend with an arsenal of colloquial terms:

> or is solipsism
> a subset of unreal
> McData
> juxtacrined and morose.

This clash of tradition and the contemporary, of the informal and the technical, contributes to the sense of anxiety in Chan's poetry. A reimagining of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the titling of the book's sections ("Deviance Standard," "Mute Function"), and the book's subtitle, "a primer for Not Knowing," combine to create a carefully crafted expression of being flesh in a partly robotic world.

All of Us Reticent, Here, Together is an honest, formally straightforward exploration of memory and relationships, in which Brockwell studies his life through the lens of the figure of the poet. Many of the poems are aptly titled "Biographies" of certain things and people, as he records experiences and feelings in hindsight: "Biography of the Translucent Grandmother," "Biography of Glazing," "Biography of My Father's Last Breath." As is apparent from the titles, the poetic representations of Brockwell's personal life range from sorrowful to sardonic, exemplifying his capability with multiple tones. Like Chan, Brockwell alludes to literary and philosophical figures, yet the allusions are often presented as tongue-in-cheek and in passing. There is a claim that Heidegger mistitled *Being and Time*; it should have been *Being in Time*, for there is "no other way to be." The versatility and personality of the collection exemplify a blend of the droll and the doleful that is emblematic of a recent trend in Canadian poetry.

In a similar way, Pier Giorgio Di Cicco's newest collection examines individual experiences and emotions in a primarily lyrical, serious manner. Many of the poems revolve around religion, death, and memory: they look forwards and backwards. Despite such weighty and grave matters, Di Cicco's poetry exhibits an uninhibited affirmation of life, of people, of love. As the poet examines his life in detail, he simultaneously claims in one of the poems that "[o]ne day I became everybody else," and in the preamble he writes that he "always had other people's thoughts." This juxtaposition attempts to create an element of universality in the poetry in *My Life without Me*, claiming an authority for the poet's perspective on the important matters of life. In a world permeated by the loss of love, life, and time, Di Cicco asks, "Where is God in all this?"

Carson's *Knots* revolves around the subjects of the mind, memory, and love, almost exclusively using nature-based metaphors. The sky, birds, rivers, and mountains play a central role in his elaboration of his view of the mind and its functions. Although it boasts a pulchritudinous style and a creative way of unwrapping the mind's emotions, *Knots* feels increasingly repetitive as it proceeds. The book employs essentially only one poetic structure for each section, and a single poem from one of the sections can sometimes seem indistinguishable from the others, both in style and in subject. Nevertheless, Carson shows off his ability to craft poems that delve into the heart of thinking, loving, and remembering.

Landscapes of the Mind

Marie Carrière, Curtis Gillespie, and Jason Purcell, eds.
Ten Canadian Writers in Context.
U of Alberta P $24.95

Rudy Wiebe
Where the Truth Lies: Selected Essays.
NeWest $24.95

Reviewed by Rachel Lallouz

"Here, among the unglaciated mountains unending as an ocean, the brain cannot truly comprehend what in every direction the open eye must see," exalts Rudy Wiebe

in the essay "On Being on the Top of the World," from his collection of memoirs and speeches *Where the Truth Lies*. In this particular recollection, Wiebe draws from a deep well of memory, detailing his time spent as part of a 1999 Geological Survey of Canada team completing work on the northeast coast of Ellesmere Island.

"To stand in such a place on earth; the widest possible camera lens is basically a silly little thing . . . the mind drops, bottomless," he says. It is this abyss—this incalculable immenseness of the writer's potential to craft land and space—that we see reflected in each of the twenty-one works in *Where the Truth Lies*. Wiebe's collection traverses a psychic, embodied geography of Canada as much as it does the physical land itself, from the remote and barren North to the windblown fields of the Prairies, down along the North Saskatchewan River snaking itself through the city of Edmonton and past the old office window of Professor Wiebe himself, emeritus professor of literature and creative writing at the University of Alberta. In a spirited and playful essay, "A Frontier Visit," the ghost of his first writing professor visits him with sage advice and a sardonic smile. The advice imparted to the startled Wiebe? His ghostly professor reminds him to "not dare less than the farthest edges of [his] wildest, most improbable dream." As fantastical as this instruction given by writing mentor Professor Frederick Miller Salter is, we see in this collection that Wiebe has turned his order inwards, and the sixty years' worth of writing in *Where the Truth Lies* opens wide into inspiration and memories giving rise to his most influential books.

The sense of expansiveness imparted to the reader is drawn primarily from the utter vastness of Wiebe's travels throughout Canada and into memories that are the genesis of his fiction and that have crafted his sense of identity. In "The Wind and the Caribou," Wiebe details his attendance of a Dogrib Dene winter hunt for caribou ("through binoculars they seemed too immense to be believed"), while "On the Trail of Big Bear" pounds home the heartbeat of Wiebe's writing: that "the stories we tell ourselves of our past are by no means merely words: they are meaning and life to us as *people*." Always, however, Wiebe's writing returns to the prairie, to his childhood growing up on the plains outside Lethbridge, and to the Mennonite faith that grounds and gives shape to his stories. For Wiebe, accessing the core "truth" of one's identity and heritage lies in the deceptively simple, and weighty, act of writing. "Truly," says Wiebe, "all I as a writer can do with truth is dig for it with words, dig into words for it, dig for it wherever it may lie." Where it lies, suggests Wiebe, is in the rich matter of the self, the body, and the land.

Geographical breadth is also spanned in *Ten Canadian Writers in Context* through the compilation of excerpts of creative non-fiction, fiction, and poetry from the multilingual, multicultural Canadian Literature Centre/Centre de littérature canadienne's ten-year archive of Brown Bag Lunch readings. Each of the ten featured works is preceded by a critic's essay, giving sharp insight into this transcultural anthology and further contextualizing individual works for the reader.

The selections chosen by editors Marie Carrière, Curtis Gillespie, and Jason Purcell are as preoccupied as Wiebe with the relationship between spatiality, geography, and Canadian identity. Newfoundland-born Michael Crummey's excerpt from *Sweetland* digs into grief, felt hard and fast by a Newfoundland fisherman soon to be displaced from his home village of Chance Cove by the Canadian government's resettlement program that accompanied the 1992 moratorium on fishing. In the excerpt from Caterina Edwards' *Finding Rosa*, we see her Italian protagonist, Bianca, who now calls Edmonton home, on a trip to Italy, where she stands in front of the house her mother

was born in. She stares at the towering orange tree in the front yard, imagining "her grandmother, black hair soaked with sweat, her face twisted in pain" as sunlight illuminates the room while she gives birth to Bianca's mother. "This is the place where my mother began," she states.

Displacement and journeying—the impulse to search for the self—are most clearly seen in the anthology's latter works. Lawrence Hill's protagonist hitchhikes into the town of Gull Lake, Saskatchewan, in the excerpt from *Meet You at the Door*, where the nomadic young man works graveyard shifts as a railway operator connecting train dispatchers in the dark of the night. His search for self, however, reads more as an escape of past ghosts. He laments that "the dead [have] an unfair advantage. They could hector you all they wanted through the deepest, darkest Saskatchewan nights," where, as he explains, there is "no movement but oil pumps bobbing in agreement." We learn that he is trying in vain to outrun the shadow of a close friend who committed suicide. Like the concept of displacement, the idea of "home" is interrogated in this anthology. The excerpt from Eden Robinson's *The Sasquatch at Home* traces her experience camping in the remote Kitlope Valley with a group of Indigenous youth—the kernel, she reveals, of what became *Monkey Beach*. Gregory Scofield's selection of poems, weaving violence and sorrow with his deft musical tongue, demands that the reader *listen* to the sound of loss and displacement echoing over and through Canada's landscape. Sings Scofield in "Prayers for the returning of names and sons":

> I am singing
> to bring back
> your stolen sons
> whose sons and sons
> and their missing bones
> are unsung geese
> lost in a country[.]

Starving for Answers

Emma Donoghue
The Wonder. HarperCollins $32.99

Reviewed by Lucia Lorenzi

In Emma Donoghue's bestselling novel *Room*, the main characters are trapped within a small, claustrophobic room, held there for years by a sadistic sexual predator. In her latest work, *The Wonder*, Donoghue asks us again to meditate on suffering and captivity: this time, however, she asks us to consider what happens when a young girl inflicts pain upon herself, seemingly for no reason, becoming both captor and captive within her own body. Drawing on the Victorian history of so-called "Fasting Girls"—young women whose aversion to food made them into both celebrities and spiritual martyrs—*The Wonder* takes place in 1850s Ireland, where the unflappable nurse Lib Wright is summoned to the bedside of Anna O'Donnell, a young girl whose months-long fast appears to be so impossible as to be miraculous. Rather than solely being employed to care for the frail girl, Lib must determine, amidst the religious furor that surrounds the O'Donnell household, whether or not Anna is indeed a spiritual "wonder," or rather simply a fraud who has been aided in her ruse by her entire family, and if so, to what purpose. Lib's dual role as nurse and investigator is, at first glance, well served by both her medical training and her innate skepticism. Yet, as the days pass and Lib gains little insight into the girl's psyche, she must face the consequences of her seeming inability to solve the wondrous mystery of Anna O'Donnell: Anna's worsening physical symptoms and her impending death.

While Lib is undeniably the novel's protagonist, Donoghue also asks her readers to consider the ways in which the young Anna disappears—both literally and figuratively—within the religious and scientific discourses which either praise or denounce her renunciation of food. For the pious villagers

who visit the O'Donnell household to leave various religious offerings or money, Anna's "thriving by special providence of the Almighty" is a hopeful indication of the workings of God, not to be questioned or interfered with, but only praised. Even amidst the scientific discussion surrounding Anna's perplexing symptoms, the girl becomes the object of debate, rather than of intervention and care. In Lib's initial briefing on Anna's case, she declares boldly to Dr. McBrearty that "science tells us that to live without food is impossible," to which the doctor replies with excitement: "[H]aven't most new discoveries in the history of civilization seemed uncanny at first, almost magical?"

Ultimately, *The Wonder* is a novel less about the supposed mystery of Anna's inability or unwillingness to eat than about the ways in which the suffering of young girls—as much in 1850s Ireland as today—is simultaneously pathologized and mystified, denounced and celebrated. The cause of Anna's perplexing symptoms is ultimately no great religious or scientific mystery, but Donoghue demonstrates that collectively we are often willing to let girls die—or, at the very least, languish on their deathbeds—before we realize the urgency of simply bearing witness to their stories.

Museum Shop Memories

David B. Goldstein
Lost Originals. BookThug $18.00

Steven Ross Smith
Emanations: Fluttertongue 6. BookThug $18.00

Jennifer Zilm
Waiting Room. BookThug $18.00

Reviewed by Ryan J. Cox

Early in *Emanations*, the sixth volume in his *Fluttertongue* series, Steven Ross Smith implores the reader to "remember, make your mind a museum shop." It's an interesting image. The museum shop, in stark contrast to the museum it serves, is never a presentation of history as it was, but rather a series of representations of the idea of the past reduced to talisman. The plastic dinosaurs that Smith describes in the lines before he makes this request are not dinosaurs as they were—they are playful extrapolations of the idea of dinosaurs and a past that is elusive. Smith's *Emanations*, Jennifer Zilm's *Waiting Room*, and David B. Goldstein's *Lost Originals* all engage in this exploration of hauntological memory, seeking to represent or capture experiences both quotidian and aesthetic despite the distance between the reader and those moments of inspiration. That those moments may themselves be mere instances in an ongoing cycle of inspiration and representation is part of the joy of embracing the mind as museum shop. Each of these poets makes use of different techniques to do this work—Smith seeds his text with an idea and riffs, Zilm makes use of erasure and intertext, Goldstein's text is an example of ekphrasis absent the original—but each of these collections seeks a past that has become more gift shop than museum.

It should be little surprise given his work as a sound poet that the poems in Smith's *Emanations* are highly musical. Rich with assonance, alliteration, and language play, the lines in these poems beg to be read aloud, to be heard. This musicality carries over into the poems' relationship with their inspiration. Each poem riffs on a seed from a source poem—sources include works by Di Brandt, bpNichol, Lyn Hejinian, and Lisa Robertson, among others—reacting, expanding, and playing with that seed in order to create something both wholly new and tied to a history. The seeds are present in the poems, yet entirely absent, providing a layer of textual complexity for readers should they wish to excavate for further archaeological strata. However, the seeds remain elusive, sometimes even for Smith, as the notes on "Offering" indicate, while imparting the text with a tremendous amount of energy. *Emanations* isn't about

the seeds so much as what happens when they take root in Smith, and, for the reader, what he does with those moments of inspiration is itself inspiring.

Waiting Room is Zilm's first full-length collection of poetry, and, considering the fact that the poems confront dentistry, psychiatry, and graduate school, the title is apt. The collection is bound together by a concern with critical and therapeutic interventions, but its strength is in the way Zilm makes use of the familiar contours of these interventions, their normalcy, to create engaging poetic moments. The familiarity of these moments allows the reader access to the anxiety and uncertainty—the pushy yoga instructor hygienist imploring you to breathe properly—that these therapeutic spaces carry with them. Even the crisis space of residential recovery on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, which Zilm juxtaposes with Dante's vision of Purgatory, is grounded in the quotidian because she starts the cycle about that experience, "Singular Room Occupancy," with something as mundane as a job description. Even Zilm's use of pre-existing texts to generate some of the poems serves this function, allowing for introspection through excavation. *Waiting Room* is compelling, gripping, and familiar. It is a valuable contribution to the documentary tradition in Canadian poetry because it works to reveal the subject waiting to be uncovered in the document.

Goldstein positions the work in *Lost Originals* as an act of translation, an attempt to evoke objects that can only be apprehended by the reader through the ghostly echoes of poetic language. This is an interesting exercise insofar as it seeks to capture the aura—which Walter Benjamin describes as the special quality of an object related to both its singularity and proximity—of the objects described when the objects themselves are irretrievably absent in an era when the auracular is constantly being effaced. The first section of the book, "Object Permanence," largely succeeds in doing this because its collected dolls and figurines are knowable or discernible as types of objects despite the absence of the specific. However, when the objects that Goldstein engages with are more esoteric, further estranged from the reader, the poems are less successful. The original becomes lost in translation.

Aspects of *Her* Nature

Rhoda Rabinowitz Green
Aspects of Nature. Inanna $22.95

Reviewed by Shana Rosenblatt Mauer

Aspects of Nature is a collection of short stories—a pastiche of fictionalized memoir, third-person consciousness punctuated by metafictional moments, and epistolary tirades—written over the course of more than two decades, the earliest published in 1993. Broadly, the stories are an exploration of a shifting, but consistently reductionist, view of women and perceptions of the inverse relationship between aging and widely embraced cultural codes of femininity.

Green brings much energy to three stories that focus on women who refuse to see themselves as inconsequential unless they keep their aspirations and sense of self-worth in check. In "You Make Your Decision," the protagonist, Jenny, resorts to silence as her efforts to become a concert pianist are thwarted by a music school dean. After her failed entrance audition, he insinuates that her attempt to study was disingenuous since she had already chosen matrimony over music: "'Come now my dear,'" he condescends. "'You made your decision the moment you said I DO.'" In later years, Jenny's frustration is expressed as a cascade of tears when she "agrees" to abandon her reclaimed career aspirations and relocate to a new city as her husband's ascending career dictates. Yet, in a turn that

is representative of Green's narrative structure, it becomes clear that Jenny's sacrifices are about much more than music.

In "Dear Doctor" and its companion story, "Age Appropriate," the heroine, Rose Enfeld, writes to her physicians to ply them with her grievances, expressing not only the physical shame of aging, but also the emotional degradation of simultaneously becoming anonymous and, worse, burdensome. These first-person harangues recall the chatty exuberance of Grace Paley's recurring heroines, Hope and Faith, who likewise illuminate their listeners with recriminating observations on women's lives. In particular, "Age Appropriate," a letter to a shamelessly sexist plastic surgeon, captures the speaker's rage at the suggestion that her happiness hinges on procedures to lift every part of her body "'that has sagged, dropped, drooped, gone slack.'" Intrepid, Rose berates the doctor for reducing her to a societal pariah for accepting aging's physical repercussions while he, ironically, remains self-satisfied despite his "creping skin, baldpate, doughnut middle."

The indignity of old age is captured in another pair of connected stories, "Shayndeleh" and "Shayndeleh's Real Estate," which focus on Jeanne, a working-class Jewish woman who feels she has been caged by her children and niece in a seniors' home. Betrayed by her mind, she is angry and frustrated but cannot link her feelings to past experiences or relationships. Yet her reactions to her niece's condescension—the niece insists that old age has left Jeanne unchanged—is a biting indictment of the patronage of the old. "What does *she* know?" Jeanne thinks when her niece tries to convince her that she is still her young self. Jeanne's terse remark is both question and answer; for the young to assume to understand aging is to confess wholesale ignorance of the innumerable perplexities of getting old.

Incidental in these stories are the occasional Canadian references and Jewish allusions. Set in nondescript versions of London, Philadelphia, Toronto, northern Ontario, southern California, and elsewhere, these stories lack a sense of place, an anchoring rootedness to substantiate their context and their characters' worlds. Equally, the Jewish elements seem appended to the stories' discursive trajectory, especially in "Out to Lunch with the Girls" as well as "Shayndeleh," where Jeanne's attenuated Jewish identity and her niece Tzippy's ultra-Orthodoxy seem contrived. More problematic are the Holocaust inferences. While Green does tread carefully, avoiding the exploitative tendencies delineated in Lawrence Langer's *Using and Abusing the Holocaust*, overall the "survivor" allusions are used to troubling effect. In "The Wind at Her Back" and "The Day of the Gorgon," most notably, references to Bergen-Belsen and "ARBEIT MACHT FREI" suggest an inappropriate effort to elevate stories of poignant but recognizable relationships into morality tales with historical gravitas.

Green tries to cover much ground in most of her stories. The narrative threads and passages that are most moving, however, are those characterized by an exploration of depth rather than scope. When she is on surest ground, examining gendered double standards and the tension between age and the potency of femininity, the impact of her prose is most resounding.

Poems of the Leafy Mind

Steven Heighton
The Waking Comes Late. Anansi $19.95

M. Travis Lane; Shane Neilson, ed.
The Witch of the Inner Wood: Collected Long Poems. Goose Lane $40.00

Reviewed by Nicholas Bradley

"This shaking keeps me steady," wrote the American poet Theodore Roethke in "The Waking." In that villanelle, all's misalliance, topsy-turvy: "I wake to sleep, and take my

waking slow. / I learn by going where I have to go." But time and experience, the poem suggests, will reveal the right path, faith in the numinous world leading to destinations unknown: "God bless the Ground! I shall walk softly there, / And learn by going where I have to go." Roethke is not one of the sundry poets named in Steven Heighton's *The Waking Comes Late*, but the similar titles of old poem and new book—a happy coincidence—correspond to a resemblance in theme. In poems of self-discovery in middle age, Heighton writes of hard-won knowledge and searches for wisdom that could change the course of his days. He examines CAT scans, "[m]ost intimate / of portraits, yet / clinically impersonal," to see himself injured and healing; he confronts death to muse upon frailty and disappointment. "Each day I wake feeling I've already failed," begins a poem "Inspired by a Line by Paul Celan." (The next line proposes a cure for despondency: "Tonight let's get wrecked and call it Venice.") In "The Waking Comes Late," comprehension of beauty's particularity replaces youthful ignorance: "in those days he assumed all evergreens / were 'pines,' or 'spruce,' whatever, / beyond his ego's stunted reach it was all whatever." But "[n]ow he believes little matters more / than knowing right names": landscapes console, hallowed words allowing the world's splendours to be perceived.

As the nod to Celan implies, Heighton looks across the Atlantic for touchstones. His collection is inhabited by Seféris, Mandelstam, Kaváfis, Trakl, Karyotákis, Akhmatova, and Mallarmé, whose poems he translates or emulates. Robert Lowell's *Imitations* (1961) is an important antecedent, and P. K. Page's *Hologram* (1994) a Canadian precursor, even if Heighton's translations hew closer to their originals than Page's glosas to their inspirations. One of Heighton's interlocutors, the Spanish poet Villalta, is as mysterious as Andreas Karavis, the fictitious Greek poet of David Solway's *Saracen Island* (2000). (I make the comparison to Solway gingerly and on strictly poetic grounds.) Explaining his method, Heighton suggests that *The Waking Comes Late* fulfills the ambition of earlier volumes:

> My last two poetry collections, *The Address Book* and *Patient Frame*, both end with a section of 'approximations'—free translations of poems by various authors modern and ancient, renowned and obscure. In this new book, I've opted not to sequester the translations but instead to integrate them with my own poems.

As Marjorie Perloff noted of Lowell and Ezra Pound, such approximations depend "finally upon the poet's ability to make the past present." The contemporaneity of Heighton's translations is demonstrated by their parallels with his other poems. A version of Cavafy's bleak "The City" is followed by "Wheat Town Beer-Leaguer, Good Snapshot, No Backhand," a fantasy of escape from "the fakery / and fuckery of culture": "Sometimes gladly I would skate away / from the simian prattle in my prefrontal lobe, / the desolate sierra of Mandatory Reads." But Cavafy's dour warning looms: "there's no ship out for you, no road away."

If T. S. Eliot was right that no *vers* is *libre* for the poet who wants to do a good job, then perhaps no translation is truly free either. Heighton contends that his translations and originals arise alike "from a single period and process of reading and pondering, writing and revising"—they are "two worlds rhymed to one," in a phrase from "Late Couplet," a sonnet about the sonneteer Thomas Wyatt. As if to evoke authorial obsession—"writing and revising"—*The Waking Comes Late* is repetitive by design. Thus the first lines of "'*¡Evite que sus niños . . . !*'"—"On the shrink-wrapped shoreline a mourner / sits shiva for the seas"—reappear in "Thalassacide," a "madman" taking the mourner's place. But although Heighton's poems are weighted by midlife's millstones, chilled by midwinter's

grind, they glint with memorable images and figures: "the dog with her large-array ears / who's loyally listening" ("After the CAT Scan"); "a month-long crimson tide, / as if the blighted sea were bleeding out" ("A Cosmos"); "bare heels / impastoed with pinesap" ("*Arenosa*"). He lingers on infirmity, death, the traumas of war, and the world's end, treating enduring themes with skill and compassion.

M. Travis Lane's books, from *An Inch or So of Garden* (1969) to *Crossover* (2015), span nearly half a century. With *The Witch of the Inner Wood*, Shane Neilson (as editor) and Goose Lane (as publisher) have performed a genuine service by assembling her long poems and throwing into relief one facet of her sizeable body of work. A fervent admirer of the "diminutively potent firebrand," Neilson celebrates Lane's writing and makes bold claims for its significance:

> Since 1969, Lane has written in a relative Canadian wilderness, championing subjects and themes that have only become more important as the years pass. Taken in context with her great poetic skill, what you have in your hands is a remarkable book that is, if not an alternative to the narrative of the long poem in Canada, certainly an addition to it.

His enthusiasm is catching, but Lane's poetry is its own best advertisement, and *The Witch of the Inner Wood* should renew awareness of her investigations of the world's secrets: "The evening, like an empty hand, / seems portent with meaning, unsayable," she writes in "To Persevere" (from *Touch Earth*, 2006). Neilson's introduction concentrates on Lane's involvement in the Long-liners Conference of 1984, her position vis-à-vis the poets included in Michael Ondaatje's *The Long Poem Anthology* (1979) and Sharon Thesen's *The New Long Poem Anthology* (1991, 2001), and the environmental (and specifically ecofeminist) dimensions of her poetry. In her afterword, Lane herself is generous in defining the relevant term:

> The 'long poem' is not a 'form,' but it is structurally different from a short poem, insofar as a short poem tends to seize upon a single incident, while a long poem carries on further. In the absence of anything other than duration as a criterion, I propose that a poem which takes at least five minutes to read out loud is long.

Like Heighton, Lane often engages in dialogue with the literary past. In Book Three of "Divinations" (from *Divinations and Shorter Poems 1973-1978*, 1980), the quotation of Hopkins' "The Windhover"—"sheer plod," "Shine sillion"—makes plain her spiritual and poetic sensibilities. The questing Eliot of *Four Quartets* skulks in "The Seasons" (from *Reckonings: Poems 1979-85*, 1988), not least because of a shared Atlantic geography; in "Fall," Lane is concerned with coastal New Brunswick. "The groaner only calls us to ourselves": her readers will remember that in "The Dry Salvages" Eliot glossed the noun, for the benefit of landlubbers, as "a whistling buoy." Allusion alone is not the point, but Lane's telltale echoes resound, proffering contexts for her precisely rendered observations. In "Summer," her description of a boggy shore—"Tide's out. The river's turned to mud. / The gulls prowl in the bladderwrack"—leads to a pastoral proposition. "To live as if the moment were a whole / and wholly in the moment"—this "is heart's desire." Showing length to be no impediment to clarity and pith, Lane's *Collected* utterly rewards the reader's attention.

Imagining the Land

Trevor Herriot
Towards a Prairie Atonement.
U of Regina P $22.95

Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough, Danielle Marie Cudmore, and Stefan Donecker, eds.
Imagining the Supernatural North.
U of Alberta P $29.95

Reviewed by Marinette Grimbeek

Trevor Herriot's *Towards a Prairie Atonement* is a lyrical appeal for "a restored covenant with the land" based on Métis land-use practices. For all its lyricism and intimate descriptions of precarious prairie life, Herriot's slim volume brims with anger. The author's wrath stems not only from the Harper government's lifting of federal protection for these endangered grasslands in 2012, but also from the irreparable damage done by colonialism and forced removals. Most of the prairie has been left in private or public ownership, and, consequently, Herriot envisages "a third way" that transcends this dichotomy, based on traditional First Nations and Métis land tenure. Herriot's indictment of private ownership is not universal, however; he recognizes that at least some small freeholders have had a positive impact on grassland ecology and the local economies.

Some of the most poignant passages from *Towards a Prairie Atonement* are spent in conversation with Michif Elder Norman Fleury (who also penned the Afterword) in the graveyard at Ste. Madeleine, all that remains of the Métis community whose residents were forcibly removed by the federal government in the late 1930s. So if Herriot's lament on the fate of the prairie seems nostalgic, his nostalgia is tempered by a consideration of the extermination of the buffalo, and of the way in which both human and nonhuman suffering can be traced back to colonial and corporate expansionism. Atonement is an essential component of Herriot's envisaged prairie commonwealth: atonement should involve decolonization, expressed as a "restored covenant with the land and the peoples who have known it so long."

Herriot's volume is one of reconciliation and an appeal for renewed respect between human communities. *Imagining the Supernatural North*, on the other hand, focuses on the circumpolar North—and cardinal direction—as imagined Other. Although its editors express the hope that their volume may serve as a "starting point for a criticism of the discursive hegemony claimed by European-American observers over the North and its inhabitants," not many of the contributions explicitly reflect on their own cultural bias.

The collection's sixteen chapters are presented in four parts: "Ancient Roots: The Menace and the Divine"; "From the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period: The Monstrous and the Demonic"; "The Nineteenth Century: The Scientific and the Spiritual"; and "Contemporary Perspectives: The Desire for a Supernatural North." Individual chapters cover diverse topics, ranging from the North in Jewish lore and Ancient Greek proverbs to the role played by Northern imagery in contemporary subcultures, such as black metal and Otherkin communities (the latter comprising individuals who regard themselves as not just human), to readings of specific texts or biographies. Broadly speaking, most of the chapters take an anthropological or cultural studies approach, although many other disciplines are involved, including history, linguistics, literary studies, and folkloristics.

Nevertheless, precisely because of the variety of subjects and time periods it covers, my overall impression is of a slight lack of coherence within the collection, which might have been addressed with more explicit attention to one or more aspects of the "imaginatio borealis" in all of the chapters, such as the gendering or Othering

of the North. While the volume certainly multiplies perspectives on associations of the supernatural with the North, a slightly narrower focus, and fewer very long quotations in the relatively short chapters, would perhaps have been more useful for a student of the gothic or the uncanny. As it is, however, *Imagining the Supernatural North* provides an accessible introduction to a vast subject by touching on such a variety of aspects related to the North and its hold on the Western imagination.

Both *Towards a Prairie Atonement* and *Imagining the Supernatural North* concern the ways in which we make sense of our planetary habitation. In their very different approaches, both of these volumes underscore that such conceptions are not static; some hope for changed relations lies in repeated reimagination and the acknowledgement of marginalized perspectives.

Exploratory Operations

Emily Izsak
Whistle Stops: A Locomotive Serial Poem. Signature $17.95

Erin Robinsong
Rag Cosmology. BookThug $18.00

Moez Surani
عملية *Operación Opération Operation* 行动 Операция. BookThug $18.00

Reviewed by Carl Watts

The jury's out on whether there's a hard distinction between experimental and not-experimental poetries in Canada, but the three collections under review negotiate innovation and tradition in a way that both denies and reifies this distinction. Moez Surani's *Operation* showcases a conceptualism that is entirely removed from the author's past writing; in Emily Izsak's and Erin Robinsong's debut collections, markedly experimental techniques are respectively appended to and interspersed with more conventional verse.

I approached *Operation* with a degree of skepticism. Surani, whose previous work consists of writerly lyric poetry, here provides only a list of names—those of government operations carried out by member states of the United Nations. Surani's introduction dispels some of these doubts: it describes the UN's shift from preventing conflict to intervening when a government endangers its citizens, makes a case for the project's revelation of the violence on which the international community has "inadvertently collaborated," and outlines constraints in operation naming suggested by Winston Churchill.

The list itself yields a minimalist topography of postwar geopolitics. For example, an influx of Hebrew names (transliterated and not) marks the establishment of Israel in 1948. Not all major historical developments are spelled out with this kind of textual-visual patterning, however. Upon reaching 1950, the year the Korean War broke out, a reader finds not a similarly identifiable swath of names but still more Anglo-Americanisms—indicative, perhaps, of the extent to which this so-called civil conflict resulted from foreign intervention.

The book yields many similar revelations. Deep into the 1960s, sequences like "Dazzlem (1967-1968) / Blue Max / Banish Beach / Night Bolt" and "Inferno / Scrotum II / Velvet Hammer" sound more like discographies of hair-metal bands than lists of names conforming to Churchill's statement that such missions "ought not to be described by code words which imply a boastful or overconfident sentiment." The timeline of these arbitrarily selected reference points outlines US foreign policy's descent into irresponsible machismo, and Western popular culture's subsequent reflection thereof. Associations like this render the book much more complex than its simplicity may at first suggest.

Surani's framing is less than airtight: his introduction discusses the names' reflection

of "a nation's dreams of purity," leaving unacknowledged that the book focuses on the corrupt and warlike nature of governments as opposed to national-populist bigotries. But such flaws don't change the fact that *Operation* demands more active reading and yields more vigorous discussion than one might expect.

Whistle Stops, meanwhile, is part of an experimental tradition—the serial poem—that doesn't require surrendering the poet's voice to the same extent as conceptualism does. According to the book's press sheet, Izsak "gives us an unapologetically female addition" to the masculine genre of railway poetry. Its succession of always similar, always different train rides (each titled by date, route, and time) sometimes leaves off with an image that's picked up in the next entry, such as when "Sept 16th 72 to Union Station 11:02" ends by mentioning "marbled vapours / of no specific harm," only for "Sept 17th . . ." to begin, "Landfills brag / to consecutive stints / in allocution."

The capacious tradition of the serial poem organizes Izsak's verse without limiting the smart, lively style of her 2015 chapbook, *Stickup*. The speaker sometimes drifts through sections of prose or freer lines like "Beside the arrogant motion of form / our holes configure a dugout / the roof a milky macho slant." Elsewhere, Izsak's lines obey the relentless pace of the railroad, appearing in interruptive units that pass by more quickly than the content seems to demand:

> Slapstick lapse in gorgeous
> matters of swears
> basks in dangerous hours
> near ballast
> a body for spite[.]

Izsak departs for the more outwardly experimental in the book's brief second section, after which a set of notes explains the method behind each poem. This section is sometimes indicative of the perils of dealing in experimental formats in their entirety (an "H track" mesostic, built from bpNichol's *Martyrology*, seems like an exercise in a simplistic and overused mode). Still, moments such as the arbitrary "censoring" of words from Philip Larkin's "The Whitsun Weddings" ("Wide canals with floatings of $#@*^& froth; / A hothouse flashed uniquely / *&$#@ dipped and rose") reveal the layers of humour and self-reflexivity in what by now seem like hallowed experimentalist forms.

Robinsong's *Rag Cosmology* pulls off a similar combination of radicalism and traditionalism. Environmental poetry is well positioned to speak to this synthesis: ecopoetics articulates the exigencies of the Anthropocene, but broadly nature-focused writing is as old-school as Canadian poetry gets. And indeed, the collection's treatment of ecological and personal subject matter at first retains the feel of lyric; "Vibration Desks" recalls what Sina Queyras has described as the lyric conceptualism of Lisa Robertson, interspersing italicized quotations ("*who lived in this house and how many worlds?*") with the lines of a looser long-poem format ("Just as we know the universe from its folds") to produce both juxtaposition and complementarity.

Rag Cosmology's blurring of the particular and the universal also makes for some compellingly self-reflexive pieces. "It Is No Good and I Continue" breaks up single lines with virgules ("To be one's own limit / and to perceive beyond it / is what I do all day"), only to reduce itself to a series of placeholders: "Personal universes flicker like PRONOUN NOUN VERB VERB." In "I'm Working on It," the lines "When I went to parties and would end up onstage naked reading poems // to crowds of brilliant people" fold the social network (and, perhaps, contemporary poetry's seeming lack of a non-writerly audience) into Robinsong's negotiation of details and systems.

These moments produce an immediacy that doesn't always come through in the book's more abstract moments. Still, when

a visual piece consisting of scattered letters arranged into *PINE*, *FIR*, and *YEW* assembles itself in the following poem into lines like "Pine fir yew / fir, yew // yew knew I / new you, knew aye," Robinsong weaves processes of writing and revision into her repeated crossings of fragment, utterance, and idea. This kind of complexity suggests that, even if such identifiably abstract approaches appear to interrupt the larger sweep of a collection or poetics, Robinsong, like Surani and Izsak, has a considerable range and a compelling desire to innovate.

A Definite Yes

Penn Kemp
Barbaric Cultural Practice. Quattro $18.00

Nyla Matuk
Stranger. Véhicule $17.95

Meaghan Strimas
Yes or Nope. Mansfield $17.00

Reviewed by Sarah-Jean Krahn

In these new books of poetry, Penn Kemp, Nyla Matuk, and Meaghan Strimas have each added a memorable feather to her respective cap. The bewitchment and prophecy of Kemp's *Barbaric Cultural Practice* almost seem to flow from the grace of a quill rather than the laptop that snoozes beside her bed so she can log her mind on to its plasmic buzz whenever a dream imperilling Earth's beings disturbs her. Matuk's *Stranger* is always in transition, like a journal of observation accompanying its author on a train ride while the trees smudge into a plasticine bloom and a stowaway warbler Twitters from timber beams. Meanwhile, Strimas' starker *Yes or Nope* reads more like Bic pen scrawlings traversing palm to elbow, though they are no less critical in their vision of a physical world bristling with decomposition, sometimes poignantly natural, and usually in reflection of a well-intentioned if morbid human spirit.

Alongside poems of the loss and near-loss engendered by aging and illness, not to mention a philosophizing on the evolution of Tim Hortons (deliciously facetious, its "Light Eats" section deteriorates quickly into "Heart and Stroke: Foundation"), *Barbaric Cultural Practice* views the majesty of nature through a window that is (almost) always open. Frequently drifting, dream-like imagery stands in sharp contrast to the title's searing commentary—perhaps on the Conservatives' tabled 2014 Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act—which occasionally bares its teeth. The poem that snaps most fiercely in this regard is "Grazing the Face of Climate Change," which finds the Icarus of humanity taunting his own future in his prideful bounds toward solar possession. His destiny of death harks back to an earlier discussion of extinction, in which Kemp declares, "I know I am responsible / somehow" for the disappearance of frogs from her yard. Throughout the book she touches on this theme of responsibility, with the most playful of these references (in line with Kemp's sometimes overt, sometimes subtle, and agreeably habitual punning) "No-one's fault"—as in both the occasionally shattering fault lines of the earth and the responsibility of humans for her quaking outbursts.

In *Stranger*, almost nothing is so conclusive. Exploring through the headset of a synesthetic speaker, we overhear snapshots, spy upon parley, and sip on charming vistas. Through Matuk's eyes, even the apparent pests—the gully mouse and porch moth—are quaint, though perhaps not unique. For these poems are all about imitation, from the first poem's "statue of a woman in the lily-padded lake . . . / a mimicry of Diana's animal life" to "[a fern's frond] copied by an ambitious seamstress." And Matuk herself is a mimic, fusing fragments of found poetry into her work: "It never occurred to me / there's something impractical about living this way, jotting down other people's longings." In this book, origins, ethnicity, and identity are absent, questionable, or outright false, some of this confusion attributed to

a mass of uncritical critics, as in "What Critics Do"—i.e., so unhesitatingly exalt public idols as to inflate a Kardashian to *Chief Operating Officer* and Trump to *His Royal Highness*. Meanwhile, in Matuk's exemplar poem, "The Vireo," the poet mimics the designs of Varick Street, Manhattan, while the critic inadvertently mimics the poet and wallpaper designs mimic the call of the lovely vireo, who in turn has mimicked the poet.

Yes or Nope romps most easily not with beauty or charm, or even a hint of longing to emulate, but with the grubbiest of weeds. Starting with the sarcastic "Nature Poem" ("Seriously, who doesn't want another" is Strimas' opening line), this is a slender volume that lays bare the abject of an ordinary life—"dishes [stewing] in the sink overnight," the single mom's battered digs restricted from the neighbour child's play, cheap chocolates dispensed by an uncle for sexual favours—all the while off-gassing the wasting stench of rot. Emphasizing this chronic state of decay, the pitiable image of expired butterflies flickers on and off throughout the book. For Strimas' characters, the natural world acts as a stage for the performance of intensity, and animals in particular provide an outlet for "us two-legged creeps"—be they as insignificant as mutilated newts or sexually assaulted sows. Still, in a surprising though perhaps ironic moment in "Nonsense Poem, or I Like," Strimas confesses appreciation of the delicate daffodils for their determination in peeking through the snowpack. And while these poems present themselves as dry, dirty, and sore, *Yes or Nope*, with its raw honesty, is the most compelling collection of the three.

Loop Limbo

Aaron Kreuter
Arguments for Lawn Chairs. Guernica $18.00

Sarah Pinder
Common Place. Coach House $18.95

Jacqueline Valencia
There Is No Escape Out of Time. Insomniac $16.95

Reviewed by Dani Spinosa

It is perhaps not surprising that what these three very different collections by young Toronto poets share is an uneasy feeling, a difficult negotiation of the relationship between the body and the landscape, the self and the world. Aaron Kreuter's and Jacqueline Valencia's debut collections of poetry, and Sarah Pinder's celebrated second collection, all engage in and alter the lyric form to try to make space for the self in a landscape that increasingly doesn't care for individuals, for bodies, for poets, or for publishing.

Kreuter's *Arguments for Lawn Chairs* is equal parts ecocritical lyric poetry and careful meditations on Judaism, artistic production, and the cityscape. Kreuter's collection is marked by a cyclicality, a back-and-forth pull between on the one hand wanting to become a part of the earth, and on the other a desire to burn it all down. This cyclicality is made clear in the coupled poems "With the Grain" and "Against the Grain," poems that pivot on the fulcrum of this desire to burn it all down, all of us with it. "With" walks past a "well-stocked lumber store" only to become overcome by the environmental devastation signalled by all that wood, dejectedly ending with "I wish oblivion on us all." But almost as if he decided that "wish" was too real and "oblivion" too severe, the speaker returns in the first line of "Against" with "I dream death on us all." We are still surrounded by clear-cut forests and coffee table books, but Kreuter's speaker here decides—maybe for the best—that we should die only in dreams

and live another day to at least contemplate ways we can be better to each other and to this place. Later in the collection, the poem "Fan Fiction," which was included in the 2014 *Best Canadian Poetry in English* anthology and which the poet describes as his "greatest hit," exemplifies this concern, expressing the difficult relationship between popular literature—in this case the *Harry Potter* series—and the politics of community and the environment. The speaker wonders, for example, "What's the Ministry of Magic's / position on nuclear proliferation, / on offshore drilling, on deforestation?" and in the end finds us more like a wizard I won't name (though he does). The clever use of J. K. Rowling's wizarding world against the painful image of humanity with only a few horcruxes remaining leaves the reader unsure of how to feel.

Though not about the environment or politics in the same way as Kreuter's collection, Valencia's *There Is No Escape Out of Time* articulates, as the title suggests, some of the same oscillations between hope and dejection. Valencia speaks directly to and about a literary canon that is increasingly irrelevant and more meaningful because of its distance, with diverse poems referencing diverse but still canonical authors like Theodore Roethke, James Joyce, John Milton, and Allen Ginsberg, writers who seem to have very little to offer when we are tempted instead by "All the high of bright touch screens and buttons." But the book's strongest poems are the ones that consider family, domestic space, and the individual navigating a city that does not seem to care that she is there. In a poem that accompanies an illustration of Toronto's cityscape against a ravine, Valencia's speaker observes this sense of cyclicality, the same push and pull of jaded dejection and youthful hope. First: "This is a loop limbo, or we have made an effect." Then, right after: "Don't listen to the guy saying, 'This is a revolution of the mind.' // They just pay him to say that." We may not be sure, even by the end of this collection, if this is a loop limbo or if our words, our desires, have effected a change, but Valencia's poetry decides instead to enjoy the sensuality, the joy, and the humour of that loop regardless.

In Pinder's *Common Place*, the lyric takes a dramatically different form than in Valencia's or Kreuter's collections, with smaller, unnamed lyrics (and plenty of blank space) forming a fragmentary long poem that brings issues of capital, commodification, and technology in a quiet (but no less violent) collision. The speaker moves deftly from tongue-in-cheek quips about contemporary society, to absurdist advice for the reader, to sensual and romantic moments, revealing that these voices are really not so different as we might think. At times, Pinder's poetry reels with feminist rage delivered with more exhaustion than vitriol. A poem in the book's second half begins:

> First-person voice and thought
> are uncomfortable.
>
> What you propose is to occupy this take
> and be taught by me, a type of woman,
> to become
> somewhat more sensitive.

It's the same sentiment that punctuates much of feminist thought today: the (often unnoticed) emotional labour of caring, of teaching and encouraging care. But rather than retreating behind the exhaustion of this work, the incredulity that this work must continue, Pinder's speaker observes warningly, "You've got no idea where the heat will go / but still want to keep me around." Later in the collection, in a poem that opens "I had a debt before. / Now, I don't know," Pinder's speaker advises readers whose debts are either metaphorical or painfully, financially real to "put them in the Crown Royal bag, / draw the gold cord and swing it overhead / fast and faster, until it disappears." The image bursts with youthful exuberance and the difficult knowledge

that, for most of us, this is the best option for getting rid of our debts.

These poets share a very Toronto poetic voice, at once youthful enough to feel hopeful and old enough to know better. The poems are thus stuck in a loop limbo, at once believing in the power of reusable water bottles, the songs of our children, or tissue paper dandelions, and at the same time knowing (either behind or in spite of those things) that this is all doomed. The poems will leave you feeling absolutely convinced that you're not sure either.

Reconceiving "West"

Victoria Lamont
Westerns: A Women's History.
U of Nebraska P $82.50

Amber McMillan
The Woods: A Year on Protection Island.
Nightwood $19.95

Reviewed by Emma Morgan-Thorp

The words "the West" are powerfully evocative in the North American context. Whether in the contemporary Canadian sense of the Pacific Coast, with its lush rainforests and storm-battered shores, or in the sense of the legendary American Wild West, with its cowboys and cattle ranges, the West is a fantastical concept, conjuring adventure and the human struggle to eke out an existence in extreme conditions. Given the predominance of masculinist narratives about such experiences, accounts by and about women are a welcome addition to the field, and 2016 saw the publication of two works of Canadian nonfiction about the words and worlds of women in the West: Victoria Lamont's *Westerns: A Women's History*, and Amber McMillan's *The Woods: A Year on Protection Island*.

Lamont, who teaches at the University of Waterloo, has written a compelling page-turner of an academic text which provides a feminist counter-narrative about the development of the popular Western. This book—which moves deftly among such disparate topics as the suffrage movement's reliance on violent narratives, the gender and class dimensions of the rustling of maverick calves, American feminism's split from its abolitionist origins, and the repurposing of the pulp Western form for Indigenous literary projects—is likely to surprise a casual reader unprepared to be fascinated by detailed descriptions of cattle ranching. Lamont doesn't shy away from referencing such intellectual figures as Butler, Bourdieu, Lacan, and Žižek, but manages to provide quick and comprehensible synopses of their relevant philosophies without compromising the pacing of her broader project. She takes more time, however, with close readings of a handful of Westerns by female authors and of the branding and marketing of pulp romances. Throughout, Lamont is keenly attentive to the gendered, classed, raced, and colonizing dimensions of the development of the Western literary form, and to the ramifications of these stories for the social movements of the day. *Westerns* is recommended reading not only for fans of classic Westerns and of feminist literary recovery, but indeed for all readers interested in the history of the American West and the origins of contemporary feminisms.

McMillan, meanwhile, has produced a memoir of her year on Protection Island, which lies off Nanaimo east of Vancouver Island. McMillan and her family moved to the island sight unseen from their home in Toronto, seeking a change and fantasizing about a lifestyle unlike their own. From page one, McMillan establishes her unhappiness with her situation in the big city, and though her circumstances and location change drastically, the tenor of overwhelmed exhaustion and disappointment lingers to the final page. Easily consumed in one avid sitting, *The Woods* reads like a long-distance phone call, full of emotion, gossip, self-realization, and complaint. The book is rigorously researched and peppered with fascinating tidbits of historical and geographical

information; in one chapter, "The Curious Myth of Douglas Island," the author muses on the nature of storytelling before moving on to a very thorough investigation of the history of the island's name. This book can be taken as an antidote, for those who want one, to the many besotted love-of-the-land personal accounts of life on the West Coast which idealize the region. Also unlike other authors who take the West Coast as their subject (Christine Lowther and Anita Sinner's *Writing the West Coast: In Love with Place* leaps to mind), McMillan eschews ecology and politics for a focus on the anecdotal and archival.

Both books under review provide provocative interventions into extant bodies of work about their respective mythical Wests. *The Woods* describes an experience of the West Coast with honesty and earnestness that counterbalances idealized odes to the region. *Westerns* offers up a genealogy of women's Westerns which not only denies the genre's supposedly masculine origins, but also critically examines the development of white American feminism. McMillan and Lamont have crafted interdisciplinary counter-narratives which bring necessary new perspectives to parochial regionalist discourses, and have done so with critical wit and humour which render the books enjoyable and accessible to academic and non-academic readers alike.

Fist, Fire, and Heart

M. Travis Lane; Shane Neilson, ed.
Heart on Fist: Essays and Reviews 1970-2016.
Palimpsest $19.95

Michael Lista
Strike Anywhere: Essays, Reviews & Other Arsons.
Porcupine's Quill $25.95

Reviewed by Neil Surkan

Despite their similarly combative titles, M. Travis Lane's *Heart on Fist* and Michael Lista's *Strike Anywhere* contain drastically different takes on reviewing Canadian poetry. The essays in *Heart on Fist* span an impressive forty-six years and were selected by Lane and her editor Shane Neilson from over 120 poetry reviews Lane published in Canadian literary magazines like *The Fiddlehead*, *Canadian Poetry*, and *The Antigonish Review*. Conversely, the essays in *Strike Anywhere* were mostly written over the five or so years that Lista calls "the halcyon days before my self-immolation," when he wrote a controversial weekly column on poetry for the *National Post*. Both books pay homage to a span of time in which each critic was afforded the rare opportunity to make reviewing poetry his or her job. Lane and Lista achieved different goals within that time, as the introductory essays in each book make clear: in Lane's case, discovering writers from "off the beaten track" was her top priority, whereas Lista strove to provide the antidote to "service journalism" by writing what he calls "skeptical" reviews.

Lane has demonstrated a critical stamina that may be second to none in Canadian literature. In a style Neilson aptly calls "mildly devastating," the essays in *Heart on Fist* present Lane's remarkable commitment to literary criticism, from early reviews of Phyllis Webb and Michael Ondaatje to recent takes on Karen Solie and Al Moritz. The collection guides readers on a walking tour of the last half-century of Canadian literature, as seen through Lane's keen eyes, while, in tandem, presenting her central theses on how good poems work, where Canadian poetry can and should distinguish itself, and why women writers have earned their place in CanLit. What is most apparent throughout her essays and reviews is the fact that Lane is a very good listener: "sound" is the first thing she looks for in a poem, and she consistently quotes long passages of verse from the collections she reviews in order to let the poems speak for themselves. Even in hostile essays where she

vehemently disagrees with a poet, the most obvious case being her 1976 essay on Robin Skelton, she still only proselytizes "a little," reasonably teasing out points of disagreement with Skelton's arguments in biting, balanced, aphoristic sentences. For example: "Only a person who makes a point of not perceiving the people who are not poets can believe that poets are more sensitive than anybody else." Such a sentence epitomizes Lane's approach to reviewing: clichés and generalizations wither in her fist, but the fist is bound to the heart.

Lista's essays and articles in *Strike Anywhere*, which he jointly calls "arsons," span the space between lighting a fire and burning something down. He was, and continues to be, committed to engaging where others back off because poetry is "useful" to him—worth fighting for. Contemporary poetry, for Lista, is like "medicine": "It's not supposed to taste good. That's how you know it's working." When Lista likes a collection, he is unafraid to signal his approval by calling it a "masterpiece" ("Joshua Mehigan") or "vital" ("Michael Robbins"). He also delivers split decisions on occasion, as in the case of Alexandra Oliver, where he declares, "Not every poem succeeds . . . When she succeeds, she succeeds entirely." But Lista clearly thrives when he is fired up; he shines when he takes risks and writes skeptically. The most notorious examples are his reviews of Tim Lilburn, Anne Carson, and Don McKay: he likens Lilburn's poetry to "behind-the-counter medicine that deserves to be strictly controlled," calls Carson's poems in *Red Doc>* not poetry but "prose—in my opinion, not super-good prose," and points out lines in McKay's work that are responsible for giving Canadian poetry "McKayabetes." However, Lista's more wide-angled essays, with titles like "Publish Less" and "Why Poetry Sucks," also display his knack for controversial, convincing writing as he weighs in on the state of contemporary poetry. The final essay in the collection, "The Shock Absorber," an in-depth examination of the militarized financial backing of the Griffin Poetry Prize, is especially impressive, courageous, and incendiary.

Lane and Lista are not similar critics, but the circle of Canadian poetry is lucky to include them both—fire, fists, and all.

Celebrity, Cultural Production, and the Nation

Katja Lee and Lorraine York, eds.
Celebrity Cultures in Canada.
Wilfrid Laurier UP $34.99

Reviewed by Nadine Fladd

Celebrity Cultures in Canada, part of the Cultural Studies series published by Wilfrid Laurier University Press, offers insightful, wide-ranging analyses of the workings of "celebrity" or "persona" as a concept. These combined analyses result in a book that will be of interest to scholars of celebrity studies, Canadian literature, film studies, and cultural studies generally. The foreword by P. David Marshall elegantly justifies the need for a book like *Celebrity Cultures in Canada*, while also offering readers who are new to either field an introduction to both celebrity studies and the Canadian context considered by the chapters that follow.

Marshall points out his "predilection" for identifying Canadian stars on film or television, and claims that this "affliction" is a "feature of Canadianness, a way in which Canadians work to self-identify." He uses this example to make clear that "[r]eading celebrity in the Canadian context is complex," especially in light of what he identifies as Canadian celebrity's "appeal to validation from cultural industries external to Canada" (i.e., primarily American ones). These complex patterns of Canadian celebrity are what each of the eleven single-authored chapters teases out by taking up a different Canadian

text, genre, author, actor, artist, comedian, politician, or other public figure.

In their introduction, editors Katja Lee and Lorraine York make clear the two main tenets underpinning these chapters: that Canada has developed cultures of celebrity that merit sustained scholarly attention, and that these analyses should not "automatically assume" that "celebrity" represents "false, unearned cultural value" (although the introduction does offer a useful overview of how the concept of celebrity has been theorized since the nineteenth century). The chapters that follow offer nuanced analyses of how celebrity functions in specific cases, often in relation to concepts of nation.

Celebrity Cultures includes several chapters that focus on film stars. Chapters by Lee and Amy Shore both explore the "political, cultural, and affective" implications of the fluid, transnational personas of film stars such as Mary Pickford and Nell Shipman. In addition, Liz Czach uses the bilingual film *Bon Cop, Bad Cop* as a case study to illustrate the differences between the Quebec film industry's well-established "star system" and the way that English Canadian audiences respond to well-known Canadian actors. The most interesting chapters in the book, however, are those that use the lens of celebrity to explore how well-known Canadian figures who are not actors have deployed their celebrity power, or even how others have deployed it posthumously.

Valerie J. Millar's compelling "Terry Fox and Disabled Celebrity" theorizes the confluence of Fox's 1980 Marathon of Hope with that year's "threat to Canadian confederation by the forces for sovereignty," and points out the influence of Fox's run on the fundraising tactics of other activists, such as Rick Hansen. Throughout her chapter, she "explore[s] how the annual Terry Fox Run works to collectivize people . . . while simultaneously reaffirming able-bodied hegemony and reproducing the ideological Canadian nation-state." In her chapter on the polarizing Hockey Night in Canada host Don Cherry, Julie Rak dissects the former coach's ironically "campy" sartorial choices. Like Millar, Rak connects this individual celebrity's performance to a nationalist project, arguing that

> Cherry's image does two things: it works to disguise the central role semi-public television has played in the creation of hockey as a national mythos for Canada, and it elides the existence of NHL hockey as an American-controlled business.

While Cherry performs what Rak describes as a "melancholic nationalist narrative"—a lament for what Canadian hockey culture once was—in "Celebrity and the Cultivation of Indigenous Publics in Canada," York identifies ways in which Indigenous celebrities deploy the various media cultures available to them in "reworkings of mainstream culture" and in fostering "alternative Indigenous publics." She cites A Tribe Called Red's "celebrity use of social media" to engage in "counter-pedagogy" as just one of several examples of the ways that "Indigenous production in Canada offers the possibility of reimagining celebrity as collective achievement" rather than as individualistic. York has made substantial contributions to the field of literary celebrity and celebrity culture in Canada, including *Literary Celebrity in Canada* (2007) and *Margaret Atwood and the Labour of Literary Celebrity* (2013). In addition to entering into conversation with other relevant chapters in *Celebrity Cultures*, several of the authors in this book draw on York's previous work. Marshall does not overstate the case in his introduction when he claims that "[t]he editors and authors have developed a very nuanced reading of how celebrity operates in Canada."

"Memories we won't forget"

Joseph Auguste Merasty and David Carpenter
The Education of Augie Merasty: A Residential School Memoir. U of Regina P $21.95

Reviewed by Rob Jackson

The Education of Augie Merasty begins and ends with the land. The opening and closing paragraphs of this short memoir describe Joseph Auguste (Augie) Merasty's warm memories of life in northern Saskatchewan. In these fleeting passages, Merasty, with co-writer David Carpenter, locates himself in his territory amidst a web of respectful and reciprocal relationships. Merasty describes navigating rough rapids, smoking fish, and drying moose meat, as well as lakes teeming with trout, a density of humming blackflies, and an abundance of reindeer who keep his family fed on the shores of Deep Bay, Saskatchewan. Framing his testimony of the years he was detained in St. Therese residential school, these moments illustrate the importance of land and self-determination to dialogues concerning reconciliation today.

The 2015 publication of this memoir coincided with the release of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on Indian Residential Schools. Merasty's narrative is composed, in part, of correspondence with lawyers who worked on the class-action lawsuit that ignited the official TRC process. While working toward his memoir, and writing his own legal testimony, Merasty also served as a grassroots documentarian, recording the stories of his community:

> All those sisters and cousins, uncles and many other unrelated people from other villages told me what has happened. . . . A lot of their stories I already wrote and submitted to our lawyers . . . representing the survivors of residential schools.

While the foreground of *The Education of Augie Merasty* is a character-driven catalogue of the routine and devastating violence of residential school life, these accounts are punctuated by conversations with other survivors about collective experiences of brutality and resilience. Such moments of narrative interruption are an important reminder that the TRC process was made possible by the bravery, conviction, and grassroots activism of survivors willing to share their experiences and collectivize their struggle.

Perhaps the brilliance of Merasty's story is his ability to weave his personal experiences of incarceration with a broader political critique of colonial domination manifest in the Indian Residential Schools system. Throughout the book's nine short chapters, Merasty makes a point of identifying the colonial paranoia of his "keepers" in the school. Describing two of the most vicious nuns, Merasty writes: "I think they were paranoid in the position they had, being masters of a lower race of creatures, Indians, as we were called." In this lucid analysis of a fragile colonial supremacy that must always be protected by violence, Merasty names the structural nature of the colonial domination he experienced. In the most compelling passages of the memoir, Merasty draws ethical and historical parallels between Fascist Germany and the "little regime" of residential schools. While comparisons to Nazi Germany often miss the mark, Merasty's assessment signals the importance of historical, structural critique to both popular and academic discourses of reconciliation. Reflecting on the religious hypocrisy of the residential schools' perpetrators, Merasty writes: "[T]hey never really practiced what they preached, period." In our current era of TRC calls to action and reconciliation, this book is a must-read if we are to avoid that same charge.

Poets in the Pits

Jordan Mounteer
Liminal. Sono Nis $15.95

Owain Nicholson
Digsite. Nightwood $18.95

Reviewed by Kirsten Alm

Since Thoreau's experiment in living and writing in the Massachusetts woods in the mid-nineteenth century, many ecologically minded North American writers have followed his example and recorded their own retreat to the wilderness where they too "earned [their] living by the labour of [their] hands only." For example, replace Thoreau's forest, pond, and field of beans with the mountains of the Cascade Range and you have the lookouts where Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, and Jack Kerouac wrote and read in between watching for fires in the employ of the United States Forest Service. Ostensibly, whether they are writing from mountain peaks or the Massachusetts woods, the non-urban world is where writers in this line can find the "broad margin to . . . life" that Thoreau celebrated, and produce literature blending careful observation with reflection about self and society. This tradition is continued by Jordan Mounteer and Owain Nicholson, who find inspiration in the pits of the archaeological dig site and the rutted terrain that is the territory of tree planters.

Tree planting serves as a focal point for the theme of loss—of love and political innocence—which pervades Mounteer's *Liminal*. In "Watersheds," the central section of *Liminal*, the tree planter exists in "blue-collared numbness," the tree planter a typewriter who moves "left to right, left again" through each "capsized forest." Mounteer's poetry acknowledges his own implication in an economy of "life taken / at softwood price" and the poetry questions any naive belief in the hope that the denuded slopes might be "mended." This disillusionment is poignantly expressed in the poem "Fugitive Upbringing / September 6, 1991." While planting seedlings in the "[c]orridors cut through / western cedar grid hillsides" that his mother once tried to protect from logging, the speaker looks back to his childhood and a futile protest. "[T]he . . . work of narrow shovels" becomes a form of compassion for a place and the people whose "innocence was broken" in trying to preserve it. Poems like these introduce a complexity into the volume that prevents it from becoming a formulaic coming-of-age travelogue.

Nicholson's *Digsite* records another journey out to the wild. As the archaeologist seeks prehistoric remains from the earth, these poems consider the meaning of time and place and necessarily raise the question of Indigenous inhabitation, possession, and dispossession in North America. Lamentably, though, they do not explore these themes as fully as they might, caught up as they are in the close work of archaeological description and self-reflection. Indeed, the collection lives partly in a childhood school-world of "double major[s]," tracing first losses and loves. The voice which speaks about these experiences is juxtaposed against the more mature voice which speaks when the poems turn to archaeology. In these poems, the isolation of the archaeological dig site provides a metaphorical location of exploration that directs the collection, although not entirely successfully.

While tracing the writers' experiences, the two collections also walk some of the same paths taken by other ecologically minded poets and, at times, trip over roots. Both *Liminal* and *Digsite* are maps of male experience where women appear only in memory or as objects of longing, or, like the female tree planters who are briefly present in *Liminal*, are significant by virtue of their female difference. Certainly, the comparative lack of female presence in the collections reflects the highly gendered nature of the forms of labour which feed the poems. Still, it continues the unfortunate pattern in

North American writing wherein women are excluded from the male encounter with nature. Moreover, since the encounter with nature becomes a source of inspiration in ecologically minded writing, the absent woman is excluded from the poetic vocation itself and must seek poetry from the male poet—"write a poem about a girl who steals into the night to sleep with animals," requests one woman in *Liminal*. Admittedly, no single collection can be held responsible to correct the gender blind spot that exists in some ecologically oriented writing, but one wishes to find stronger depictions of female presence in these male encounters with nature, and hopes to find more female poets depicting their own stride down these pathways along with fresh and nuanced male voices in these times of gender orienteering.

Page in the Darkness

P. K. Page; Margaret Steffler, ed.
Mexican Journal. Porcupine's Quill $27.95

Reviewed by Emily Ballantyne

The recurring image of this journal is darkness—night, black landscapes, shadow, despair, and the unknowable. After the aesthetic ecstasy of three years in Brazil, P. K. Page's *Mexican Journal* recounts her spiritual and artistic "undoing." Page is looking for definition and purpose, and is at odds with her environment, her spirit, and her body. As she battles with depression, she looks inward, deep into the darkness on a quest for knowledge and purpose.

This volume, though the third published in the *Collected Works of P. K. Page*, is the first to present exclusively new material. It reveals a different side of Page—a view that comes primarily from Margaret Steffler's careful editorial decisions. *Mexican Journal* presents an excised text that includes several main narratives: Page's literary and artistic life, her observations about Mexico, and her spiritual quest. However, the entries that are presented are unexcerpted, and thus paint a complete picture of Page's state of mind at the time of their composition. The volume, as a result, is a candid expression of Page's lived experience in Mexico as an artist and the wife of a Canadian diplomat. In this private journal, she confronts her conflicting public and private identities, seeking a spiritual solace that she never quite finds over the course of the text.

Given how heavily Page edited *Brazilian Journal* before it was published, *Mexican Journal*'s raw, personal prose can sometimes be a shock to the system. As a very self-conscious writer, Page often omitted the personal, going so far as to identify which pieces of writing in her journal were private and which were public. In this edition of the text, Steffler privileges the personal, allowing for a deeper sense of Page's interiority. Page directly addresses the ways in which her spiritual and aesthetic life conflicts with her public life. She reflects that she is "cast in a role that isn't mine," often unable to paint due to dinner parties and diplomatic calls to "large house after large house, each apparently housing one isolated woman." She candidly discusses turning down invitations to events that would reflect poorly on her Embassy, and feels great fear that she might be identified as "the Canadian Ambassadress" in a photo with visiting Subud spiritual advisers.

We find Page searching for her purpose, and for a clear sense of God. At the turning point in the journal, a Gurdjieff scholar rejects her and tells her she is not ready for spiritual enlightenment. This crushes Page, who was quite anxious about meeting with him. The experience defeats her, leaving her cut off in the dark. She reflects, "[h]e had rejected me as unworthy . . . I who had always been special. This was bad enough. What was worse was the despair. There wasn't a way—or if there was—I could not follow it. I was unable. And alone." In this moment, the darkness manifests itself as

the unknowable. Page is kept out from the light—she knows it exists, but is not for her. And yet, with determination and intense vulnerability, she continues her spiritual journey. She practises quieting her mind and submitting her body to external forces; she journeys from reading Jung and Gurdjieff through practising Subud, partaking in Catholic ritual, attempting astral projection, and exploring the work of Idries Shah and Sufism, where her journal trails off. Though the journey is incomplete, Page's dogged determination provides its own kind of hopeful possibility.

One of the bright lights in all of this darkness is Page's friendship with surrealist painter Leonora Carrington. She serves as Page's spiritual adviser, art teacher, and confidante. Carrington helps her discover new mediums of expression and walks Page through some of her first experiences showing and selling her artwork. She helps Page find egg tempera, a medium she is delighted to find "so supremely well suited to my temperament," and later, gold leaf, a medium that thrills her in much of the Mexican art she loves. Carrington also offers guidance on Page's spiritual search, providing answers that help to illuminate her path and challenge her to continue after her difficult encounter. *Mexican Journal* reminds us of the necessity of darkness in the journey for self-knowledge and purpose. Though at times the journal is heart-wrenching, it provokes a very real and deeply felt sense of wonder.

Promising Debuts

Steven Peters
59 Glass Bridges. NeWest $19.95

Alisa Smith
Speakeasy. Douglas & McIntyre $22.95

Reviewed by Stephen M. Dunning

Speakeasy testifies to the research skills that undoubtedly helped to make Alisa Smith an award-winning journalist and successful non-fiction author. In this, her debut novel, Smith convincingly treats the Allied efforts to crack Japanese communication codes during World War II, displaying not only technical familiarity with the world of cryptology, but also a strong sense of subjects with intrinsic narrative appeal. Add a strong female protagonist and an equally strong, coke-addled bank robber with an erratic Robin Hood complex, all played out against the backdrop of the Pacific Northwest during the Depression and war years, and it is not surprising that the story consistently maintains the reader's interest.

A number of persistent problems, however, limit the novel's literary achievement. In odd-numbered chapters, Lena Stillman recounts her work in the mid-1940s as a code breaker during the war. In even-numbered chapters, Byron Godfrey describes the exploits of Bill Bagley's gang (of which Lena was a member), from December 1931 to June 1933. About a third of the way in, however, we discover that Byron's narrative is a journal that has just come into Lena's possession, and from this point, Lena comments occasionally on the contents of what she has just read. But how are we to understand the status of the chapters that precede Lena's encounter with the journal, or of Byron's epilogue, which Lena could not have read? It feels as if Smith happened on the idea of the journal midcourse, but did not go back and rework the novel's structure coherently. In addition, there are no significant thematic links between the two narratives.

Lena's voice often proves anachronistic. She describes something happening in "real time," a decade before the expression came into currency. Similarly, she employs "begged the question" incorrectly to mean "raised the question," a relatively recent solecism. These minor lapses characterize a more serious problem: Smith's imposition of a contemporary progressive consciousness on that of her narrators. Convincing historical fiction requires a

narrative method-acting that issues in true ethical otherness. Smith's deft handling of the historical material suggests that she has the investigative skills and intelligence to achieve this.

Like *Speakeasy*, Steven Peters's first novel, *59 Glass Bridges*, has two narratives, also separated by about a decade. But here the parallels between these books stop. An unnamed, thirty-something speaker carries the bulk of Peters's novel, narrating two out of every three chapters. These chapters are set in what appears initially to be an Escheresque labyrinth of endless white hallways, indifferent to both the narrator's expectations and the laws of physics. Every third chapter harkens back to the narrator's childhood, where he recounts episodes primarily from his history with his grandmother, though at times he touches on his parents' disastrous relationship. This second narrative progresses largely chronologically, moving from the narrator's experiences at the age of eight to sixteen, and then ending with the death of his grandmother much later, which (one surmises) precipitated whatever led to his entry into the labyrinth.

The relationship between the two narratives works very effectively here, in that we can trace the narrator's conflicted behaviour towards Willow, his guide in the labyrinth, to his equally problematic relationship with his grandmother, whom he loves deeply and yet whose authority he habitually resents. Moreover, the realistic setting of the earlier narrative provides relief from the surrealism of the labyrinth.

Peters, however, does not rely primarily on the regular interspersing of realism to help orient the reader. Instead, he draws extensively on classical and Biblical allusions to provide signposts. The myth of Theseus and the Minotaur provides the primary classical source, while most of the Biblical allusions are filtered through Dante's *Inferno,* passages of which appear as red marginalia in a New Testament that the narrator discovers. The novel proves very effective in intermingling these sources, though figuring out what is going on will put fairly heavy demands on the reader given that Peters retains the original Italian, which the narrator does not understand. But tracking these references down provides important clues to how and why he ends up in the labyrinth, and to how he might escape. And though the Minotaur remains to the end of the work, its meaning finally transcends the classical world that gave it birth.

Indeed, Peters offers a strangely compelling tale of postmodern disorientation and salvation, one with roots in a past that it acknowledges as authoritative, but to whose authority it refuses to surrender definitive interpretive prerogative. This is a powerful work from an extremely promising writer.

A Father Remembered

Tetsuro Shigematsu
Empire of the Son: A Play. Talonbooks $16.95

Reviewed by Josephine Lee

Empire of the Son, which depicts the relationship between a Japanese Canadian son and his immigrant father, is engrossing and uniquely personal; Tetsuro Shigematsu's one-man play thankfully defies typecasting even while it explores familiar issues of cultural difference, intergenerational relationship, and personal loss.

Shigematsu developed his play through a two-year process with the Vancouver Asian Canadian Theatre (VACT), and it went from an award-winning, sold-out run in 2015 to a national tour to this print version. The play focuses on Shigematsu's relationship with his father, Akira, who moved to London as a BBC producer/announcer, and then to Canada, where he became a radio host for the CBC. During his father's declining years, Shigematsu was inspired to collect and share his family history; a former radio host for the CBC's *The Roundup,* he notes

parallels between his father's work and his own. In her introduction, VACT artistic director Donna Yamamoto recalls that the initial production of *Empire of the Son*, Shigematsu's first play, was complicated by his commitment to keeping it as factually accurate and up to date as possible. Even as the play was under development, Akira Shigematsu's medical conditions were worsening, and he died just eighteen days before the show opened.

Obviously, the print version cannot fully capture the impact of the theatrical production. The stage effects created by a live video feed—Shigematsu's fingers transformed into skateboarding and ice-skating legs, injecting cream into an aquarium filled with water to emulate the bombing of Hiroshima—can only be suggested. Likewise, the deft use of audio clips from past radio broadcasts and personal interviews can only be imagined as voices. Most regrettably, Shigematsu is not present in the flesh to remind us of how much a stage production relies on the body's power to signify complex physical, emotional, and philosophical states. Shigematsu's toned, shadowboxing physique poignantly contrasts with descriptions of his father's weakening frame, and he reflects on the "terrible beauty of life": "I have reached the peak of my physical powers during the very season my father has begun to fall."

Despite the limitations of print, the theatrical production is lovingly reconstructed with family photographs and careful stage directions that make the collaborative nature of both the narrative and its theatrical telling apparent. Shigematsu is a solo performer but he is never alone, with family members (particularly a memorable trio of sisters) and kind strangers populating his story. A young undertaker, for instance, provides the final motif for the play's closing meditation when he says that in his first few months of work he learns to appreciate rain: "Just being able to feel it on my skin because—these bodies I carry out—can't."

And the printed version does make it possible to reread Shigematsu's extraordinarily powerful language, which is in turns wryly humorous, poetic, and gut-wrenching. The exquisite moments of his closing monologue, which builds on the undertaker's allusion, are particularly worth savouring:

> And one day, the water that is you, will not be you. But if you were loved, maybe you will be the tears of someone who weeps for you. Not because they're crying, but because they're laughing so hard at the memory of how pathetic you looked, that time you got caught in the rain. And as they dab their cheeks, they'll stop to wonder, are you in heaven? When in fact you have never been so near.

Due to his father's death, Shigematsu's script was finalized only days before the play opened, and its monologues measure out his grief in carefully managed rituals of spoken loss, both public and private. Every self-respecting Japanese man, Shigematsu tells us at the opening, has a black suit with two ties: a white one for weddings, and a black one for funerals. He talks about his failures both to communicate his feelings of love to his father and to cry at the funeral. By the play's end, Shigematsu has donned the black tie and his words resolve into tears: if not his, then ours.

Retrospective Recursion

David Staines, ed.
The Cambridge Companion to Alice Munro.
Cambridge UP $29.99

Robert Thacker, ed.
Alice Munro: Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage, Runaway, Dear Life.
Bloomsbury $29.95

Robert Thacker
Reading Alice Munro, 1973-2013.
U of Calgary P $34.95

Reviewed by Lorraine York

These three volumes, all appearing in 2016, form part of the first generation of post-Nobel Prize Alice Munro criticism. Though some of the essays contained therein predate her Nobel win (the earlier essays by Robert Thacker collected in his *Reading Alice Munro, 1973-2013* being the most obvious examples), the volumes containing them are all framed by her Nobel win. Positioning that win as the culmination of a growing fund of cultural capital, all three volumes draw upon a triumphal recognition narrative.

The Cambridge Companion to Alice Munro, edited by David Staines, is certainly a canon-confirming exercise; Munro is only the second Canadian writer to be "Cambridged," after Margaret Atwood, whose volume, edited by Coral Ann Howells (who has an absorbing essay in this Munro volume), appeared in 2006. Scanning the list of the titles of *Cambridge Companions* discloses an Anglo-American emphasis and, more specifically, an emphasis on white writers. As a volume, Staines' is distinguished by a mixture of contributors both academic and writerly; essays by noted Munro scholars Robert McGill and Howells, for instance, rub shoulders with writers' perspectives on Munro by Elizabeth Hay, Merilyn Simonds, Douglas Glover, and fellow Cambridge subject Atwood. I wondered why Staines did not make more of this intriguing combination in his introduction. His own contribution, "From Wingham to Clinton: Alice Munro in Her Canadian Context," is somewhat anecdotal and descriptive (presumably for readers unfamiliar with Munro), leaning more on the early development of her career than on her late works, which are briefly telescoped into one paragraph (though various contributors do draw on them in their individual essays).

What several of the contributors to this collection offer us is a fascinating view of Munro as a recursive writer: a writer whose creative practice is all about obsessive return as both methodology and epistemology. Glover observes that Munro operates by contravention rather than assertion; Atwood agrees, identifying "the forced linkage of radically different adjectives or anecdotes representing mutually exclusive realities, both of which are then affirmed," as the ineffable "Munro signature." McGill takes the most pointed approach to what he calls Munro's "poetics of recursion," showing how she challenges notions of progressive development both in the human narratives she creates and in her own narrative as a writer whose recursive attachment to the short story challenges the assumption that short-story writers are in temporary apprenticeship to the crowning literary achievement of writing a novel. And in implicit tribute to that mode, W. H. New performs what I would call a recursive reading of *The Moons of Jupiter*—returning to the volume and seeing the patterns of looping return and echo in that collection. In effect, New takes to heart Munro's famous description of her way of reading a short story—starting anywhere and reading around the story, because a story is "not like a road to follow . . . It's more like a house"—and offers readings of *The Moons of Jupiter* that begin from the beginning, the middle, and the end, in a bravura act of critical homage.

The attention that some of these critics, most notably Howells, direct toward the

non-fiction work (from the early "Working for a Living" memoir of her father to the final four stories in *Dear Life* that Munro calls "the first and last—and the closest—things I have to say about my own life") is responsive to the fragile construction of non-fiction in Munro's oeuvre. As McGill argues, Munro has always been careful to blur the lines, both in her practice and in her interview comments, between fiction and non-fiction, the better to avoid yet another narrative of "development" that would place fiction on a higher echelon of creative achievement than non-fiction.

If I were to wish for more from this collection, it would be for a bit more edginess of the sort that Howells and McGill demonstrate; the critical perspectives and theories that animate current work in literature seem fairly thin on the ground here (disability studies is a notable absence). For instance, although Munro's engagement with gender is often invoked, the one essay entirely devoted to her feminism (by Maria Löschnigg) is entitled "'Oranges *and* apples': Alice Munro's Undogmatic Feminism." The titular proposition undergirds a somewhat conservative assumption that one must guard against the *other* type.

Thacker's edition of essays on three late collections published by Munro between 2001 and 2012—*Alice Munro: Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage, Runaway, Dear Life*—offers a welcome opportunity to think about the concept of "late style" in relation to Munro, though the volume is not conceptually framed in this way. It is rather surprising that, for example, the influential work of Edward Said in *On Late Style* (a volume that, fittingly and sadly, was left unfinished at his own death in 2003) is not a stronger presence here, not to mention the work that has emerged in the years since that challenges the very notion of "late style," such as Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon's *Four Last Songs: Aging and Creativity in Verdi, Strauss, Messiaen and Britten* (2015). Instead, here, late style is assumed to be a crowning, deepening maturation: precisely the characterization of late style that Said sought to question.

Let it be said in all fairness, however, that critics of Munro have ample reason to invoke a notion of maturity; the philosophical depths, the complexities of volumes like *Runaway*, *Dear Life*, *Too Much Happiness*, and *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* offer opportunities aplenty for a close examination of a literary sensibility that prizes complexity over superficiality, inconclusiveness over pat conclusions. (Here, too, Said's thought, especially his challenge to the idea that late style was marked by closure and resolution, would be apropos.) And there are significant developments in Munro's writing over the decades of her career, though the much-vaunted movement toward inconclusiveness is one that I, for one, feel has been overstated. There are, however, shifts over the course of her writing career, like the "deepening geological sensibility" that Thacker draws our attention to in his introduction to this volume.

The essays on *Dear Life*, gathered together at the end of Thacker's collection, are particularly strong; Munro's finale has brought forth a richness of insight on the part of critics who are aware that they are, in all probability, witnessing a writer's farewell to the page and to her "dear life." Ailsa Cox brings a very welcome focus on disability studies and on comedy (a topic arguably underanalyzed in Munro's work) to this volume in her essay "'Rage and Admiration': Grotesque Humor in *Dear Life*." Invoking Munro's late collections' "increasing engagement with encroaching mortality," she shows how those volumes' concerns with "chronic illness, disability, and disfigurement" allow for a "grotesque realism" that "reinstates the materiality of the human body." Keeping the Staines volume's concern with recursivity in mind here, one can

question the extent to which this concern is a product of Munro's late work (think: Milton Homer), but it's undeniably the case that the aging body has increasingly become the grounds upon which Munro has focused her study of the "grotesque" as cause for both "rage" and "admiration."

Linda M. Morra's contribution to this section on *Dear Life* also introduces a focus not as often directed toward Munro's stories as one might wish: theories of intimacy and affect. Building from Sara Ahmed's notion of the sociality of emotions and Lisa Lowe's reframing of intimacy as a force of social production that inducts subjects into (or out of) communities and their predominant ethical codes, Morra reads *Dear Life*'s "Finale," those final four stories, as exploring the "'conditions of possibility' generated by various levels of intimacy and the processes by which she expresses herself against or within those values." Morra shows us how belonging in Munro is contingent and shifting, and how, as a result, we may become complicit with behaviours or feelings that we may recognize as suspect or "morally questionable." This is a perceptive and wise way of reading that most poignant conclusion of "Finale": "We say of some things that they can't be forgiven, or that we will never forgive ourselves. But we do—we do it all the time."

Retrospection and recursion are the dominant modes and moods of Thacker's other book under review here: *Reading Alice Munro, 1973-2013*. It is a collection of Thacker's writings on Munro from his earliest essays and reviews in the 1980s to a 2013 review of critical insights into Munro's writing. But as the start date of Thacker's subtitle suggests, we have here a retrospective not only of a critical writer but also of a reader—perhaps Munro's most abiding public reader. The year 1973 marks the date the recently graduated Thacker, contemplating graduate school in Canada, opened the first issue of his *Tamarack Review* subscription to discover Munro's brilliant metafictional story "Material." Throughout those forty years and more, Thacker has devoted the greater share of his career to the study of Munro's writing. The pieces collected here attest to the various venues in which that attachment played out, from reviews of her work, to reviews (often demanding and occasionally sharp-tongued) of other Munro critics' work, to full-length essays on Munro's stories, to large-scale assessments of the Munro critical industry—for such it is—in formation. Such a volume cannot, of course, capture the other, major dimension of Thacker's devotion to Munro's career: his definitive biography, *Alice Munro: Writing Her Lives* (2005). But even so, what we have here is, in effect, a reassessment of a scholarly life—a professional autobiography in critical essays and reviews—devoted to a writer whose persistent concern was the act of reassessment.

What does this rich retrospective tell us? First of all, it tells us that Thacker knew from the beginning that Munro was a writer of extraordinary talents. He also had an early sense of those threads in her work that would turn out to absorb her critics decades later; his influential essay "'So Shocking a Verdict in Real Life': Autobiography in Alice Munro's Stories" is a case in point, as critics like Morra and Cox now ponder Munro's presumably final autobiographical gestures in *Dear Life*. It also tells us that a richly recursive writer like Munro has, in this instance, inspired a critic whose methods and concerns (he frankly says "something of an obsession") are also arguably recursive in nature. A close reader, not drawn to contemporary theory's explicit musings on critical assumptions, Thacker is focused on the text in a way that one might loosely call New Critical, but his is a textuality that is informed by community, history, autobiography, and always, always, the archive. A critic who has chided other critics for not

making use of the extensive Munro archives at the University of Calgary, Thacker has made ample use of those textual layers, seeing in Munro's stories a palimpsest of creative ideas, experiments, and designs, so it is fitting that this retrospective volume should be published by the University of Calgary Press.

These three volumes, all published in the aftermath of Munro's Nobel Prize, do not simplistically or univocally represent the criticism of her stories. It is true that they tend, for the most part, not to represent work that is informed by explicitly theoretical frameworks, and that tendency may be suggestive of a body of criticism that has always featured a certain amount of relatively conservative critical practice. But they also tell us about a community of scholarly readers and writers who have been drawn, and drawn again, recursively, to the multi-layered and epistemologically elegant writings of Alice Munro.

Creature Features

Jeff Steudel
Foreign Park. Anvil $18.00

Kate Sutherland
How to Draw a Rhinoceros. BookThug $18.00

Patrick Warner
Octopus. Biblioasis $18.95

Reviewed by Tina Northrup

Kate Sutherland's *How to Draw a Rhinoceros* presents a history of its eponymous creature as it came to exist in European and North American imaginations throughout centuries. As the subject of rumours, myths, and ballyhoos, its nature was often dubious and unstable. In "A Natural History of the Rhinoceros," the collection's opening poem, we read that the rhinoceros has

> Small piercing eyes, red eyes
> dull sleepy eyes
> that seldom open completely
> eyes in the very centre of the cheeks
> eyes placed as low down as the jaws
> eyes so small placed so low and obliquely
> they have little vivacity and motion
> eyes that only see sideways
> eyes that only see straight ahead

Sutherland's skill for assembling historical voices is best displayed in the trial-themed series of poems that report the case of *Elephant v. Rhinoceros*. Drawing on commentaries by figures such as Pliny, Albrecht Dürer, Oliver Goldsmith, the Comte de Buffon, and Richard Owen, Sutherland creates strepitous courtroom scenes where divers and diverse perspectives vie to be heard:

> In the encounter it strikes the elephant on
> the chest
> runs at the elephant with his head
> between his forelegs
> slips under
> goes especially for
> strikes most of all at the belly
> shoves its horn in the stomach
> which it knows to be softer
> the softest part
> tenderest and most penetrable part
> weakest part of the body
> thinnest skin
> where his sharpened blade will in

How to Draw a Rhinoceros is as impressive as it is delightful, and it merits multiple further readings.

Foreign Park is Jeff Steudel's first book of poetry. The writing style is casual, sometimes to the point of seeming inattentive to craft; but even though certain poems fail to make lasting impressions, the collection, when taken in its entirety, is poignant and intellectually satisfying.

"The Accident" is one of the book's most evocative pieces. Here, Steudel's style works well in a prose form that juxtaposes narrative elements to make meaning. It begins:

> I was heading up Victoria Drive when I saw the flashing reds, and I knew. I had just heard the CBC report that the NEB gave their first green light to the Northern Gateway Pipeline. The spokesperson said,

". . . with alarums and excursions," and I wondered if she was referring to Macduff's reaction upon seeing Duncan's bloody corpse. Yes it was treason, and much of it against the First Nations who may now be the only hope left for the coast. I approached the accident scene in the crosswalk by the Edwardian for sale and Tutta Mia Designs.

As the speaker's attention shifts from thoughts of resource exploitation to the instinctive certainty that his child has been struck by a car at a crosswalk, the poem does a fine job of allowing two effects to hang together: one representing contemporary geopolitics as a scene set perfectly for disaster, and the other exploring how individual tragedies are felt more viscerally, and arrest our attention more sharply, than do the communal harms that loom on the horizon. This tension between individual and communal realities permeates *Foreign Park* on the whole, and is arguably the collection's greatest strength.

While the poems in *Foreign Park* occasionally leave one wishing for more diligent craftsmanship, Patrick Warner's poems in *Octopus* sometimes go too far the other way, sacrificing meaningful expression for the sake of linguistic acrobatics. A stanza from "The Tightrope Walker" is one example:

With these will go
the washing-machine-cum-
bisected-turbine that spins,
that basin of sticky wisps,
spun stratosphere glomming
on a dipped stick to confect
edible pink insulation.

It is difficult to see what insight these metaphors give, or what fresh new perspective on cotton candy they inspire. True, poets have no obligation to reorient their readers' perceptions of the world, but it is certainly nice when they do, and Warner's own poetry is most captivating when it does. Take this stanza from "Starling," one of the collection's finest:

In the bare lilac, a half-robot starling,
his nibs whose song scans shortwave
bandwidth,
who keeps a live cicada in his crop,
beneath his iridescent brush-stroked ruff . . .

Warner has a wonderful skill for wielding rhythm and rhyme subtly, and many of his poems demand to be read aloud. At their best, they have the muscularity of works by F. R. Scott, A. M. Klein, and Seamus Heaney, and are engaging and memorable as a result.

"Welcome to the new *terra nullius*"

Drew Hayden Taylor
Take Us to Your Chief and Other Stories.
Douglas & McIntyre $18.95

Reviewed by Emily L. Kring

Drew Hayden Taylor's familiarity with genre fiction is clear in his exploration of the narrative topics central to science fiction and, like his past work, *Take Us to Your Chief and Other Stories* invokes recognizable genre tropes to craft allegorical readings of the historical and ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples and their lands. "Welcome to the new *terra nullius*," he beckons: from a time-traveller's encounter with Anishinaabe petroglyphs, to the violent incursion of hostile outsiders, to the corporeal effect of abysmal water conditions on reserves, Taylor's collection of short stories balances recognizability with narrative originality to "expand the boundaries of what is considered Native literature." Taylor demonstrates his signature irreverent, quip-based humour, pairing it with detailed world-building to engage robots, superheroes, alien invasions, apocalypse, sentient artificial intelligence, time travel, authoritarian government surveillance, and environmental degradation. This combination of detail and sardonic humour makes *Take Us to Your Chief* an enjoyable read

largely bereft of the self-serious gravitas typically accompanying these classic tropes of the genre: one character glimpses an extraterrestrial tentacle and craves calamari, and another wonders if his briefly sentient childhood toy will watch him on the toilet.

Indeed, the most unsettling thing Taylor invokes is a lurking, infinitely complex bureaucracy that stipulates and thus stifles our encounters with things remarkable or wondrous. Kyle, the queer "super-Aboriginal" protagonist of "Superdisappointed," cannot fly lest he disrupt local air traffic, spook dairy cows, and disturb a "rare and protected bird." Constantly saddled with legal trouble due to his "status as an Aboriginal superhero"—with his lawyer "writing a book about the legal implications of superherodom, with Kyle as her lab rat . . . or muskrat, in accordance with his Aboriginal heritage"—Kyle's dilemma recalls the labyrinthine triangulation of Indian status, legality, and identity under colonial authority. Taylor's constant references to the systems that undergird our social organizations cleverly remind us that his dystopian scenarios are not far from the disturbingly precise mechanics of colonial bureaucracy—tentacles aside, of course.

The stories share a similar voice and didactic style, such that the nine narratives sometimes read as similar versions of each other. Both a strength and a weakness, this sense of familiarity occasionally comes at the expense of a host of distinct, individual characters with whom a reader might become familiar. That said, because *Take Us to Your Chief* runs the gamut of science-fiction tropes and addresses many issues of relevance for Indigenous literary studies in an accessible, engaging way, it would be an excellent collection to teach in undergraduate classes. The pairing of recognizable tropes with relevant issues could help learners who are new to Indigenous literary studies immediately reject the false conception that Indigenous peoples and futurity are somehow antithetical—something Taylor continuously alludes to, with stories referencing specious archaeological claims and settler society's propensity to ogle Indigenous peoples, cultures, and stories as artifacts of a bygone past. *Take Us to Your Chief and Other Stories* is a valuable contribution to the fields of Indigenous literary studies and science fiction, and an entertaining collection that will ensure you're too preoccupied with turning its pages to note any spectacular portents—alien or AI—beyond your copy of the book.

Revisiting *questions i asked my mother* in Conversation with Di Brandt

Jeffrey Aaron Weingarten

Over several weeks in the summer of 2015, I interviewed Di Brandt to talk with her about Turnstone Press's reissue of *questions i asked my mother*, originally published in 1987. In that conversation (conducted via email and included below), Brandt speaks about *questions i asked my mother* as her personal exploration of the ethical, moral, and existential queries of a lyric persona whose perspective constantly oscillates between her footing in the past—surrounded by her family in Reinland, Manitoba—and in her immediate present, as she experiences her distance from those times, places, and people. Although Brandt's poems are intimate explorations of this lyric "I," the interview also brings Brandt into dialogue with decades-long discourses on feminist revolution and Canadian multiculturalism. Thirty years after the original publication of *questions*, Brandt's sequence retains its lyric power because of its part in such dialogues. The interview below revisits these qualities of her text through the eyes of its author.

Brandt's comments in this interview often evidence that ability of hers to connect her lyric "I" to the world at large; that is to say, her "I" sees beyond itself and articulates meaningful relationships between her personal growth and the evolution of her era. Her "*foreword*" to *questions i asked my mother*, for instance, establishes the persona's long-held wish to connect meaningfully with the world. The section opens with lines that convey the education of an expanding young mind:

> learning to speak in *public* to write love poems
> for all the world to read meant betraying once &
> for all the good Mennonite daughter i tried so
> unsuccessfully to become acknowledging in myself
> the rebel traitor thief the one who asked too
> many questions who argued with the father & with
> God who always took things always went too far
> who questioned everything . . .
> ("*foreword*" n. pag.)

As Brandt says in our interview, that yearning "to speak in *public*" was as much a conundrum of her life as a young Mennonite as it was of her life as a young Canadian woman. Likewise, in *Wider Boundaries of Daring,* she and Barbara Godard consider the historical oppression of women who were excluded from (among other arenas) politics and literature, silenced by the world in which they lived (11). In both her poetry and criticism, she imagines the woman's voice as frequently muted, othered, or exiled. The above excerpt may be a "*foreword*" to *questions i asked my mother*, but it is also, in many ways, a foreword to her career as a distinguished poet and scholar who has evidently internalized Hélène Cixous' concept of "voice": a woman's discovery of her own

powerful voice (*voix*) affords an important way (*voie*) to see (*voir*) the world.

Brandt's poems engage often with such discourses and, of course, with a specific period in Canadian history: the feminist fight for a public voice and life underlay the *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada* published in 1970, just as members of different cultural communities became increasingly willing to add their voices to national discourses after Pierre Trudeau's public endorsement of multiculturalism in 1971. Reflecting on those vital symbols of a progressive social atmosphere, Brandt's speaker in *questions i asked my mother* feels comfortable as a smaller "i": she is not, as poets like Walt Whitman thought themselves to be, the world *embodied*, but rather a small fragment of an expanse. In this interview, Brandt explores that expanse, remembering and explaining the stories, writers, cultures, and politics that nurtured her early writing and that have sustained her passion for the arts and faith in the human imagination.

Brandt is the internationally recognized, multiple award-winning author of more than a dozen books of poetry, fiction, creative essays, plays, multimedia works, and literary criticism. In addition to *questions i asked my mother*, she has published *Jerusalem, beloved* (1995) and *Walking to Mojácar* (2010), with French and Spanish translations by Charles LeBlanc and Ari Belathar. Her literary-critical work includes *Wild Mother Dancing: Maternal Narrative in Canadian Literature* and the groundbreaking anthology *Wider Boundaries of Daring: The Modernist Impulse in Canadian Women's Poetry*, co-edited by Barbara Godard (2009).

Jeffrey Aaron Weingarten (JAW): Whenever I read your work, I'm always struck by your form. In the case of *questions i asked my mother*, the long poem seems evidence of an exceptionally generative process. How did you know that the long poem form was appropriate to these poems? Were you modelling the book on something else or was it more intuitive?

Di Brandt (DB): I didn't set out to write a long poem. I was trying to write short poems, but they all ended up being about the same thing, and eventually I realized they were exploring a kind of cultural territory, were trying to tell a story, so I went with that. Retrospectively, I can name all kinds of long poems that might have been influential: William Carlos Williams' *Paterson* (with his championing of "local colour" and "local pride"), Phyllis Webb's *Naked Poems* (the brave and vulnerable erotic self-expression in them, coupled with philosophical and ontological questions), Robert Kroetsch's *Seed Catalogue* (with its hilarious mix of Biblical and pioneer prairie farm mythologies). But influences, as you know, are slippery things, often more identifiable in retrospect than at the time, when floundering through the chaos of not knowing what you're doing toward some sort of solid ground often feels quite solitary.

I also grew up in a very poetic family, a traditionalist peasant village Mennonite family in southern Manitoba, where my grandmother still held extended family "salons" in the old world style. All the little grandchildren had to sing a song or recite a poem for her or play the piano or violin before we got our little treats, at every important holiday and family gathering (Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, her birthday, etc.), and there was much gorgeous *a cappella* hymn singing. And of course we heard the rich poetic cadences of the Bible on a regular basis. It's no accident that many of the grandchildren in that family became professional musicians, filmmakers, artists, intellectuals, and poets. Though we had to leave the community to go professional; obviously, there weren't those opportunities within the [Mennonite] community.

JAW: And yet, *questions i asked my mother* is deeply rooted in that same community. It fits with an entire generation of books that unabashedly explored local roots and prides.

DB: We didn't think of them as "local roots and prides." The family and the village, the tribe, represented for us in micro the social organization of the polis, and more ontologically, the cosmos. It was the centre and symbolic representation of the whole world to us. As the pressures to modernize increased, the traditionalism became narrower and narrower. But it still carried a lot of power then. So if I were going to write about anything whatsoever—and it seemed the only way I could actually learn to express myself with freedom and integrity—I had to write about my family.

I think the timing of *questions i asked my mother* was definitely connected to the new permission in the early seventies (as represented in the 1971 Multiculturalism policy) to speak about our various ethnic heritages without risking expulsion or not being taken seriously in professional contexts. (The universities, for example, had had quotas against many ethnic groups including women, Mennonites, and Jews until then.) And I was part of that new ethnic wave of writing of the eighties, of which Andrew Suknaski, Robert Kroetsch, Myrna Kostash, Eli Mandel, and so many others were also a part. Before that time, we had to all work *hard* to hide our ethnic identities if we wanted to get anywhere; after that, it was cool.

I was also trying to answer Northrop Frye's famous question, "Where is here?"—not just in the local sense but in the continental sense. We didn't have much Canadian content in our school curricula when I was growing up. In church, we learned about the places and stories of the Bible; at home we learned about the places our ancestors had lived in: Ukraine, Prussia, Holland. In school, we learned about British queens and kings. But "Where is *here*?" I kept thinking. You can see the speaker in *questions i asked my mother* trying to climb out of the stories set in other landscapes long ago into the here and now.

JAW: And how did your upbringing affect your ability to tell some of those stories?

DB: It was complicated. My upbringing was filled with internal contradictions, situated as it was amongst the medieval Mennonite traditionalism of my parents and grandparents and peasant village community, the innovative forward-looking funky sixties, a modern English school education, and occasional access to the new social media of the time. My parents were divided. On the one hand, they encouraged us to be really good at school and go for top-of-the-line professionalism, and, on the other hand, it was an attitude of "hunker down," "don't ask questions," "do what you're told," "stay with the old ways." It was a complicated time for the whole culture.

My mother's family consisted of prominent church people, and so "speaking in public" and telling the public stories of our people was part of my upbringing. My mother and some of my uncles and aunts were fabulous storytellers. We still lived in a traditional oral economy, for the most part. Telling a good story, with vivid details, that could hold the listeners spellbound from beginning to end, and be remembered well, was highly valued. They all loved poetry, and everyone could recite a huge repertoire of German and also English poems. That was obviously a great positive influence in developing my literary imagination and expression, and they were impressed with my poetry writing, and encouraged it, from a young age. But at the same time, I was supposed to become a proper Mennonite woman and practice public silence, and submission, and service to the patriarchy, publicly and in the family, at all times.

JAW: If you found it difficult to break out of those roles with the support of family, did you find support for your writing career elsewhere? Did you, for instance, have writers pushing you to join in the conversations of other young writers like Kroetsch, Suknaski, or Mandel?

DB: I had *them*! Particularly Kroetsch, whom I studied with at the University of Manitoba. He was an inspiring presence for me, a "permission giver," as he sometimes himself put it. I was lucky to meet influential women like Dorothy Livesay and Daphne Marlatt, who both took note of me and gave me lovely mentoring support over the years. The first professional writer I got to know was Paul Hiebert, of *Sarah Binks* fame, while I was still in high school, in a chance meeting at a little museum. He took me under his wing and used to take me for lunch and tell wonderful stories to inspire and guide me along in the turbulent years of leaving home and trying to figure out how to live in a modern city. And I had a beautiful women's writing group while I was writing *questions i asked my mother*, which gave me wonderful support. Jan Horner, Smaro Kamboureli, and Kristjana Gunnars were in it. A talented bunch.

JAW: It makes sense that you would, in some ways, feel more at home with those writers. Each of you was very much going against the grain.

DB: Yes. The "scandal" of *questions i asked my mother* was that I exposed the way the sacred stories of the Bible were being misused in Mennonite culture to justify the oppression of women and children, and to suppress freedom of expression and jubilation, and so on. That was a painful thing for the Mennonites to hear, and they would have tried to suppress the message entirely if they could have.

By the time I wrote *questions*, I was a doctoral student in English at the University of Manitoba, reading all kinds of contemporary experimental writing and cultural theory—remember, that was at the height of the feminist movement in Canada. We were all reading tons of feminist theory, from Adrienne Rich to Mary O'Brien to Luce Irigaray, and daily finding direct liberatory links between their texts and our own lives. The principle of the feminist movement was "the personal is the political." As women writers and academics we kept being disqualified in our observations, stories, experiences, theories, and self-expressions, because they had to do with the domestic or the personal, or because our identities were not already encoded in the received archives except as absences or forbidden subjectivities. So the principle of "the personal is the political" was very important to our lives, both personally and professionally, and very enabling to the writing of *questions i asked my mother*.

JAW: It must have been a challenge, having that urge to speak out, but coming from a community that was so silencing.

DB: Yes. Coming from a long history of exile and political persecution, as the Mennonites did, we took refuge in public silence; we were *die Stillen im Lande*. So drawing attention to our people beyond the strict boundaries of the culture seemed like a big public betrayal to them. I happened to grow up just exactly at the time the Mennonites were beginning to modernize, in the sixties. The farmers were mechanizing and corporatizing their farms. The children were able to attend high school. Church services began to be held in English instead of German. The parents could no longer control access to modern social media once transistor radios came along. And the arrival of television in our communities spelled the definitive end of the traditionalism. It was inevitable that there would be Mennonite writers coming out of that extraordinary moment of radical cultural shift.

The Mennonite people blamed us for destroying the traditionalism of the culture, but thirty years later I think it's clear that we weren't destroying it: we were documenting the radical changes the culture was undergoing at that time in order to understand what was happening to us, who we had been, and who we were becoming. It was an act of cultural and personal preservation, really. I had my family's encouragement to begin with, but later they saw my writing as frivolous and/or potentially dangerous. I wanted my writing to crack open the culture at its very heart. I was interested in identifying the place where the sacred stories of the Bible were being used to silence and oppress the women and justify extensive kinds of abuse against children in the community. I couldn't really find my own voice and vision without confronting that.

JAW: It's interesting that you've talked about "confronting," unveiling, and discovering, because these are vital concepts in your writing. Your poems focus often on what is "discovered" and what is "invented." And as you talk about those things, we're brought back frequently to some pretty big questions about the nature of faith. You were discovering a world outside the one in which you were raised, and so how did that newfound distance from Mennonite communities change your perception of God and religion?

DB: I'm delighted you mentioned the motif of "invented" or "discovered," which the young Diana in *questions* is particularly preoccupied with. It's the question of nature versus nurture, or the received versus the initiated, essence versus existence. Experts are still arguing over that question and it can't really ever be answered definitively, can it? The overlap of these categories is after all the evolutionary continuum, how the world grows and develops, in an intricate dance between mind and matter, imagination and experience, dream and reality.

In traditional Christianity, there was perhaps too much emphasis on the received as opposed to the experimental, on preserving the past, on humility and ancestral loyalty, on trusting in God and the bigger picture as something we are held by, rather than pushing forward into an altered future. That created a stifling narrowness that eventually had to bust open. In the postmodern, it has been perhaps too much the other way around. Too much emphasis on newness and change at the expense of stability and identity and respect for the past, the elders, the earth itself. A destabilizing broadness, bereft of divinity and humility and faith in a loving, meaningful universe, much lamented by artists: "the centre cannot hold / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."

That is really the systemic breakdown of orientation and location described in personal and poetic terms in *questions i asked my mother*, though I like to think the looking forward to a "new tender flowering" at the end of the book carries enough promise with it to bring some sort of coherence to the whole. There is no other way to undo the restrictions and wounds of our too narrowly inward-looking traditionalist and too outward-looking overextended modern paradigms—both damaging in their ways—except to bring them home to one's own cultural investment in them, to walk through the shattering experience of their inevitable interface, hopefully to something more graceful, ethical, and creative than either could manage. We now seem to be moving, slowly but surely, toward a more creative and dialogic happy medium between extremes: let's hope we can do it gracefully and imaginatively instead of catastrophically. There are many signs everywhere that humanity is ready for moving forward into something smarter and wiser and calmer and more peaceful than these two opposing modalities, at war with one another.

As for belief, people like to refer to "faith" as a sort of private thing these days, and

it certainly has a deeply personal dimension; but ultimately, it's a political and philosophical and existential act, a choice you make about how you see the world, how you construct or find meaning, which God or gods you serve, where you put your faith, where you hedge your bets, what kind of community you invest in, what kind of vision you subscribe to. Were we created as whole beings, on a beautiful, intricate, divine blueprint (who somewhere along the way got damaged, perhaps through our own folly, and therefore are reparable, through hard work and remorse and tenderness and creativity) or are we merely random experiments in a brutal, alienated process of the survival of the biggest and toughest? All traditional religions propose some version of the former; modernity subscribes to a large extent to the latter. On the theoretical level, though, I think in practice we *must* have some sort of ethic based in a hopeful process that transcends our individual being, both as individuals and collectively, and holds us to an upward evolutionary continuum, otherwise we cannot really function in a human way at all.

In this sense, a sacramental, reparative, interdependent modality is much more rational and practical than an alienated one, however much people claim the opposite to be true in the age of science. Like most people, I waver sometimes between these modalities. But ultimately I think that a sacred cosmology, infused with divine love and meaning—where each small part is deeply, intimately connected to and contributing meaningfully to the whole—offers much greater hope for us in the present age. This is, I think, true for us as individuals, communities, and as a species facing the prospect of radical self-improvement or extinction. It also makes much more sense in an evolutionary perspective. I feel the shamanic cultures are still the most eloquent on these matters, understanding that consciousness is not restricted to cognitive function, but rather pervades the cosmos and infuses all of life with light and love and meaning.

JAW: Given how many connections you've had to sever or weaken (intentionally or unintentionally) to pursue your art, I wonder if you have ever felt—for lack of a better word—"lonely" as a writer? One of the issues you take up in *Wild Mother Dancing*, for instance, is becoming a writer and mother in a literary tradition that lacks affirming portrayals of mothers.

DB: What I proposed in *Wild Mother Dancing*, which began as my doctoral dissertation at the University of Manitoba in the late 1980s, is that in fact contemporary Canadian writers, especially women writers, were writing extensively about mothers and mothering, but that because of the pervasive absence of the mother in the Western literary tradition, these stories were being read, at that time, without adequate recognition of their subjects. For example, Daphne Marlatt, at that time, had published more than a dozen books, and the subject of mothering, of having a mother, of being a mother, of theorizing the maternal, in the personal and wider social and cosmological senses, was one of her main topics throughout her oeuvre. But these texts were being read, somewhat bizarrely if you think about it, for their linguistic and geographical and intercultural and genre experiments, but never for their main subject, the maternal.

It was a matter of literary training: people were reading her texts in light of a literary tradition that kept the mother absent or invisible. I might have done the same, except that I had young daughters to look after during the time I was writing my dissertation, and so couldn't help noticing this phenomenon. I desperately needed stories to reflect and comment on my own intense experience of mothering. Was it lonely to write about this? No! There was

a lot of excitement about this hot new topic in Canada in the late eighties. What was lonely was finding an adequate intellectual and emotional support group to complete the work, since my professors were mostly male and old school in relation to this subject then. So I had to be very persistent and thorough in presenting my case. But there was much at stake, after all, and the response from colleagues across Canada and internationally was astounding. Marianne Hirsch, who wrote *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, wrote me a lovely letter of encouragement (after I wrote her a fan letter expressing my admiration for her work, and its relation to my own). Andrea O'Reilly (who founded The Association for Research on Mothering [ARM] at York University) publicly credited *Wild Mother Dancing* with inspiring her whole amazing project. I'm so delighted by that and filled with admiration for the vast network of intellectual mother support she created. I wasn't doing this work alone, though it often felt that way: *Wild Mother Dancing* was at the front edge of a huge wave of writing on the subject of mothers and mothering which has changed the culture in radical ways. You can find stories about breastfeeding on the front page of newspapers now. Everybody and their dog writes about mothers and mothering (and fathers and fathering) now. This was unthinkable a few decades ago.

Did you know that in every century from the beginning of patriarchy in the time of the ancient Greeks, there has been a feminist movement to recover women's political power? And in every century there have been massively violent gestures of backlash, often culminating in large-scale war, to shut this feminine/maternal power back down again. Riane Eisler has tracked this historical rhythm in her interesting book *The Chalice and the Blade*. We're in that kind of cultural moment right now, aren't we? If we know that that's how our historical psyche works, Eisler writes, then we can transform this pattern into a more positive one, by paying particular attention to the response to feminism immediately afterward: that's where the pain of understanding how distorted and oppressive our histories have been sets in. And instead of trying to shut down that understanding in order to lessen the pain of it, we could put in place, rather, structures and processes of reparation, and healing. We could reintegrate the power of the feminine, the honouring of our mothers, the honouring of "reproductive consciousness," as Mary O'Brien called it, in ourselves, and in our collective stories and cultural practices. There's lots of that going on in our culture right now as well. We're at a very exciting choice point in the history of Western culture, and the history of our species as we know it.

JAW: Besides Mennonite writers such as yourself, where else do you see some of those stories emerging in the world?

DB: I feel that it is the Indigenous writers of North America who are giving us the best, most powerful models of "putting the Mother back into the story" now, to use Maria Campbell's resonant phrase. The public ceremony around the missing and murdered Indigenous women at this time is an incredibly powerful model for us to emulate. There are many missing and murdered women in non-Indigenous culture as well, or perhaps we should say, many missing and silenced and exiled and crazed mothers.

Two wonderful Indigenous writers who have written eloquently about being mothers and having mothers are Joanne Arnott and Louise Halfe. Greg Scofield has written eloquently about his "crazy" mother and the women who raised him as well. For each of them, telling this story is both a political and a reparative act. Jacob Scheier, a young Jewish writer from Toronto, has also written about his "crazy" mother (the very sane

poet Libby Scheier, who later became ill and died an untimely death, broken-hearted by the weight of her patriarchal peasant Jewish heritage) with a lot of political understanding, and in a healing way, also.

JAW: *questions i asked my mother*, too, is part of those forward-looking efforts, though. It does the same work that those authors you're mentioning do in their writing. That project obviously still resonates with readers, given that the book has been reissued. Nearly thirty years later, has the meaning of the poem to you as both a personal piece and as a contribution to a particular era of Canadian writing changed?

DB: Nearly thirty years later I look back at that very brave young woman and I'm filled with admiration for her and for the size and depth of her project. I'm filled with gratitude for all the extraordinary help and support I received during the writing of *questions i asked my mother*, and the extraordinary public reception of the book afterward, both in Canada and internationally. I'm grateful, too, for the many ways it inspired other people to write their own stories and take the project forward in a thousand directions.

I was thrilled to be included in Lorna Knight's literary installation at the National Library some years ago, called *Let Us Compare Mythologies: Half a Century of Canadian Poetry in English*, where *questions i asked my mother* was included as a representative of the literary achievement of the eighties in Canada. You can't really know, as a young person and emerging writer, what the size of the impact of your work will be, or how widely or iconically your personal musings might speak to the rest of the world. But it did feel as if my own life and the meaning of everything were at stake in that project, and that I had only the one chance to get it right. In a way, everything I've written since has come out of the questions I asked myself then. And I'm hugely delighted and honoured to have contributed to the imaginative development of Canadian and Mennonite and international life in an influential and liberating way.

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Sounding a Canadian Icon: An Interview with bill bissett

Maidie Hilmo

A pioneer of sound, performance, and concrete poetry, internationally renowned Canadian poet bill bissett remains at the cutting edge of the evolving process of what poetry is in this digital age. His powerful, musical voice, often accompanied by the use of his magical rattle, enlivens his dramatic performances and energizes his audiences, who become part of every unique experience. Sound has been an important element of his poetry since the late 1960s. Deconstructing words into their component parts and sounds releases new and inherent meanings in his poems. Even on the printed page, he has developed his own unique phonetic

spelling that encourages readers to slow down and become part of the performance by voicing the words and sounds. Often the repetition of letters and syllables forms a visual pattern on the page engaging the eye in a complementary aesthetic experience. Since he is also an artist whose work has been shown at numerous venues across Canada, his published works often include accomplished line drawings. Philosophical and socially conscious in his push toward a more egalitarian society for everyone, bissett brings to all his creative endeavours a deep compassion for all living beings.

A list of his printed poems in books and journals alone fills several pages, and there are almost as many recordings of his performances in various old and new media. His latest publication, *th book* (Talonbooks, 2016), is mentioned in the following interview. His recent awards include the Pandora's Collective Distinctive Body of Work Award (2016), the prestigious Sheri-D Wilson Golden Beret Award (2014), and the George Woodcock Lifetime Achievement Award (2007). In 2008, he received an honorary doctorate from Thompson Rivers University in recognition of his contributions to Canadian literature.

bissett's influence on Canadian literary, artistic, and musical culture is incalculable. He founded blewointment press in 1962, which first published early works by many of the literary figures who subsequently gained major prominence. He was also the lyricist and vocalist of the Luddites, an alternative rock band. He continues to help run the Secret Handshake Gallery in Toronto, which helps people with schizophrenia and also serves as a venue for readings by new poets and artists. He is a figure of national importance whose schedule of poetry readings across the country is as busy now as ever. Frequently a poet-in-residence, he has inspired many new generations of poets.

I previously interviewed bissett in 1986 and published that interview in *Essays in Canadian Writing*. Speaking together again thirty years later in Victoria, we tried a new approach. I asked him questions and he replied orally while simultaneously writing the answers on his iPad, using his own phonetic spelling. Then, after he left Victoria, we finished the interview by email. The result is that his answers are not only accurately recorded but also that the reader will likely experience bill's rhythms and thought processes directly while reading aloud.

Maidie Hilmo (MH): Where does your poetry come from? When you wrote the poems you contributed to the collection *For Kelly, with Love: Poems on the Abstracts of Carle Hessay*, I noticed that you responded immediately to the abstract paintings, and the words just flowed right out of you.

bill bissett (bb): i dont know wher th
poetree cums
from
that time with yu i feel n think th
pomes came as much from me being
ther with yu th beautiful littul hous
n yr opnness 2 th idea that i wud
feel his paintings 2 write abt them
4 me it was as much yr vibe n th
situaysyun sumhow magikalee
channelling n reseeving th empathee
that th pomes wer cumming 2 me
i felt i was writing th pomes with th
paintings n with yu it was a veree
speshul n prmitting specifik time
thank yu agen 4 that

MH: Can you expand more generally on the genesis of your poetry?

bb: poetree cums 4 me from desire
2 xperiens th takilitee uv langwage
2 represent or say or not represent
or not say n accenshuate th desire
4 form cumming in2 being fluid n

fleeting
lyrik poetree is evreething in
langwage distild 2 a few images
that make us think or feel th
mysteree n ambiguitee uv evree
thing n or idea
th touch uv th stroke th word or
lettr in th image th breth in th
image in th word

i think lyrik poetree is a neurologikul
propensitee

MH: Since you first began experimenting with poetry, sounds, and images, I imagine you were aware of being in the forefront of new movements and styles of writing. Which movements are you aware of pioneering or being part of (e.g., sound poetry and concrete poetry)?

bb: i was alwayze aware
i was in a moovment uv poets in
england spain france germany poland japan
brazil manee
countrees th konkreet poetree moovments
pioneering with manee
othr peopul n it all being
connekting with
sound poetree ivo vroom henri chopin bob
cobbing paula claire
bpNichol clive fencott sew manee
peopul bernard heidsick jackson mclow bob
cobbing henri chopin
had bin in2 it b4 bpNichol n me got
in2 it
we didint kno abt our predecesors
n wer xplooring evreething we cud
challenging th stabilitee uv a lettr
say a trope dekonstrukting evree
thing we cud 4 a nu realitee
n we got 2 intl sound poetree
festivals
it was thrilling 2 meet them

sound poetree is first love with me as is
breking disrupting convensyunal meenings
n stances n tropes n stock
phrases

MH: Since your poetry is written out phonetically, the reader almost has to sound it out as well, making the reader also a performer. Are you aware of that?

bb: i am aware uv th reedr potenshulee
sounding out words n i hope they
dew its all writtn 4 that

MH: Does it matter if what they derive from a work is different from what you initially conceived?

bb: it dusint mattr if th reedr derives
sumthing diffrent thn how i xperiens
th pome

MH: Is it just a matter of play, allowing the reader/viewer to attach a meaning or feeling?

bb: i like what yu say abt
play th process is mor like that
in that way art mirrors th prson
looking at it in part

MH: When you compose your poetry, do you hear it in your head and think of its possibilities for performance?

bb: i dew heer th pomes as i write
them n how they sound is sew
important 2 me

MH: How closely do you stick to the written words and sounds when you perform your poetry, or do you allow for variations?

bb: maidie whn yu describe th *improv*
variaysyuns in my reeding most def
th sound pomes chanting parts
uv song is xacktlee what i dew
unless ium in a band n thn i stik
2 th arrangements

MH: Has being in a band affected your life and work?

bb: being in luddites th alternativ rock band was wun uv th most wundrful experiences uv my life lerning n unlerning sew much

MH: Do you change and build on some poems after receiving feedback?

bb: n no i dont reelee change things up anee bcoz uv feedback i dont think sew not that ium aware uv i think its th othr prsons stuff if they dont get it n thats ok

MH: In breaking down language into its phonetic sounds, are you constantly discovering new meanings in letters and words that allow for surprising discoveries?

bb: deekonstrukting grammar n mor convensyunal meenings xploring mor phonetik spelling n sounds uv words sylabuls spelling brings abt othr n sumtimes nu paradigms n slowing th reeding xperiens 2 launch othr ideas not sout out or thot uv in mor convenshunal arrangements uv lettrs n words interrogating xisting meenings
2 opn thos up 2 nu undrstandings nu qwestyuns nu deepning awareness if sumthing unxpektid happns i go with it hopefulee wantid n nu diskovereez in arrangments uv lettrs n words clustrs bound n unbound in manee realms uv consciousness ium mor uv a lettralist thn a literalist tho ium qwite literal abt human rites n egalitarian societeez as th goal uv living xposing hierarkees as negativ n dangerous n healthee environments ar also a first caws pursuit

MH: I've noticed that you precede your poetry readings with a kind of ritual sound and dance using your rattle. Is it to affect the audience in some way?

bb: latelee i start th reedings diffrentlee thn i usd 2
now i start with short pomes narrativ with a point n a short sound pome n thn longr socio politikul pomes n cum 2 a longr sound pome n mor shortr politikul n environmental n prsonal pomes n thn sumtimes close with a chant song wheras i use 2 opn with a chant song
its a diffrent kind uv approach n brings peopul in in a diffrent mor immediate way n ium sure itul change agen 2 sumthing els that seems mor with th immediate vibe bringing th pomes in with th peopul

MH: Was the rattle given to you?

bb: ths rattul i play with now n 4 sum time was givn 2 me by veree dere frends gerald n arlene lampert n they came upon it in th amazon
previouslee iuv had rattuls wch i hand paintid myself ths wun i seem 2 b not painting

MH: When did you start doing that?

bb: i gess i startid chanting with a rattul in reedings in th mid seventeez chanting can b sew helpful in releesing cognitiv bloks as all writing n painting can b releesing th stroke th image th shape th line th sound th manee tastes n levls uv being its an amayzing journee 2 b
on n ium veree grateful 2 b on it

MH: Has computer technology opened up new creative possibilities for you?

bb: i preferrd quark i cud put lettrs on top uv othr letrs not xaktlee like a typwritr but i cud ther wer devices availabul 2 dew a lot uv things chek narrativ enigma
now i use word see *th book* 4 what i can dew with that sew far with work arounds i dont want 2 get in2 designism iuv alwayze typd my work

espeshulee in ths genre sumtimes
tho traveling i write stuff on papr n
writing spiritual n or metaphysical
pomes i tend 2 write them by hand
howevr teknolojee is wundrful 4 me

MH: Are you simultaneously also going back to the origins of writing and images?

bb: n with lettrs they wer all originalee
piktographik yu can see that transisyun
with chinees writing th image in th lettr n
th lettr in th image

MH: How do you match up your poems and your line drawings for publication?

bb: how th drawings ocur with th pomes
is a mysterious process its nevr
overtlee mimetik or illustrativ i dont
reelee know how it happns xsept
ium looking 4 th best drawings as
possibul 4 th space 2 not ovr
ride th pome or evn accent but b
th best i can find 4 that space
almost similar 2 moovee soundtracks
on its own yet sumhow enhansing
th pome like keeping companee
with th pome

MH: What role does humour play in your writing, art, and life?

bb: a big role fr sure all th msplasd
intensyunaliteez mr n ms undrstandings
competing desire alliance that turn out 2 b
meaningless th banana peel 2
slip on is evreewher we dont know wher we
cum from or wher we ar
going n our fluid identiteez ar mor multi
fasitid thn we like sumtimes
2 admit sew 4 these purposes n thos we
such n sew our leedrs nd our own
absurd n delisyus n dangrous n self limiting
oftn murmurs n choices
sew with writing poetree i like 2 prsue abt 7
approaches 2 poetree lyrik
romantic politikul his her storikal
metaphysical sound poetree konkreet vizual
poetree spiritual poetree naytur poetree 4
me thees multi approaches
work 4 sum wun els it mite not n thats ok
its onlee what ium dewing n
thats possibulee why ium mor amenabul 2
multi approach in living i
have taut in th mental health industree n
now enjoy being a volunteer
n undrstanding on a dailee basis that is nevr
wun way uv dewing
things ther is mor thn wun banana peel 2
slip on in fact ther ar
a multitude uv availabul peels redee 4 us at
anee millisecond n all
thees send ups make humour out uv almost
all our intensyuns
almost all our egos

MH: Does humour always involve slipping on a banana peel, metaphorically, revealing our discomfitures or those of others, or can it involve just unexpected positions?

bb: yes uv kours n various posishyuns
leonard cohens great album n all
our own lives

MH: Could you tell us about the Secret Handshake Art Gallery in Toronto—what led to its inception and what is its purpose? Is it a multimedia art gallery and gathering place?

bb: th secret handshake peer support
network for peopul with schizophrenia
was creatid n foundid by jordan stone
legalee incorporated as a charitabul n not
for profit in 2006
i am th tresurer
n th signing prson n dew othr
work as well as galleree sitting
we ar all volunteers we ar a teem
i love it n
trying 2 balans th volunteer work
with
time 4 my own work is a reel big

challeng sumtimes tho oftn its
organikalee eezee reelee always
dew whats in front uv us 2 dew
yes
most uv our membrs ar artists
paintrs musicyans writrs n at
our gala poetree reedings sum
writrs from othr clustrs or pop
ulaysyuns reed as well n we pay
sumhow sumtimes evreewun who
reeds n who shows in th galleree
we ar in our second clubhous now
its sew wundrful n amayzin

th work iuv bin dewing with th secret
handshake has helpd me grow intrakt n
appresiate n build n love
as duz happn with evreewun dewing
sumthing important 2 them they beleev in

MH: In your beautiful long poem about the passing of your daughter published in *th book*, did your daughter's speaking to you in your mind help you to continue on your earthly journey?

bb: yes a strongr sens uv we ar all
part uv each othr n th separatsyuns
hurt mor

MH: Is memory a stronger force than before?

bb: me mor ee each brain bunduling
evreething up it can whil it can
changing heddings constantlee
n adding nu wuns n cross cata
loging th tiny librarians in our heds
filing n sorting all th time

MH: Do moments when you are aware of the transitory nature of beauty help redeem all the suffering? I am thinking of your poem "lake on the mountain" in *th book*.

bb: yes lake on th mountain tells that storee
uv how we look 4 feeling
n if wer luckee we find it as part
uv our heeling

MH: As time has passed, I sense that your *Weltanschauung* has deepened since you were younger. What led to that change?

bb: abt th world view thing deepning
n changing sins i was youngr
specifikalee th world view deepning
i think thru disapointment wch
wunt dew that on its own its mor
th loss iuv xperiensd that in no
way i wantid 2 or see as redeem
ing a deepning sens uv how presyus
each moment is n how limitid our
specees is n th sumtimes wry hope
that we can reelee evolv
i live in hope but it is amendid
by loss n looking at human
behavyur worldwide thats nothing
nu i know n i try 2 beleev in mor
positiv possibiliteez evn with th
selfish behavyurs justified that we
can get bettr adapt n reset n readapt
sew manee uv our systems ar archaik
n antiquatid n block us as we can
block ourselvs
i think i always wrote abt ths
but diffrentlee n ther was always
loss
its a diffrent tone now at leest
ths summrs pomes
thanks 4 notising th changing
yu probablee see it bettr thn
me

ium still optimistik n loving
n hopeful
politikul changes 4 th bettr i
still beleev in
thanks sew much 4 notising all
thees things maidie

MH: Have you always lived existentially or is that something you've learned to do through experience and suffering?

bb: yes i always have n xperiens helps
i beleev we can create our own essences that
xistens cums first n with informd choices
we can help our nayturs find theyr wayze
in2 being we continualee ar dewing that in
sew manee wayze as we hopefulee keep
on wun moment n molecule at a time
making safe places 2 b

MH: Do you think people are divided among themselves and within themselves? Would more exposure to the arts open their minds to more expanded ways of seeing?

bb: yes i remembr allan blooms great
book "the closing of the amerikan
mind" with referns 2 yr qwestyun
mor egalitarian edukaysyun n free
universitee edukaysyun wud totalee
help all our minds from closing

MH: Your poetry and art and music seem holistic in approach. Is that something that can be taught?

bb: yes definitlee tho agen i wud
suggest that evreething is in
parts n peesus not reelee wholistik
wholistik teeching can b confusing
as well as helpful bcoz th same
mind or brain needs 2 xperiens
contradiktoree ideas 2 bcum reelee
flexibul
wholistik living is accepting contradiktoree
ideaz
in ourselves n in life
without having to feel wun is rite n one is
wrong

MH: I think we are using holistic differently. But we seem to be coming to the same place by different routes.

bb: yes def n we share similar distopik views uv th neer futur

MH: Maybe that's why we both laugh so much. The absurdity of it all becomes funny. Even with all we don't know, you are still quite happy.

bb: yes def

MH: In what direction do you see your poetry and art going now?

bb: in th direcksyun they want 2 n i try n follo

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Contributors

Articles & Opinions and Notes

Emily **Ballantyne** is a doctoral candidate in Canadian literature at Dalhousie University, where she has held a Killam Fellowship and an SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship. Recently, she co-edited a special issue on P. K. Page for *Canadian Poetry* and a collection on transnational modernist writing in Paris for University of Ottawa Press. Her work has appeared in *Canadian Poetry*, *Studies in Canadian Literature*, *University of Toronto Quarterly*, and *The Dalhousie Review*. She has also contributed chapters to *Public Poetics: Critical Issues in Canadian Poetry and Poetics* and *Archival Narratives for Canada*.

Myra **Bloom** teaches writing at the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on confessional and identity politics in Canadian/Quebecois literature. Her publications include articles in *English Studies in Canada*, *Québec Studies*, and *Studies in Canadian Literature*. She is also the Reviews Editor at *The Puritan*.

Maidie **Hilmo** is currently an affiliate at the University of Victoria. Before retiring, Hilmo was an instructor in English and creative writing at Northern Lights College. Her publications are mostly on medieval manuscripts, but also on Canadian art and literature (including an earlier interview with bill bissett in 1986).

Rebekah **Ludolph** is a PhD student at Wilfrid Laurier University. Supported by a SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholarship, Rebekah is currently studying alternative subjectivities and multicultural texts in Canadian literature.

Eli **MacLaren** teaches Canadian literature at McGill University. He is the author of *Dominion and Agency: Copyright and the Structuring of the Canadian Book Trade, 1867–1918* (U of Toronto P 2011).

Ana María **Manzanas-Calvo** teaches American Literature and Culture at the Universidad de Salamanca, Spain. Her research centres on American literature, a field she approaches from a comparative, intercultural perspective. Her publications include *Hospitality in American Literature and Culture: Spaces, Bodies, Borders* (Routledge 2017), *Occupying Space in American Literature and Culture: Social Movements, Occupation, and Empowerment* (Routledge 2014), *Cities, Borders, and Spaces in Intercultural American Literature and Film* (Routledge 2011), and *Intercultural Mediations: Mimesis and Hybridity in American Literatures* (LIT Verlag 2003), with J. Benito.

Heather **Murray** teaches in the Department of English at the University of Toronto, and is a faculty member in the Graduate Collaborative Program in Book History and Print Culture. She is the author of two books (*Working in English: History, Institution, Resources* and *Come, bright Improvement! The Literary Societies of Nineteenth-Century Ontario*) as well as articles in the fields of cultural history, readership history, and the history of English studies.

Jeffrey Aaron **Weingarten** is a professor of Liberal Studies at Fanshawe College in London, Ontario. His research and teaching centre on twentieth-century Canadian literature and media with an emphasis on creative representations of cultural or personal histories in poetry, fiction, and theatre. His publications include reviews, articles, and interviews in *Canadian Poetry*, *Canadian Literature*, and *Studies in Canadian Literature*, as well as a forthcoming manuscript on the evolution of poetry and historical study since 1960. He is also the co-managing editor and co-founder of *The Bull Calf: Reviews of Fiction, Poetry, and Literary Criticism*.

Poems

Derrick Stacey **Denholm** lives in Burns Lake, British Columbia. Adam **Dickinson** lives in St. Catharines, Ontario. Alan **Hill** lives in New Westminster, British Columbia. Arleen **Paré** lives in Victoria. Renée **Sarojini Saklikar** lives in Vancouver.

Reviews

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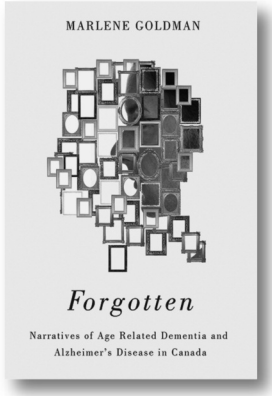

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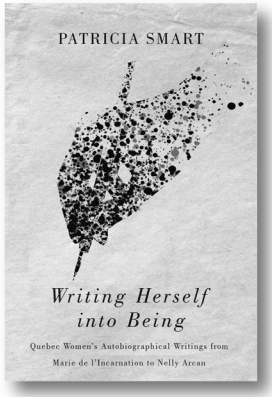

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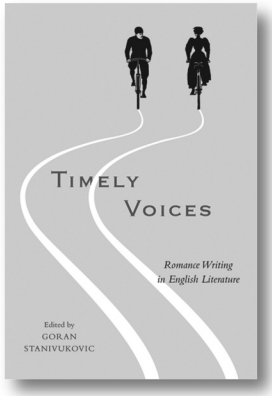

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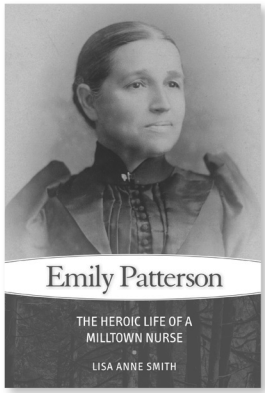

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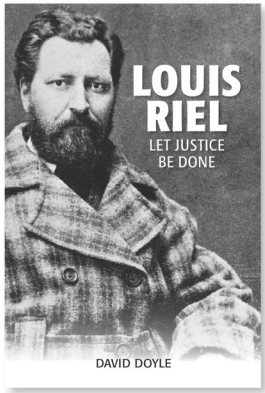

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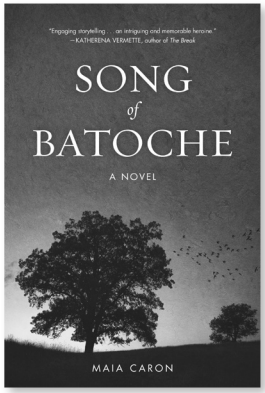

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