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Editorial

Contesting Vancouver
Case Studies in a Cultural Imaginary

Gregory Betts and Julia Polyck-O'Neill

Vancouver, balanced on the tipping point of the continent, has long been aswirl with contestation. The early-twentieth-century poets might have toasted the "Queen of the Coast" with "the bonniest hues" (Johnson 55), but their way of writing the city was breezily dismissed by the modernist poets as mere trifles from "the usual collection of happy-go-lucky housewives" (Davey, "The Present" 1). Though the macho *Tish* poets carved out a space for themselves in CanLit with their magazine, they have since been critiqued for enacting a "violence against other outsider positions" (Butling 56), especially against women, racialized writers, and the spectrum of non-heteronormative subject positions that were kept off *Tish*'s pages. In the years after the first editorial period of *Tish*, Vancouver was suddenly awash in transdisciplinary experimentation, particularly the (con)fusion of the literary and visual arts. As late as 1966, Frank Davey, erstwhile head of the *Tish* brigade, dismissed the intermediated work of the downtown scene *in toto*, "which mode I still find irrelevant to what I know as poetry. For me poetry is of language, and language is still of sound with rhythm in stress and pitch, and is not just visual shape" ("Dear Fred" 3). On the other side of that transformative era, George Bowering, another *Tish*er, grabbed the mic after a 1983 reading by Kevin Davies (of what would become the Kootenay School of Writing) threw Davies' poems onto the ground, and declared it all "a lot of dumb shit." Aesthetic fiefdoms—occupied by the likes of the Black Mountain school, the lyric poets, the West Coast Hermeticists, the Spoken Word poets, et al.—have emerged and grown into small, moated empires, only to crash and spill into other lines, other allegiances.

Meanwhile, and in tandem, the city's visual arts communities have been similarly blessed by the excitement of discovery of new, globally acknowledged aesthetic pathways, and the joys of building and inventing new kinds of art institutions. Visual artists, however, have also been afflicted by exclusionary politics and the particular divisiveness of a general spirit of contestation. These realities persist in spite of the overarching ethos of the broad, experimental, and "revolutionary ambitions" of the countercultural moment on the North American West Coast (Watson 8). The transformative waves of (so-called) change that tried to reimagine Vancouver's cultural identity have proved to be susceptible to issues of gender, class, race, or affective economics, importing the "political effects of [a] hierarchy between open and closed cultures" (Ahmed 134). The evolution of artist-run culture, particularly in the interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary realms fashioned by the likes of the Intermedia Society, the Western Front, Image Bank, and the VIVO Media Arts Centre (formerly the Satellite Video Exchange Society), amongst an abundance of others, provides many examples of increasing attention to the marginalized, and ongoing turns in the contest of Vancouver. But even these coming-to-agency moments are not without complications explicitly connected to Vancouver's social geographies and cultural imaginaries.

The unsettled history of the place, with habitual reminders of being on the unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations, inflects the way that art is made, circulated, and interpreted in the city, and the way that artist communities form in a stance of defiance, honed by awareness of overlapping oppressions and histories of violence. Throw in the anxiety caused by the permeation of international capitalism and the displacing fact of overpriced real estate, add in fentanyl, the open street use of opioids, and the longue durée of colonialism, and suddenly the fact that this gem in the English crown on the farthest coast erupts into riots and running street battles seems altogether less random. Malcolm Lowry once wrote of Vancouver as a "place where chancres [venereal ulcers] blossom like the rose / For in each face is such a hard despair / That nothing like a grief finds entrance there" (159). The notion that art and aesthetics are ideologically inflected—still pooh-poohed in other centres—is presumed as a baseline for aesthetic production in the Vancouver context, where artists either play with the ideological implications/potentials or else wage open war against them. Thus, Hock E Aye VI Edgar Heap of Birds' *Native Hosts* (1991/2007) reversed the name "British Columbia" in his twelve-sign installation on the UBC campus and pointedly reminded his audience

of twelve First Nations "hosts" in British Columbia (Chilcotin, Cree, Haida, Gitksan, Kwagiulth, Lillooet, Lil'wat, Musqueam, Nuu'chah'nulth, St'at'yemc, Squamish, and Wet'suwet'en). Thus, Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun launched his campaign to "Rename BC" ("#renamebc") in 2016 in order to denaturalize the lingering colonial heritage that still conditions artmaking in the province, even including its name.

It is important to register the fact that this special issue is part of a broader "Concept of Vancouver" project that has, at present, two distinctive parts all attuned to an unfolding mapping of the Vancouver urban imaginary: it was a conference at Brock University in 2016 organized by Julia Polyck-O'Neill, Andrew McEwan, and Gregory Betts, with fifty scholarly and creative presentations, two art exhibitions, and plenary addresses by George Bowering, Richard Cavell, Dana Claxton, Christos Dikeakos, Deanna Fong, Larissa Lai, Roy Miki, Lisa Robertson, Michael Turner, and Rita Wong; and it is this issue of *Canadian Literature*. Furthermore, both of the guest editors are presently working on book-length studies of experimental arts and writing communities in the city, and are part of a far-flung network of scholars and writers doing similar work in Vancouver Studies. This special issue continues such work by reading the bifurcations and contradictions of the city as both stifling and generative.

Many of the authors in this collection pick up on this theme of contested space, uncertain and malleable borders, and generative tensions. Dani Spinosa, for instance, seeks a form of literary scholarship that attends to the problem of such competing forces. She troubles the spirit of taxonomy that informs so much of literary and cultural studies by documenting the transnational, transgenre drift of digital and electronic literature. Felicity Tayler uncovers the conflagration of localism, regionalism, and cosmopolitanism in the International Image Exchange Directory, which established dense, cross-border social networks through the mail. Mathieu Aubin seeks to unsettle the dominant, patriarchal narrative of one of the city's ur-texts, documenting subcurrents of queerness in the later issues of *Tish*. This issue does not touch all of the bases of contestation in Vancouver, inevitably leaving out much more than it includes. Instead of trying to take on all of the social and cultural complexity of the city, this issue gestures towards various aesthetic and socio-political scenes as reflections of a unique, transdisciplinary modality of artmaking.

The creative contributions in this issue, selected by Phinder Dulai in dialogue with the guest editors, sustain this transdisciplinary contestation,

and individualize the affect of bearing witness to the struggle of Vancouver, and the complexity of Vancouver's oxymoronic narratives. As Chelene Knight writes, "there's a thirst here too clenched." Projective images of the city "ripped down" echo across the poems, as in Joseph Dandurand's portrait of communal violence and addiction on the "insane streets of the pathetic / city," or Ajmer Rode's reflections on the difference between the spectral concept of the city and its harsher, grittier reality, documenting the disintegrating hopes of the "Silly girl" who still "Believes the city will keep its word." Dana Claxton's poem, an extended address to the spirit of the city, pairs a desire to maintain connection to the geography and Indigenous heritage of the place with a frustration at the inequalities and systemic oppressions that structure daily life in the city: "Vancouver. . . .who are we?" While bill bissett imagines the perfect freedom of an "astral realm . . . wher we reelee let go uv our // obsessing narrativs," Jeff Derksen cautions about the manufacturing of optimism and the compression of the possibility for autonomy. If the present is "[a] feeling that goes past its possible experience," as Derksen writes, then we must beware of art and cultural products that justify "not love" but "some form / of cruelty we have become accustomed to."

The consequences of this ongoing spirit of contest, this spirit of necessary caution, are manifold, entrenched by oscillating waves of leftist utopianism, centrist compromise, and rightist austerity. In her contribution to Stan Douglas' *Vancouver Anthology*, the late Nancy Shaw notes, "Interdisciplinary and collaborative practices were instituted as pedagogical *doxa*" in the new mid-century BC schools Simon Fraser University and the David Thompson University Centre (91). These are foundational, inviting, and open cultural modes, but Shaw explains that this doxa facilitated structural challenges to individual geniuses (making people perennially suspicious of careerism) and institutional participation (making people perennially suspicious of bureaucratic compromise). Shaw witnessed the morphing of artist-run cultures whose "utopian models of social integration were gradually replaced by alienated, hierarchical systems of organization" (91). Ingrid and Iain Baxter's N. E. Thing Company parodied such a professionalization of the arts in the city by incorporating, even taking out TV, newspaper, and radio ads to satirize the entrepreneurial side of the art world. For a moment in the city's history, artists sponsored junior hockey teams (Baxter 77); Baudrillard and Burroughs were equally amused. In this issue, Jamie Hilder writes of the transition of loose art collectives into closed and private networks as the city shifted away from intermedial and anarchic models into increased

specialization and bureaucratic/hierarchical modes. Still, while the rise of neoliberalism ushered a wave of conservatism into the arts community in Vancouver, Jason Wiens points out how pockets of resistance, like the Kootenay School of Writing, emerged in the brine. He highlights how the collective functioned as a kind of malleable archive, a kind of repertoire centred on the politics of the group (the commons, etc.) against the strategic isolation of the individual.

We thus arrive at the lush plurality of a city with both ocean and mountains, tankers and pipelines, with links to Asia and Europe (yet insistently North American), colony and driver of the nation's decolonial agenda. A city shaped by the expansion of neoliberal and imperial discourses met by generations of aesthetic communities increasingly attuned to the necessity (and seeming impossibility) of resistance. Christopher Gutierrez attends to the tensions of a space shaped by such viscerally felt contradictions. The presence of instability within idealized representations of Vancouver emerges from its violent, episodic counter-histories and its general affect as the site of contradictory tensions. If, in the mid-twentieth century, Northrop Frye led a significant sector of Canadian authors and scholars to pursue the taxonomical cleanliness of archetypes, national symbols, and regional essences, Vancouver art and writing during the same period followed a different path that was more attuned to the messier collage modality of Marshall McLuhan's theories of mediation. Indeed, Vancouver's cultural imaginary is remarkably attentive to medium, the material of production, and the conflict of bodies trained by capital to perform intersecting oppressions. These legacies persist as Vancouver artists operate within the anxiety of material speculation, the necessity of decolonization, and the concept of a city permeated by broader worlds of conflict.

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Chelene Knight

Vancouver 2018

when a city is ripped down
to its fossil resin,
and you once lived
in a "nice big house" behind a chapel on Jackson Street
you sit there now in silence
notice the paint peel in slow
motion there's a division of race, of gender, of class, of—
a city's silence
they call it art
they call it science
they call it some unsolvable math equation
meanwhile, children here are hungry
dirt under fingernails
empty lunch boxes
textbook pages missing
a teacher's eyes glazed over and glassy
found everyone's minds
dreaming of elsewhere
there's a thirst here too clenched
throats parched from city smoke hi-rise
climbs the walls
cement dust flies to fill nostrils
music dies out to a whisper
fluorescent lights buzz and hum
mountains mirror metal
a chapel on Jackson Street red
and white brick sprawled
out behind trees
oak every plank

white wooden fence stands guard
like infantry
guns aimed
at a house
you once lived behind
a chapel
on Jackson Street

Jamie Hilder

Vancouver as a Going Concern

Artists' Spaces, Public and Non

The history of artists' spaces in Vancouver since the 1960s is, in some ways, a history of bureaucratic forms. The artist collective Intermedia struggled with the imposition of a board of directors by the Canada Council as a condition of funding. Iain and Ingrid Baxter's N. E. Thing Co. embraced the model of the corporation while adhering to the structure of a patriarchal family. The Western Front and other artist-run centres pursued an owner/operator format as a stabilizing strategy in order to hold space. And independent spaces, through necessity, organized themselves around and through precarity. How these artists' spaces emerge, survive, dissolve, and re-emerge is imbricated with issues of affordability, national and provincial arts policy, and shifting expectations of what art can and should do. In his excellent history of the Vancouver-based Kootenay School of Writing (KSW), Jeff Derksen cautions that "a history of an artist-run space can unfortunately become a history of its governmental funding" (288). Such an emphasis on funding structures, particularly in the case of the KSW, he argues, can diminish the agency of artists and writers in their collective response to the material conditions created by shifts in cultural policy. But I want to argue that there is a valuable history of artists' spaces in Vancouver that can only be told through an analysis of the role that public funding has played in sustaining, constraining, and forming art practices and subjectivities over the past half-century.

Most histories of the material and conceptual infrastructure of contemporary art in Vancouver begin with Intermedia, and for good reason. Intermedia was formed as a loose collective comprised of visual

artists, dancers, poets, filmmakers, non-artists, and explorers who came together in the late 1960s to imagine how a society of artists might live. They organized happenings and performances, many of which were purposefully undocumented, and opened a workshop on Beatty Street that functioned as a meeting place, studio, and production centre. They also hosted a free high school and kindergarten organized by the Company of Young Canadians,[1] and, in partnership with the Vancouver Art Gallery, operated satellite galleries throughout the city that doubled as community centres and aimed to reach audiences not usually affiliated with art. Nancy Shaw points out that "the satellite galleries were intended to be numerous and located through the city in order to reach as broad a public as possible, but these plans turned out to be short-lived due to funding difficulties" ("Expanded" 88). Such "funding difficulties" are common to most artist-run spaces, but in Intermedia's case, one of their funding problems would turn out to be too much of it, in combination with its source: the relatively young Canada Council for the Arts, which in 1967 awarded Intermedia a forty-thousand-dollar-per-year operating grant without the collective having ever applied for it. With the grant came particular responsibilities, and the co-operative character of Intermedia strained under the pressure. They eventually hired a director to facilitate the day-to-day operations, a gesture that for some alleviated tension and for others tainted the group's character. Kate Craig, who would go on to co-found the Western Front, remembers that Intermedia submitted an ambitious grant application to the Local Initiatives Program, a federal government effort meant to alleviate winter unemployment by funding privately generated projects that contributed to "community betterment" (Huneault and Anderson 30). Their original request was for seventy-nine artists' salaries. They received twelve, which were distributed amongst various projects, including "Video Inn, Granville Grange, Image Bank, New Era Social Club and Intermedia Press. . . . [I]t was at that point that all those different groups went their own way" (Craig 261). The realities of administration that emerged contemporaneously with the aesthetics of administration were anathema to the spirit of Intermedia's enterprise, and they disbanded in 1972 (Wallace, "A Particular History" 27).

Questions of scale emerge from the failure of Intermedia's utopian experiment. As a group, they partnered with and navigated institutions and their organizational challenges. They coordinated projects with both the University of British Columbia and the Vancouver Art Gallery and managed to maintain a satisfactory level of autonomy. But the strictures of

funding from the Canada Council, a body designed in large part to foster the creative and socially transformative practices that Intermedia exemplified (and also to encourage Canadian artists to resist the lure of the American art market), were simply too contradictory to the spirit of the project for it to be sustainable. The Council's bureaucratic requirements of reporting and quantifying activities, and of articulating the value of experimentation, impeded the kind of open, creative, and imaginative mode of art production the funding body had been designed to encourage.

After Intermedia's dissolution, former members went on to initiate other artist groups and spaces, many of which recognized and capitulated to the requirements of government funding. Vancouver's Co-op Radio and Pacific Cinematheque are two such examples that still remain, and that have had a lasting impact on the cultural landscape of the city (Wallace, "Introduction" 2). Also in the wake of Intermedia came the emergence of publicly funded artist-run centres. The Western Front, which opened in 1973 at 303 East 8th Avenue at Scotia Street, was founded to pursue interests and projects similar to those of Intermedia. It emphasized cross-disciplinary, performative, explorational media practices, but it was artist-*owned* and operated, and it absorbed and architecturally performed the structures of ownership. The building was previously occupied by the Knights of Pythias, a kind of Freemason-like secret society, and was zoned for non-profit use only, a category that frustrated the previous owner and contributed to its affordability (Wallace, "Introduction" 1-2).[2] In a particularly meaningful shift from Intermedia's openness to the public, where people could come in and use equipment and facilities with very little oversight (and consequently could steal equipment with very little trouble), the Western Front disguised itself from the public. It installed a buzzer on its front door, so visitors needed to request entry to see an exhibition.[3] Keith Wallace points to this particular adjustment as evidence that Vancouver artist-run culture no longer felt the pressure to serve a general public because it served its communities, which were often small and diverse, but energized and committed ("A Particular History" 30).

Before connecting the emergence of artist-run centres in the 1970s to Vancouver's contemporary moment, I want to address another artist group that operated concurrently with Intermedia: the husband-and-wife team of Ingrid and Iain Baxter, who produced work under the banner and corporate structure of N. E. Thing Co. (NETCO). Like Intermedia, they had a strong interest in the relationship between technology and art, and in the potential

for art to intervene in and transform everyday life. Whereas Intermedia was a loose and revolving collective that buckled under the strain of formal organization, NETCO had a bureaucratic structure and space in place from the beginning: a marriage and a shared home in North Vancouver. Multidisciplinary and politically peripheral, if not disengaged, NETCO was originally developed to operate outside the conventional parameters of art. In a 2011 interview with Alexander Alberro, Ingrid makes explicit that "the whole point of forming a company was so that the individual artist would be subsumed by the larger entity" (42). While much of their practice involved ephemeral interventions into landscape, or work sent via new communication technologies such as the telex, some of their major exhibitions foregrounded their incorporated identity. In 1969, they turned the first floor of the National Gallery in Ottawa into their corporate headquarters, which included hiring "temporary workers to sit at the desks and push paper around for the duration of the show" (Alberro, "Iain" 31).[4] That same year, they joined the Vancouver Board of Trade and then displayed the documents from the process at the Sonnabend Gallery in New York.

The language NETCO used to articulate their project bordered on the parodic. Their position statement from 1971 reads:

> The role of an "ARTIST" in society today is constructed by a series of negative structures, i.e. financial, political and especially the connotations of the word *ARTIST* itself, which propels his [*sic*] position to the fringes of the sources of power and its servants, the media.
>
> An artist in this marketplace environment relies ultimately on the charity of those who, for whatever psych-socio reasons, wish to "support" the arts. It is essential to free the artist from these constraints, and allow the cultural knowledge he possesses to fuse with that of business, politics and education. Rejecting impotence and violence, it seems essential to develop a financial base, therefore the N. E. Thing Co. Ltd. is transitioning itself into a business organization operating within the current framework—to generate funds by legitimate, highly imaginative and profitable business activity, in areas like food, clothing, shelter, leisure and consultation, so as to support and accomplish the projects and concepts it wishes to conceive.
>
> The object is not personal profit, but to develop a structure and method whereby products, functions and power can change directly the value systems of society. (Shaw and Wood 43)

The posture NETCO assumes here is interesting, not only for its rejection of the term "artist" itself as being too negative, but of art in general for being either impotent or violent. We can recognize the influence of Marshall McLuhan's thinking in the term "marketplace environment," though here the Baxters

extend McLuhan further into an economic sphere than he might normally venture. In the combination of the adjectives "legitimate, highly imaginative and profitable" with the noun phrase "business activity," we can identify a shift away from an artistic vanguard to a corporate vanguard, one that is perhaps more meaningful to contemporary observers than it was to critics who read NETCO's press releases and very structure as a parody of business.[5]

Compare NETCO's position with how representatives from Intermedia, Victor Doray and Joe Kyle, described their group during a 1967 interview on CBC radio:

> It is our intention that Intermedia be a place where creative exploration could take place on an interactive basis between artists, between technologists and between seriously interested people. The only criteria that we have is that it is far out, creative and exploratory.
>
> I don't think it's very desirable to try and define Intermedia in too great detail at the moment because it's exploratory—we are, in a sense, discovering this thing into existence.
>
> We have tried in the setting up of this to create as unstructured an environment as possible. This is the essential difficulty involved in working within an existing institutional structure. ("Intermedia")

A contemporary reader will likely be familiar with the tone of these passages, for both positions—the unabashedly corporate and the unapologetically speculative—have been adopted to varying degrees and effects by the discourses of late capitalism. We hear these phrases and ambitions from corporate leaders as well as politicians but also from less established voices: students, small businesses, artists, and others involved in what have been designated as the "creative industries."

But when we situate these statements in the spaces from which they emerged—the familial live-work-play suburban home and the urban, collective, fluid studio workshop—we can begin to understand which forces converged to impede or support the operations of both Intermedia and NETCO. Margaret Thatcher's oft-quoted claim, in a 1987 interview with *Women's Own* magazine, that "there is no such thing as society. There are only individual men and women and there are families," provides an entrance into thinking about notions of collaboration, support structures, and stability (Keay). For if there is no such thing as society—a collectively responsible, fluid, connected group of people who share an understanding, however superficial, of the world they live in—then a project such as Intermedia's would have a tremendously difficult time sustaining itself. And if there are only individual men and women, and there are families, then

Ingrid and Iain Baxter—as individuals, as a family unit, and as a corporation that, under law, is also granted legal personhood—have structural advantages that should come into play when considering their position in the history of experimental art spaces in Vancouver. While Thatcher's statement is obviously false, the ideological structures that allowed her to first think and then speak it are very real, and they have real effects on the formation of subjectivities, art-related and otherwise.

Iain Baxter became the president of N. E. Thing Co. upon its founding in 1966. Ingrid began as secretary, and then became vice-president, and then briefly, in 1969, co-president. When they formally registered as a corporation, though, regulations required that there be only one president, and Iain became president again, putatively because his name came before Ingrid's alphabetically. Iain's account of their working relationship during that time is this: "Well, I was the art guy. Ingrid was a kind of consultant and sounding board for me, as is true in any relationship. I bounced ideas off many people every day. That's how I work. Ingrid never really made anything. I made all of the artworks and all of the aesthetic decisions" (Alberro, "Iain" 29). Ingrid remembers their working relationship differently:

> We collaborated on all of the works and events that were produced from about 1965 until we separated around 1978. . . . The main body of the artworks between 1965 to 1978 was jointly produced. Iain did not exhibit anything outside of what we produced together during that time. . . . We were both producing the concepts and the ideas for the work. Iain would manufacture the work, but the concepts and ideas were very much a collaboration. (Alberro, "Ingrid" 41-42)

Ingrid's specific emphasis on claiming authorship of the work in this interview from 2011 is likely a response to Iain's practice of exhibiting and claiming sole authorship, post-separation, of work produced during NETCO's tenure (Shaw, "Expanded" 96). That she would have to make a point of insisting on the value of her role brings into relief the social terrain of Iain and Ingrid's collaborative structure. When asked about how NETCO involved itself with the larger art community in the late 1960s/early 1970s, Ingrid responded:

> You'd have to ask the art community. To us it just felt natural. . . . Connecting to the community, I think we were so busy, doing things, we were just really, really busy and didn't get involved in the community all that much. Intermedia was really active and we were on the fringe. We went to meetings and did some stuff, but it was always just so . . . so many things to get done at home base. (Arnold)

Out of these two statements from Ingrid, I want to extract a couple of points. The first is that being part of a husband-and-wife team at that sexist moment prevented Ingrid from being taken seriously as a full participant

in the company by both the business community and the art community, including, unfortunately, her husband. Various observers have commented on this before, specifically the way in which Ingrid would often be referred to as Iain's "beautiful blonde wife" (Shaw, "Expanded" 95). My second point is spatial. It seems that the Baxters' position as a domestic unit reduces the utopian or subversive character of collaboration, which in other forms challenges assumptions about authorship, property, or participation. As husband and wife, the Baxters shared a family home, income, and, to some extent, child care, though Ingrid notes that she couldn't participate as fully in some projects, like NETCO's Eye Scream Restaurant (1977-1978), as she would have liked because they took place at night, and she had to care for the children (Arnold). As husband and wife, they worked from an economic structure that provided them more security than those individual men and women that Thatcher revered. As an entrepreneurial team that fused work with the domestic and operated largely outside of the artistic community, they were, paradoxically, an ideal manifestation of the neoliberal individual: the married couple as the highest form of the individual.

Around the same time as the Baxters were actively pursuing a fusion of art, business, and the family, Michel Foucault was attempting to think through the historical trajectory of the market economy's encroachment into everyday life. In *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*, he points to the work of Quebec economist Jean-Luc Migué as evidence of how economic discourse had become imbricated with that of the family. Migué advocated for a rethinking of the dynamics of the family as equivalent to that of a firm, where a marriage becomes a long-term contract that allows the spouses, as co-signatories, to "avoid the transaction costs and the risk of being deprived at any movement of the *inputs* of the spouse and, hence, of the common *output* of the household" (qtd. in Foucault 262). Just as we recognized the language of speculation and corporate trumpeting in the earlier mission statements from Intermedia and NETCO, we likely recognize Migué's language here, as it is the language of contemporary economic discourse, where everything from nations to institutions to friendships is couched in the language of efficiency, equilibrium, and investment. Economic rationality even finds its way into cultural sectors.[6]

The pervasiveness of economic or finance-based discourse has been taken up by various critics who are concerned about how that hegemony might suppress or limit other ways of imagining social and cultural forms. The French sociologists Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, in their 1999 book

The New Spirit of Capitalism, studied managerial texts published between the 1970s and the 1990s and found that the language of management had co-opted the language of protest from the 1960s. The demands of the activists affiliated with global anti-war, anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, and feminist movements for more politically responsive structures of power were taken up by capital and implemented globally to great effect. Boltanski and Chiapello argue that, as a result, "a new representation of the firm has emerged, featuring an organization that is very flexible; organized by projects; works in a network; features few hierarchical levels; where a logic of transversal flows has replaced a more hierarchical one, etc." (165). This re-branding of the firm in the face of protest has been tremendously successful: organized labour suffers from the reputation of inflexibility and capitalists are reframed as "job creators." A shift in the modes of production made possible by the technology NETCO welcomed and celebrated as connective actually increased separation, as workers who work remotely or global firms who have factories in multiple locations are unable to form collective identities in opposition to their employers.

The effects of these technological and cultural transformations of labour and consumption practices culminate in what Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval refer to as the "neo-subject," a subject who is no longer the autonomous liberal subject that formed during the Industrial Revolution and who believed themself free to sell their labour, but who maintained an inalienable self apart from their labour. This new subject, this "neo-subject," forged within the neoliberal technologies of the self that reward competition and discourage any non-productive activity, is a speculative subject, more financialized than the *homo economicus* that Foucault identified in the 1970s. The neo-subject has internalized the idea of human capital and competition, and is the one competing to work for free. It is also, on the other side of the desk, the subject creating the job posting that calls for a graduate degree and three years' related experience for a thirteen-dollar-an-hour limited-term contract. The neo-subject is a subject with a limited capacity to imagine and pursue a social relationship outside of the strictures of the dominant economic discourse.

The connection I want to make between the development of the neo-subject and artists' spaces in Vancouver is perhaps a tenuous one, but thinking through the relationships that particular spaces encourage or limit, and how those relationships might manifest in behaviours or proclivities (political or otherwise), allows us to address the material conditions of making, holding, or abandoning spaces in Vancouver. If, in the late 1960s, an institution like

the Vancouver Art Gallery could partner with Intermedia to support the development of satellite galleries that also functioned as community centres, how can we understand the recent push from Bob Rennie—a condo marketer and art collector from Vancouver—for the gallery to abandon its downtown building as well as its plans for a new, larger space a few blocks away, in favour of developing eight to ten smaller, satellite galleries throughout the city? A 2012 article from *The Globe and Mail* positions the wealthy real estate marketer against Kathleen Bartels, the director of the cash-strapped public institution who has been involved in an ongoing feud with Rennie for over fifteen years. Marsha Lederman presents Rennie's argument this way:

> For the city, multiple sites mean spreading the cultural wealth around the downtown core and to neighbourhoods beyond. And true to his background, Rennie also looks to a spreadsheet for some of the benefits: From a practical, fundraising perspective, multiple sites offer several opportunities for wealthy philanthropists to get their name on the outside of a building.
>
> "Once you've given away naming rights to the building, it does get difficult to raise large sums of money," says Rennie. "This way we have eight to 10 different naming rights." He offers a hypothetical example: the Vancouver Art Gallery's Michael Audain Museum of Contemporary First Nations Art. (Audain has a keen interest in first-nations [*sic*] art.)
>
> "This to me starts to lead where the world's going," says Rennie, acknowledging his is more of a vision than anything near a concrete plan at the moment. "I really think that this is starting to look at where we're going, as opposed to what's been done before." (Lederman)

To ask "what has changed?" between Intermedia's satellite galleries supported by the Vancouver Art Gallery and Rennie's proposal is to be confronted with the impossibility of accounting for—note the financial language—a wide terrain of social, political, and cultural forces. In some ways, nothing has changed. The approach to city-making is still largely determined by propertied classes. Vancouver now has a Trump Tower, the last building designed by Arthur Erickson's architecture firm, on West Georgia Street. Despite the suggestion that one of the satellite spaces be devoted to First Nations art, the honorific is awarded to Michael Audain, whose great-grandfather was Robert Dunsmuir, after whom a main thoroughfare in downtown Vancouver is named, and who made his fortune as a settler from mining coal on the unceded territory of the Coast Salish people. Audain's fortune was similarly made developing unceded territory via his company Polygon Homes. In October of 2017, the publicly funded North Vancouver museum once known as Presentation House Gallery opened its new space with a new name, The Polygon Gallery, in recognition of a donation from Audain.

The culture of public funding has also changed. In the 1983 catalogue for the inaugural exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery's current Hornby Street building, *Vancouver: Art and Artists, 1931-1983*, there is, significantly, an account of art in Vancouver in the 1960s and 1970s by David P. Silcox, who was the visual arts officer for the Canada Council for the Arts at the time. The text reads as an insider's account of the art world. Silcox speaks of visits with the Baxters and points out that the NETCO button that reads "Artoficial" was made for him. In an anecdote that is sure to deflate anyone who has recently applied for funding (a process that requires lengthy project descriptions, detailed budgets, and samples of work), Silcox claims that "it was with [Iain] Baxter that I set something of a record in those pre-bureaucratic days by receiving a request by phone on one afternoon and having the cheque in the hands of the artist in Vancouver (by mail yet) twenty-four hours later" (154). Similarly, Silcox was the one who, after a single meeting to discuss a multimedia centre to serve the technological needs of an experimental arts community, secured the forty-thousand-dollar grant that would fund Intermedia's headquarters, all before Intermedia had even gone through the process of becoming a legal entity (158).

While the recent bureaucratization of granting institutions has slowed the distribution of funds to artists, the role that federal, provincial, and civic arts councils play is still widely influential. In "Canadian Cultural Policy: A Problem of Metaphysics," Ken Lum makes the point that "there has not been a single Canadian artist of consequence in the last thirty years who has not benefitted significantly from Canadian government financial assistance in one manner or another—not a single one" (83). Lum wrote his article in 1999, and despite the problematic category of "artist of consequence," I would venture to extend his claim by nineteen years into our present moment. Lum's analysis is not a celebration of government support for the arts; he argues that the availability of financial support has adversely affected the level of critical and curatorial practices in Canada, a claim that he does not develop and with which I cannot agree. But he does well to shine a light on the ideological foundations of the Canada Council, which grew out of the anxiety of "Canada's ruling anglophone elite" that they would be unable to retain a unique national culture if Canadian artists could be seduced by the much more robust commercial art market in the US (76). The strategy of paying artists to stay, of supporting experimental practices that could resist the aesthetics of the market, and of financially supporting small, artist-initiated and artist-run exhibition spaces, resulted in a particular aesthetic,

but one that lacks the easy metric of sales. In a cultural environment that consistently reverts to market valuation as a rhetorical strategy, one that now consistently supersedes the rhetoric of the nation, an argument for supporting experimental practices without *accountability* becomes much more difficult to craft.

If, as Bob Rennie believes, the world is heading in a particular, financialized direction, then it seems as if public space is destined to be sacrificed, initially in name only, to private interests. A common impulse when encountering the overwhelmingly white, hetero, and cis male philanthropy class is to retreat into a nostalgia for the "public." This is what Rennie points to at the end of his statement, having likely come up against people who resist his "vision." But an analysis of the public artist-run centres and the independent spaces that operate alongside them troubles that comfortable distinction between the good state and the bad capitalist.

When the Western Front purchased its space and secured it through a buzzer entry and an architectural camouflage stemming from its residential location and lack of signage, it performed a synthesis of the utopian collectivism of Intermedia and the entrepreneurial, strategic capitalism of the Baxters. Some of the founders, and eventually other artists and friends, lived in the building, in apartments above the gallery, hall, dance space, and offices. Over the past forty-four years, there have been a fluid board of directors and succession of curators at the Western Front, but the space has remained the same and the funding has been steady from federal, provincial, and civic granting institutions. But it is primarily the technology of ownership that has allowed it to remain in place, and to continue its program of exploratory, non-commercial presentation and production of visual art, video, sound, performance, and dance work. A legal structure was created via a nest of contracts and leases, drawn up by Peter Fraser, a lawyer and one-time resident of the Front, that allowed the owners to become directors of the society. Memberships were sold, but without voting rights (Wallace, "Introduction" 6).[7]

Other artist-run centres have come and gone. I realize that any attempt at a history of artists' spaces in Vancouver cannot adequately cover every space and the relationships, personal and material, that they have to the city and its roiling arts community. But I want to jump forward from Intermedia, the Baxters, and the Western Front to address the conditions that artists' spaces experience currently. Over the past several years, Vancouver has oscillated between being ranked the second or third most unaffordable housing market in the world (Pawson). To have and hold a space in Vancouver in the past

fifteen years, a period when affordability has reached crisis levels, is to invite particular questions: Do you rent or own? When did you buy and for how much? How much money do you get from your family? How long can you stay here? These questions—though always there—were less deafening in the 1980s and 1990s, when a storefront in East Vancouver could be rented as a studio gallery for not much more than what a decent party would earn in alcohol sales.

In the 1980s and 1990s, artist-run centres seemed to move further toward their current identity as galleries, and away from collectives or support systems. Their networks reduced in scale, and they became an infrastructure for friendship rather than the larger and more abstract "arts community." Then in the 2000s, there appeared to be a shift towards a professionalization and internationalization of the spaces.[8] Directorships of various artist-run centres switched from artists to curators, and the spaces became, in some cases, mini-museums, pressured to present their exhibition practices in relation to an increasingly market-driven visual art scene and a particularly rationalizing, quantifying government funding structure. In return for operating funds, capital project funds, travel support, and special project money or even wages for employees, publicly funded artist-run centres are required to provide detailed, auditable financial reports, audience numbers to prove their value to the public, and justification of their exhibition practice to prove they are contributing to a contemporary art discourse. All of those articulations serve to develop a spatial subjectivity, and none of them are voluntary or artist-initiated. The work of the director/curator has become less curator and more director/bookkeeper/grant writer over the past twenty years, adding to the bureaucratization of artist-run centres.

Alongside the public artist-run centres is a shifting collection of independent spaces. Over the past few years, some of the most active of these spaces have been Model/Exercise Projects, Sunset Terrace, Avenue, Duplex, Plaza Projects in Richmond, and Spare Room. None of these spaces received any operating funds from government granting agencies, though the artists involved in their day-to-day operations might receive support from the British Columbia Arts Council or the Canada Council for other projects. These independent spaces are funded mostly by collective studio rent or parties, and consequently are allowed to articulate themselves differently, oftentimes with mumbles or shrugs: that is their advantage, and it is one to be envied and celebrated. The conditions that allow them to do this are often poverty and precarity, though, so I want to be careful not to valorize

them. Independent spaces have the option to close or stop exhibiting work (as Exercise/Model did, as Avenue did, as Sunset Terrace and Index did, as Plaza Projects did, though some of those closures were not the decision of the artists involved but their landlords). They have the option to present work that fails, and that can be accepted as failing. In this case, the flexibility accorded by failing is a luxury, as it does not come with the conservatism of a balanced ledger or the pressures of payroll.

When I began to think about how these independent spaces operate outside of a public funding model, I was concerned that 1) the anemic capacity for exhibition and dialogue had pushed artists into a more commercialized, market-driven understanding of art production, and that the artists most able to take advantage of those independent spaces would be those who come from money, the propertied classes, those relatively common artists with family wealth or support; and then 2) that the success of these spaces at showing and fostering contemporary art would serve to undercut a public funding apparatus that—within consecutive neoliberal provincial, federal, and civic governments—has been under threat alongside most other public expenditures. These concerns were likely rooted in my own position as an artist and critic who has exhibited in, and written primarily for, publicly funded galleries, and as an academic whose milieu is firmly rooted in the public university system. I am also currently the president of the Board of Directors of an artist-run centre, where I have been on the board since 2013 and where I exhibited twice, in 2005 and 2007. I have a deep personal interest in public funding for the arts and a reciprocal suspicion of the intervention of private capital and the vicissitudes of patrons or spectral market forces.

Having witnessed the gutting of public arts funding models in different spaces—particularly Ronald Reagan's and George H. W. Bush's attacks on the National Endowment for the Arts in the US in the 1980s, Thatcher's shift away from public arts funding to corporate sponsorship around the same time in Britain, and, more recently, Mark Rutte's government's slashing of the Netherlands' culture budget by twenty-five percent—I was prepared to find in the independent artists' spaces the kinds of neo-subjects who do not recoil at the term "entrepreneur," and who do not hear the boots of strike-breakers in the undertones of "flexibility" or "innovation." I did find them there, and I found children of privilege there, but not in any greater number or intensity than I found them in the artist-run centres, or in the universities. So perhaps that nostalgia for a lost or diminishing public is, like most nostalgias,

a fantasy. It is certainly true that the publicly funded artist-run centre is consistently under threat that its funding will be cut if its programming does not adhere to specific, bureaucratically determined codes of exhibition or community engagement. And the language that the institutions are required to implement in order to communicate with granting agencies has its effects. It leaks into mandates and press releases, into mission statements and directors' reports. Regardless of how genuine the grant applications and reports might be, they create a textual corpus and discursive habits that influence a spatial subjectivity that is focused on holding space and surviving in a permanent crisis.

In an interview with the British art critic Jonathan Harris, the London gallerist Sadie Coles points out that it was the presence of advertising magnate and art collector Charles Saatchi's private gallery that opened British artists' eyes to what was possible when shifting out of a national arts culture:

> [Sadie Coles]: I think that seeing that work, whether those students were reacting against it or reacting positively towards it, was just enormously influential. It led to a kind of Thatcherite, do-it-yourself, opening up of art here.
> [Jonathan Harris]: Entrepreneurial?
> SC: Yes, entrepreneurial.
> JH: The positive side of entrepreneurialism?
> SC: Basically everybody wanted to get into it. But it wasn't the established Cork Street galleries they wanted to get into, it was New York—international, you know, the world. And the way to do it was to actually "do it yourself," rent a store-front as Sarah [Lucas] and Tracy [Emin] did, and just do your own shows. (Harris 97)

In a way, Coles is correct, that in comparison to a globalized art market with vast networks of support for large projects and spectacular installations, exhibitions of smaller-scale work by artists who subsist on grants, intermittent sales, and supplementary employment will be less attractive to students and to collectors. But in other ways, Coles is speaking for her class (economic and artistic). The most evocative part of the exchange between Coles and Harris is the moment that Harris' question about the entrepreneurialism Coles seems to be celebrating goes past Coles without her responding. When he tries to clarify that what Coles is referring to is "the positive side of entrepreneurialism," by which I assume he means the creative, imaginative, and enthusiastic pursuit of new ideas and forms and not the dismantling of structures of solidarity and support through the displacement of social care and responsibility from the state onto the individual, Coles ignores the distinction, and repeats the do-it-yourself, bootstraps narrative that allows successful people to feel entitled to their

success and to view less successful people as responsible for their own miseries. I tend to err on the other side, where I worry less about the quality of art than the quality of the housing or health of the artist. Like Jen Harvie, who sees a shadow of increasingly exploitative conditions of labour in her analysis of theatre performances that require volunteer casts (46), I worry more about who gets to make art if what is required to think through a material practice is the ability to afford rent and studio space in Vancouver. I have the same concerns for the wider discourse of entrepreneurialism, where the figures best positioned to reap the rewards of risk are those who are least at risk already, those who have access to one of those mythical garages and time and networks already in place. Who has a garage in Vancouver? What kind of art will they make?

In an age of distrust motivated by metrics of efficiency and transparency, and the diminution of other forms of trust—familial, historical, social—it is difficult to make arguments for funding experimental investigations or projects that might not make it to market. This is what a condition of crisis—somehow developed and fostered amidst a moment of extreme wealth—can produce in a cultural landscape. But the argument needs to be made anew, and to be expanded into other spaces. A worthwhile conversation to encourage is one that focuses on how to create and hold spaces that reject those conditions of crisis, while fostering structures of care and experimentation, not simply for national culture but for the open investigation of knowledge. What kinds of technologies of ownership or occupation of land or space can be developed in response to current modes? What kind of art, and beyond art, what kinds of thoughts and feelings could emerge from those spaces? What kinds of subjects might they develop, outside of the language of finance economics? What could happen if Vancouver ceased to be a going concern, and became a slowing concern? If it became a different kind of concern altogether?

NOTES

1 Thanks to the anonymous reader who, as a student and member of the Company of Young Canadians, corrected my earlier version of this paper that suggested the school had been hosted and organized by Intermedia.

2 The founding eight shareholders in the property are: Martin Bartlett, Mo Van Nostrand, Kate Craig, Henry Greenhow, Glenn Lewis, Eric Metcalfe, Michael Morris, and Vincent Trasov.

3 In 2017, the Western Front renovated the ground floor of the building to make it possible for visitors to enter without having to buzz.

4 "They annexed the first floor of the gallery for Company headquarters, displayed and demonstrated their company wares, and offered their services as visual consultants. The set-up was so convincing that one passer-by stopped to ask the rental cost of such a prime location. There to open the NGC's first environment was Ron Basford, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, who praised the company for its innovative and industrious artistry" (Shaw, "Siting").

5 Though many critics and curators approach NETCO's practice as critical of corporate structures, there are others who are less convinced. Lucy Lippard, who was familiar with NETCO via their inclusion in the show she curated at the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1970, *955,000*, later wrote: "The corporate aspect [of NETCO] always gave me pause because it was ultimately not a critical stance. Humorous, yes. Ironic and corrective, no" (58).

6 As an example, the response to a ninety percent cut in arts funding in British Columbia in the lead-up to the Vancouver Winter Olympics in 2010 was a coordinated cry of "one dollar and thirty-eight cents": a figure that represented the amount of return in revenue for every dollar invested in culture (widely defined) in BC (Campbell).

7 A considerably longer and more focused study would be required to adequately investigate the histories of particular artist-run centres, and to emphasize their relationships to gentrification and ownership. 221A, which has recently rebranded to Polyanna Library, has survived by absorbing a landlord model in Chinatown and East Vancouver, using the income from artist studio spaces and storefront gallery space (including Access Gallery at 222 East Georgia) that they hold long-term leases on to fund their robust programming model. Similarly, both Artspeak Gallery and the Grunt Gallery own their spaces, thanks to the foresight of their boards stretching back to the 1990s, when participating in Vancouver's real estate market was possible for non-profit organizations, who could request help from the city or provincial and federal funding bodies. As a result, both galleries have benefited from a spatial stability that makes them much more attractive to funders, and they regularly rank first and second amongst artist-run centres in the amount of annual support they receive.

8 See Reid Shier, "Do Artists Need Artist-Run Centres?" in *Vancouver Art and Economies*.

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Dana Claxton

My beloved Vancouver

In all your splendor
lender, land claims defenda!
This place this place
With so much grace
Shifting like the tides
Rolla mender
Pauline Pauline
Wrote of you
Borrowed her stories
From ancient ones
Spirit of land
Spirit of mountain
This generous place
As they come
From four corners, four directions
And then some

So many land
…..here
Wild West full of promise
Full of drugs and beauty
Downtown Eastside pain
DTES triumphants!
Imperial lions take your scones and die UMP them!

Imperial loins scarred land
But the sisters the sisters will always stand
And as youz lands ooooonx theeez
AIN jauntz LANDZ
Remember gringo

What windz doth sayz
Rolls down from the top
Thruz cedarz and witz river
Inside water
Clear as day, clear as my mind
And as I say
As cougar walked by
We did done stare
In awe, in fear, in REV er ranze
So close to downtown bearz live
Bear ended up downtown on the back of a garage truck
A blessing for all to see
10 mins from downtown 300 year old cedars be
Vancouver….who are we?
Imports and exports travellin' through
I saw a shiny Telsa then 22
Vancouver Vancouver do you want more here
How long can you breathe with all of us near
As concrete swells up to sky
Beaches overflow urban eagles cry
Can you handle us all Vancouver my dear
Layers of layers of immigrants
Left coast, oil coast, Salish Sea
Water Protectors there for thee
On the edge of the rain
Forest so green
As I glean
Manna from your bounty

I saw a man crawl up the street
I saw a woman creep on sleep
I saw a child put a needle in their arm
I saw a person pop up from a dumpster…harm

I saw a shiny Telsa ouuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu

Wild West cowboys and loggers too
Tried to shoot down NDN's to minuscule
BIG LOGGA BIG FISHA
Took too much
GOSH this place is GEN RUS
A pack of coyotes, thieves and the grandmothers too
Spirit of mountains stays with me
Even when on the Great Plains and I cant see
Mountain mountain now in my bones
As you tower over this place called Vancouver
Plz know there is no OTHA….like you

I saw a shiny Telsa and liked it.

Dana Claxton
May 5, 2018
On the north shore mountains.

Mathieu J. P. Aubin

Reintroducing *Tish*'s Shitty Issues

Social Deviations, Radical Feminisms, and Queer Failures in *Tish 20–E*

Between 1961 and 1969, editors of Vancouver's poetry newsletter *Tish* published forty-five issues that included poems, editorials, reviews, prose, and readers' letters. In 1961, the first editorial board, composed of a group of working-class and lower-middle-class men studying at UBC and writing on Canada's West Coast (Butling and Rudy 50; Niechoda and Hunter 92-93), developed a poetics that began with and responded to its members' peripheral position in North America (*Tish 3* 11). As it is well documented, the board's "theoretically infused confrontation with the contemporary Canadian locus" (Betts, *Avant-Garde* 67) during *Tish*'s first nineteen issues (1961-1963) continues to give the newsletter an important place in the legacy of Vancouver's and Canada's avant-garde history (67-68). However, Pauline Butling troubles the legacy of these issues by arguing that, in spite of claiming to be marginalized, *Tish*'s male editors held a dominant social position in the editorial collective during its first phase (55-56). This article builds on Butling's work by considering how the newsletter's later editorial boards produced more socially equitable texts that reflected non-heteronormative concerns. During the second phase (*Tish 20* to *Tish 24*), the editors, including Daphne Buckle (now Marlatt) and Gladys (now Maria) Hindmarch, produced a more polyvocal space, acknowledged women's contributions, and deployed radical aesthetic strategies (e.g., collage). In the third phase (*Tish 25* to *Tish 40*), when the newsletter continued to be co-edited in part by Hindmarch, the textual space incorporated a more overtly feminist perspective by publishing content that critiqued patriarchal social values. During the fourth phase (*Tish 41* to *Tish E*), the editorial board, which

included gay poet Stan Persky, published queer content (i.e., poetry by gay men and a queer poetics that explored gay sexuality). While the first editorial collective addressed its marginalized position as a group of working-class and lower-middle-class men writing in Vancouver, later editorial collectives transformed *Tish*'s collective and text, published works that represented non-heteronormative perspectives, and challenged the oppression of women and queer people. Although in some ways they reproduced the initial heteromasculinity of the first nineteen issues, later editorial boards ultimately contested the initial phase's androcentricism by deviating from its social relations and aesthetic values.

Scholarship on *Tish* tends to overlook the contributions of heterosexual and lesbian women as well as gay men.[1] As Marlatt indicates in an interview with Brenda Carr, women are "omitted" (102) from histories of *Tish* that focus on the first editorial phase. The recent publications of Frank Davey's *When Tish Happens* (2011) and first-phase editor Fred Wah's *Permissions: TISH Poetics 1963 Thereafter*—(2014), which align with the fiftieth anniversaries of *Tish*'s first publication and the 1963 Vancouver Poetry Conference, respectively, commemorate the first board's literary accomplishments. However, they reproduce narratives that focus on these male editors' experiences and perspectives. Hindmarch, Butling, Buckle, Ginny Smith, and Carol Johnson were "involved in *Tish* and the Writer's Workshop" (Carr 102) from the beginning, but women's labour became more visible during the second editorial phase when Buckle and Hindmarch became members of the editorial board. Marlatt states,

> in the second phase of *Tish, which nobody remembers*, when a group of us who were younger took over the magazine after others had left, there was more of a cross-over with the *Blew Ointment* group and we were publishing Maxine [Gadd]'s poetry and Judy [Copithorne]'s. So I didn't feel, at the time, like I was the only one, though I did feel a certain resistance to the dominance of the men. It was the men who really defined the terms of the prevailing aesthetic at the writing workshops, which was really the collective activity behind *Tish*. (Carr 102, emphasis mine)

As Marlatt notes, men continued to control the newsletter, and did so during the third and fourth editorial phases. Yet, third-phase editors produced newsletters that included feminist poems and prose pieces by writers such as Buckle, Copithorne, Gadd, and Hindmarch,[2] and fourth-phase editors published issues that contained queer content, including works by bill bissett, Robin Blaser, Persky, Jack Spicer, and George Stanley.[3] A literary history of *Tish* that valorizes the contributions of some heterosexual men overlooks

work completed by heterosexual and lesbian women as well as gay men, and continues a tradition of a limited and heteronormative perspective on the newsletter.

Similarly, there is limited scholarship on *Tish* that explicitly examines the last twenty-six issues. The studies that do so mark them as a failure and inadequately address their content that represents non-heteronormative concerns. In *The Little Magazine in Canada 1925-1980*, Ken Norris argues that "the important work done by *Tish* is contained in the first nineteen numbers, when a new poetics and a new orientation were first being worked out" (122). Similarly, Keith Richardson's *Poetry and the Colonized Mind: Tish* emphasizes that later issues show a "lack of innovation" (51) and "lac[k] the argumentative energy of the first nineteen" issues (55). Conversely, derek beaulieu's *TISH: Another "Sense of Things"* offers a more generous reading. beaulieu states: "*TISH* 20 through E [45] did lack the 'argumentative energy' of the original issues, but it was perhaps a creative space that no longer needed to be a literary proving ground" (6). He adds: "As *TISH* re-emerged under a new editorial collective [after issue 19], its role as a *site* for new writing and community shifted to one that both created and reflected a new poetic and political engagement with community" (17, emphasis original). beaulieu's study establishes the necessary groundwork for me to further complicate the notion of "lack" attached to *Tish*'s later issues, especially as later editorial boards shifted their poetic concerns to reflect a new community engagement. However, beaulieu does not explicitly mention that this engagement includes non-heteronormative concerns. *Tish* scholarship ignores later editors' and poets' concerns by marking their issues as failures for not fulfilling the newsletter's founding aesthetics.

In this article, I work against the grain of scholarship that ignores *Tish*'s later issues. Specifically, I offer a socio-cultural analysis of the newsletter's "failed" publications as a means of analyzing the correlation between shifts in *Tish*'s social (i.e., the collective's extratextual social relations) and textual spaces on the page. My analysis is informed by queer theories that examine social spaces and art, including Sara Ahmed's concept of "failed orientation[s]" (92) as well as Jack Halberstam's concept of a "queer art of failure" (88). While Ahmed's and Halberstam's works both engage with the notion of failure, the former focuses on society and the latter focuses on art. Ahmed argues that, in a heteronormative society, "[s]pace acquires 'direction' through how bodies inhabit it" (12), and women and non-heterosexual people are marked as "lost" (7). However, when these marginalized people

shift social structures, they generate "failed orientation[s]" that lead to new ways of occupying a social space (19). Similarly, Halberstam argues that a "queer art of failure" does not reproduce aesthetic conventions, but it "quietly loses . . . and imagines other goals for life, for love, for art, and for being," and in doing so "recognizes that alternatives are embedded already in . . . dominant" practices (88). In short, the theories of Ahmed and Halberstam posit that failure in society and art, respectively, may foster new forms of engagement that eschew heteronormative conventions. To be clear, queer theory offers a theorization of failure that provides a useful framework that I deploy to better understand how the purportedly failed orientations of *Tish*'s editorial board in the last twenty-six issues challenge the heteronormative standards of the first nineteen issues. By joining Ahmed's and Halberstam's theories, I claim that *Tish*'s inclusion of non-heteronormative perspectives in later phases queers the newsletter: they mark a failure to reproduce the patriarchal heteronormativity of the first editorial phase.

In the newsletter's initial phase, managed by Frank Davey and co-edited by George Bowering, David Dawson, Jamie Reid, and Fred Wah, the collective sought to begin a literary movement to address their marginalized position contra established socio-cultural conditions, yet excluded people who were closer to the periphery of power. In the second phase, overseen by Dawson and co-edited by Buckle, Hindmarch, McLeod, Peter Auxier, and David Cull, the magazine's board produced a more polyvocal textual space, acknowledged women's contributions, and published a feminist aesthetics. However, it did not entirely challenge the first collective's masculinist ideology and social relations. In the third phase, overseen by McLeod, and whose co-editors included Auxier, Dawson, and Hindmarch, the magazine's board failed to fulfill the first board's publishing expectations. It published the newsletter intermittently and it produced works that embodied a feminist queer art of failure. Finally, in the fourth phase, led by Persky and co-edited by McLeod, Brad Robinson, Colin Stewart, and Karen Tallman, the magazine's collective focused on men's writing, but published texts by numerous gay poets that formed a queer art of failure. Ultimately, I show that *Tish*'s "failures" mark a departure from the first phase's androcentrism.

During *Tish*'s first phase, the editors embraced their peripheral social and geographical position and conveyed their alternate aesthetics on the page. Like many little magazines at the time across Canada, *Tish* sought to demarcate itself by presenting a unique aesthetic perspective in relation to its own location in Vancouver (Norris 107-108). Specifically, *Tish*'s first board

marked its new poetics and perceived abject social position by calling their publication a "fine kettle of fecis [*sic*]" (*Tish 1* 12), and discussing their peripheral social and literary concerns in relation to what they felt was "GOING ON IN VANCOUVER" (*Tish 5* 1). Gregory Betts indicates that the editors created what he calls a "geopoetics" that "demanded that they respond to their locality and to question in verse the relationship between place and language" as they were "shaped by the contingencies of a particular place at a particular historical moment—Vancouver, 1961" ("Geopoetics" 43). This "geopoetics" started from a self-identified socio-cultural position at the margin and enabled the editorial board to galvanize a textual movement that did not require its members to continue lines of publication begun by dominant Canadian centres of cultural production (i.e., Montreal and Toronto). *Tish* was "designed primarily as a poetry newsletter [with] the intention of keeping poets & other interested people informed on what [was] happening in Vancouver—its writing, its tastes" (*Tish 4* 13). The newsletter worked against the grain of contemporary cultural production in Canada because it failed to promote mainstream Canada's aesthetic values and successfully promoted its editorial board's new version of Vancouver's writing. Thus, by promoting what they understood to be an abject and local aesthetic, *Tish*'s collective engendered alternate socio-cultural conditions that enabled its constituents to advance a new literary project from a peripheral position in Vancouver.

While the first nineteen issues reflected the first board's marginalized identity, their texts reaffirmed heteronormative values. As Lara Halina Tomaszewska demonstrates in her work on masculinity and *Tish*, "[m]aleness and masculinity are preconditions for spiritual and personal freedom" (72). That is, to speak from one's marginalized position entails performing masculinity. To complicate Tomaszewska's point, it is necessary to acknowledge that the page was reserved for men to develop their poetics, and it failed to be more inclusive for women. Although "Buckle . . . and Hindmarch participated in discussions around the magazine and its submissions" (beaulieu, "*TISH* Magazine 1961-1969" 29-30), eighty-four percent of the newsletter's contributors in the first nineteen issues were men, and female contributors were invisible until *Tish 12*. As Marlatt states retrospectively, "I felt fairly ambivalent when Frank [Davey] was talking about marginalization: I felt even more marginalized," and "I remember submitting to *Tish*, and being told that I was writing out of my imagination too much" (Niechoda and Hunter 96).[4] This further marginalization resulted from symbolic violence inflicted upon Buckle by a masculinist

editorial board. As Pierre Bourdieu argues, "symbolic domination" (37) is not immediately recognizable to a marginalized person, but is instituted and reinforced through normalized bodily performances that empower men (37). This symbolic violence is visible in a letter by Davey that rejects Buckle's poem "Uh huh, Mama." In the letter, Davey argues that Buckle's poetics are at odds with the newsletter's aesthetic and states: "I believe in writing only about experience, and, of course, about those thoughts which most dominate my mind" ("Letter to Daphne Buckle"). Although Davey's claim suggests that the newsletter's poetry fits the collective's concept of "experience," Buckle's response to his rejection letter critiques his failure to recognize other forms of imagination and how they connect to experience. She states,

> [your] criticism of 'Uh huh, Mama' may be well-founded, in spite of the fact that I was not even attempting to write this as projective verse. Your criticism of its subject matter, however, is self contradictory . . . The very act of imagining a person or condition is in itself an experience, neither is its product completely removed from reality since all things imagined can not exist unless they be connected to some sensation or perception originally experienced. ("Letter to Frank Davey")

Since masculinity is a "preconditio[n] for spiritual and personal freedom" (Tomaszewska 72) during *Tish*'s first phase, and women's contributions are predominantly left off the page, Buckle's letter is arguably a response to the newsletter's masculinist aesthetic that leads to the exclusion of women. Specifically, the letter is a critique of Davey's limited aesthetic lens that disqualifies Buckle's work because it does not adhere to *his* understanding of "experience." An unsent early version of the letter also crosses out Buckle's phrase "[h]ere it is, a defence and a denunciation" ("Letter to Frank Davey"). This crossing out is a form of self-censorship that shows the symbolic effects of masculine power within *Tish*'s collective. Buckle's struggle to publish her work in a textual space that claimed to be for Vancouver's marginalized poets, but was dominated by men, is an example of how the first phase's social and textual spaces failed to incorporate more marginalized voices.

Tish's second editorial phase, however, marked a continuation of and deviation from the first editorial board's social relations. Although only Dawson continued his role as editor, the collective sought to maintain the momentum of the first nineteen issues. Yet, it redressed the exclusion of women's contributions. To analyze how the second phase challenged the first board's patriarchal values, it is fruitful to consider Ahmed's analysis of patrilineal movements. She argues, "[t]o commit may . . . be a way of describing how it is that we become directed toward specific goals, aims,

and aspirations through what we 'do' with our bodies" (17). However, loss in a social space can generate new directions (19). That is, to commit to a specific movement entails following and repeating the same social relations, yet a loss offers the opportunity to reimagine a social space's structure. As it transitioned to a new editorial board, *Tish* sought to continue the earlier newsletter's momentum, while it adjusted to a new board. Dawson's editorial in *Tish 20* states, "TISH has come to an actual and physical change . . . yet TISH will continue" (5). The new editorial board's members "have worked closely with TISH editors, most of them have published in TISH—all of them have a strong sense of TISH, of what it means & of what it can do" (5). This statement suggests that *Tish 20*'s editorial board was committed to participating in *Tish*'s androcentric telos because the collective's members were carefully chosen based on their previous training and ability to reproduce *Tish*'s aesthetic. However, the departure of editorial board members correlated with a shift in how the newsletter gave representation to the collective within its textual space. As of *Tish 20,* the header listing editors' names changes how it symbolically represents the collective's power structures. In the first nineteen issues' header, the title "editor" (*Tish 1* 1) or "managing editor" (*Tish 13* 1) (i.e., "Frank Davey") was placed above contributing editors' names, which are not listed alphabetically. The placement of all names on the masthead forms a visual hierarchy between the editors. Conversely, the second phase's header includes Buckle's and Hindmarch's names and all editors' names are listed alphabetically (*Tish 20* 1; *Tish 21* 1; *Tish 22* 1; *Tish 23* 1).[5] While the first phase's header marks a symbolic hierarchy of the collective that erases the contributions of women, the second phase's text redresses their invisibility and acknowledges their contributions, suggesting what Dawson described as "an actual and physical change" on the page. Thus, this textual shift indicates a change in the collective's power structures.

The second phase's editors disrupted the boundaries of the text and created space for previously under-represented voices. *Tish 21* deviates from the first phase's format by "more or less 'cut[ing]-up,' in some mad order" (*Tish 21* 1) submitted material (i.e., poems and journal entries) in response to the Vancouver Poetry Conference. Collage, as Halberstam argues, can be a feminist and queer aesthetic practice that negates prescriptive aesthetic boundaries because it "references the spaces in between and refuses to respect the boundaries that usually delineate . . . the copy from the original" (136). That is, collage disrupts rigid conventions that privilege

heteronormative and aesthetic boundaries by exposing and undermining them and reimagining the original material into a remixed feminist copy (136).[6] *Tish 21* is a disruptive text that joins multiple voices and perspectives, including those of women. For instance, in Buckle's poem "The Going Out," the speaker reflects upon the Conference and presents her impressions. The speaker states, "me me me at all reflections in / convolutions of my mind turn upon itself / the mindhand folded prey in-shell" (2). Buckle's poem emphasizes a woman's presence at the event that reflects the larger "convolutions" of the text, a point accentuated by a note following the poem from a journal entry that states, "Poem is presence, not accountable discharge" (2). The issue creates radical junctions between notes from the poetry conference and contributions by the editorial board. In this case, the note emphasizes the presence of Buckle in *Tish*. Although *Tish*'s first nineteen issues highlight the experiences of its male editors, the poem's repetition of the word "me" stresses the importance of the female lyrical voice that places the woman at the event, shows her experience actively reflecting about the event, and voices her thoughts to the reader. In addition, the words "convolutions" and "folded" represent the shape of the poem, which disrupts a linear format, because the lines present convoluted images that fold onto each other. More broadly, this poem represents the larger aesthetic practice of the issue because of its multiple junctions between submitted cut-up materials. Although women had previously been inequitably represented in *Tish*, this issue's feminist collage made the labour of women visible and disrupted the first phase's power structures.

In spite of the issues' disruption of androcentric structures, the second phase's newsletters were entrenched in the first editorial board's social relations and masculinist ideologies. In her analysis of continuity in a patriarchal society, albeit in a different context, Ahmed argues, "the line begins with the father and is followed by those who 'can' take his place" (22). That is, in a heteronormative society, males are privileged and are expected to continue the lines begun by other men. Similarly in *Tish*, Dawson continues the lines begun by editors in the first phase, including himself. As he states in *Tish 20*, "almost as a point of continuity, I am taking over as editor. the other past editors will, of course, be sending poems from wherever they may be. so the change is more a blending in of new poets, rather than an exclusion of anyone" (5). In spite of redressing the exclusion of previously marginalized people, *Tish*'s collective continued the first board's legacy by publishing poems written by Bowering, Davey, and Wah

throughout its five issues. Also, the newsletter published works objectifying women, including poems by previous male contributors.[7] For example, in Auxier's poem "Robson Street 2 a.m.," the speaker objectifies a woman he sees walking on Vancouver's Robson Street. In his description of a "Blonde-haired girl either too young or barely / old enough," the speaker sexualizes "her bum" and "her thighs" (14). This description causes symbolic violence against the object of the speaker's gaze because it reproduces patriarchal representations of the female body that make it visible as a sexual object. Referring to *Tish*'s first-phase poems, Lance La Rocque argues that the male poet "[t]ransform[s] women into commodity, tool, substance, sight," which enables him "to condense the larger other . . . and imagin[e] it as something that is at his disposal, that he can buy, grasp, mould, and gaze at" (165). Like the first-phase poems that La Rocque critiques, "Robson Street 2 a.m." contains a masculinist ideology that strips agency from women and reduces them to a sexual commodity. Although the board redressed the exclusion of some women, these efforts were at odds with the publication of masculinist poems that further served to oppress them. Thus, second-phase issues challenged the first phase's androcentrism, but they paradoxically reinscribed these values by continuing a patriarchal legacy.

The intermittent publication of *Tish* during its third phase disrupted the newsletter's identity as a monthly newsletter and marked a failure to acquiesce to the publishing standards established by the first editorial board. Although the first board established *Tish* as a monthly newsletter, second- and third-phase editors failed to maintain this production schedule. *Tish 22* appeared three months after *Tish 21,* while *Tish 24* was published four months after *Tish 23*. During the third phase, *Tish 31* and *Tish 38* were published five months apart from *Tish 30* and *Tish 37*, respectively. Because the second phase was short, the third phase's twenty-six issues marked a disruption to the newsletter's identity as a consistent publication. This failure is the focus of a letter by Bowering in *Tish 27* critical of such inconsistency. Bowering states: "[l]et me first say Tish shd be coming out more often, once a month, unless it does it loses NEWSletter basis, becomes groupy, magazine" ("Dear Tishers" 2). Bowering's letter suggests his investment in *Tish*'s legacy, his frustration that the newsletter fails to observe his standards as a member of the first editorial board, and his desire to correct it. In her discussion of the reproduction of heterosexual lines in a heteronormative society, Ahmed insists that the following of pre-established lines facilitates continuity (17), yet "straightening" (23) tools can be deployed to correct

failed orientations (72). Bowering's letter functions as a "straightening device" (23) and is intended to reorient the newsletter's collective away from its failed orientation. However, Bowering's effort ultimately failed to change anything and he distanced himself from this later phase because it did not appease his concerns. As an interview two decades later shows, Bowering "didnt [*sic*] like the idea of the magazine's continuing with a new set of editors after its run, [but] wouldn't have minded seeing them do a magazine with a slightly different direction" (Bowering, "Interview" 16). That is, Bowering felt that later editorial collectives should have started another magazine apart from the *Tish* project. This critique suggests that, according to Bowering, the creative efforts of later editorial collectives did not accurately continue the project. Thus, the third phase did not acquiesce to at least one member of the first editorial board's publication standards. It could even be marked as a failed orientation for the newsletter.

During the third phase, the newsletter increased its publication of feminist content by women that challenged the newsletter's original masculinist aesthetics.[8] Gadd's poetry, for instance, seems not to have met Bowering's standards, as he indicates in a letter published in *Tish 27*: "she seems to be thinking abt the things she says now, tho some of them are awry thots still" ("Dear Tishers" 2). Because Bowering calls Gadd's poetry "awry," it is worth further exploring her poetry's "misdirection." As Gadd's letter following her poetry in *Tish 26* indicates, "I insist on pain in art, I insist on it. Because pain . . . leads us, if it is taken fully, to ex stasis, ecstasy, standing outside of oneself, of everything" ("Dear Peter" 5). Her statement connects to what Halberstam calls radically passive feminism. This type of feminist "refuses to cohere, refuses to fortify herself against the knowledge of death and dying, and seeks instead to be out of time altogether, a body suspended in time, space, and desire" (125-26). In Gadd's "2nd Well Poem," the speaker, like a radically passive feminist, negates her creative process. In the first half of the poem, the speaker describes how she hauls "buckets of stars" (2) to the surface. Yet, as she states, because a woman warned her that she may fall into it and never return, she "had a pump / put over the damn thing" (2). The poem is an allegory for the negation of the female speaker's creative experience. The speaker hauling buckets of stars represents an act of descending into a space of imagination to bring images back to the surface. However, out of fear that she may fall into a well of imagination, she refuses to continue the act and negates her agency by replacing her movement with a tool to reproduce her process. That is, the speaker refuses

to continue returning images of stars to the surface, and stops her creative process altogether. Unlike Bowering's theoretical statement in *Tish 1,* which emphasizes that a poet's "job is to *participate*" ("Untitled" 4, emphasis mine), radically passive feminism contradicts agency. This form of feminism enables the speaker to acknowledge her pain and to exist outside of the space of production that places her in a subordinate position. Gadd's "2nd Well Poem" fails to acquiesce in the experience of writing *Tish*'s textual space with a radical passive feminist intervention in which a woman refuses to reproduce a heteronormative aesthetic. Thus, this poem provides an example of third-phase feminist content that challenged the newsletter's earlier masculinist values.

During its fourth phase, *Tish*'s collective and textual spaces were queered by the magazine's inclusion of a gay editor and its publication of several works by gay poets. While Karen Tallman was the newsletter's general editor (Persky, "Bibliographic Soap Opera" 21), Persky "change[d] its format completely . . . , r[an] an increasing amount of prose and other non-poetry forms, develop[ed] a relationship with the burgeoning underground newspaper *The Georgia Straight*, and eventually end[ed] *TISH*'s production completely" (beaulieu, *TISH* 20). Persky also published an increased number of poems by writers such as bissett, Spicer, and Stanley, who together contributed twelve percent of this phase's content. In a recent interview, Persky states that he does not believe he consciously intended to challenge the earlier phases' predominantly heteronormative patterns. However, he does admit that he "was just on the verge . . . of inventing public homosexuality" (Personal interview). Moreover, *Tish 42*, which he published alone, contains the most contributions by gay poets. It is useful once again to turn to the work of Ahmed who argues that "[t]he field of heterosexual objects is produced as an effect of the repetition of a certain [heterosexual] direction" (88). However, a non-heteronormative person orients themself towards queer objects, which queers the object through their phenomenological relationship (94). *Tish 42* is marked by Persky's non-heteronormative social relationships with poets such as Blaser and Spicer, whom he had met in San Francisco. Also, Persky had been romantically involved with Blaser shortly before editing *Tish* (Persky, *Oral History of Vancouver* 7). *Tish 42* arguably reflects this relationship because it includes seven poems by Blaser—and *Tish 43* contains four of his poems. Although the fourth editorial phase marked a queer departure from earlier phases, it remained controlled by Persky and predominantly published poetry by men.

Tish's fourth phase remained a male-centric textual space, while deviating from the original board's direction.

During the last phase, the editors published poems that formed a queer art of failure. These poems fail to reproduce heteronormative perspectives of sexuality because they contain unregulated sexual discourses. They evoke what Halberstam lists as part of the queer art of failure: "rage, rudeness, anger, spite, impatience, intensity, mania, sincerity, earnestness, overinvestment, incivility, brutal honesty, and disappointment" (110). For Halberstam, the queer art of failure challenges the social and aesthetic boundaries of a heteronormative society by evoking excessive affective responses to queer oppression (110). Persky's queer poem "The Long Goodbye" in *Tish 43* participates in this aesthetic practice by mixing brutal honesty, anger, and spite to discuss his response to the death of his lover, who was killed in a gay-bashing. The speaker's brutal honesty is seen in the explicit details of his lover's death as he states that someone "using a rod and an oily cloth until the dark grooves glow" (Persky, "The Long Goodbye" 17) killed his lover. Instead of complying with dominant social practices of mourning, the speaker evokes his anger by stating to himself:

> what you've had of love has not left you on the streets mourning its anniversary, or your hands only remembering places where you put your lips, but a toughness, puckish eyes, if your memory crowds you, you can undercut it with a sharp tongue. (17)

By describing himself as having "a toughness" and "puckish / eyes," he evokes an affective response of anger that refuses to passively accept the violence imposed on his lover. In addition, he chooses to fail to remember when his "memory crowds" him by spitefully using his "sharp tongue" to "undercut" an act of memorialization. Gay-bashings are a violent way of reminding queer people that being gay is a deviation from dominant social practices. However, the speaker in this poem refuses to adhere to this practice by choosing to actively forget these heteronormative relations. This queer art of failure does not comply with heteronormative social and aesthetic standards, but deploys queer affect to challenge these practices. Thus, this poem is one instance of radical queer poetry published during this final editorial phase that queered the newsletter's aesthetic and deviated from the original board's heteronormativity.

While *Tish*'s first nineteen issues produced a literary movement that began with its collective's marginalized position, *Tish*'s later editorial phases

deviated from that first board's heteronormative values. The inclusion of heterosexual and lesbian women as well as gay men in later editorial boards correlated with the reimagination of the newsletter's textual space that included radically passive feminist works and a queer art of failure. However, the newsletter remained dominated by men, which is clearly present on the page. In their failure to adhere to the original editorial board's standards, the second, third, and fourth editorial boards queered the newsletter and challenged the original board's heteronormative values. Although studies of *Tish* have predominantly valorized the experiences of the first male editors and continue to commemorate their efforts, this article challenges the critical trend that dismisses later *Tish* issues. The shifts in later editorial boards cannot continue to be overlooked, but must be recognized for their contemporary value, as they speak to issues that remain important to current feminist and queer activism. Thus, this article's alternate socio-cultural history of *Tish*'s later issues challenges a limited and heteronormative perspective of Vancouver's first poetry newsletter to valorize the efforts of artists that have previously been ignored.

NOTES

1 Although Daphne Marlatt currently identifies as a lesbian woman, she came out in the 1980s.
2 See Buckle's "woman in the week" (*Tish 27* 5), Copithorne's "Prologue" (*Tish 37* 6), Gadd's "i'll write the history of america" (*Tish 31* 9-10), and Hindmarch's "Vancouver Chinatown" (*Tish 26* 12).
3 See Dan McLeod's "The Underground Newspaper" (*Tish D* 8-9) and Robin Blaser's "4" (*Tish 42* 6).
4 Buckle's "Figs in Vancouver" in *Tish 12* is her first poem published with *Tish.*
5 These changes suggest a deviation from the first board's self-representation and represent a textual attempt to redress the exclusion of marginalized people (e.g., women). However, this phase's last two issues return to previous editorial practices. In *Tish 24,* Dawson is identified as the "Editor" and the other editors are listed as "Contributing Editors." In *Tish 23*, Hindmarch's name is placed last, and in *Tish 24* Buckle's and Hindmarch's names are listed last.
6 Interestingly, collage later became part of Fred Wah's aesthetic strategy. See Cabri 9-13.
7 See Bowering's "Leg" (*Tish 22* 9), Mike Matthews' "Where Did You Come From" (*Tish 23* 6), John Keys' "The Use" (*Tish 23* 10), and Lionel Kearns' "The Sensationalist" (*Tish 24* 11).
8 In *Tish 39*, half of the content is written by women.

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bill bissett

th nite is full uv zanee blessings

n brillyant multi aspekting beings
flying tigrs spells uv fieree kreetshurs
thanks n lovr
uv th strange nite skies ride
in our sky skrapr dreems
letting them fly
lites flashing on n off sigh th radians uv
nite time lites inside seeming darkness
th layzee beckoning
arms uv th bird prson spreding his wings
around yu reel n rein yu in
th detektiv espionage intreeg
dissolving inside th spinning turquois moons
n cobalt rooves uv our melting houses we
spin out 4 travl in th astral realm brite
yello n red goldn loaves leevs n loves
wher we reelee let go uv our

obsessing narrativs let up on our
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billowee pillowing leevs moist
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Felicity Tayler

Indexing Vancouver
Image Bank's *International Image Exchange Directory*

The collective project Image Bank began in Vancouver in 1969 by Michael Morris, Gary Lee-Nova, and Vincent Trasov. Morris and Lee-Nova built upon their established reputations as painters of hard-edge abstraction when they adopted the pseudonyms Marcel Idea and Art Rat, and joined Mr. Peanut (Trasov) to engage with the postal system as a communications-based high-art medium.[1] They collected, collaged, and re-circulated snapshots, staged photographs, and images appropriated from such mass-market American magazines as *Fortune, Life,* and *National Geographic*. They gradually circulated address lists through their mailings and subsequently printed these addresses in the Toronto-based artists' magazine *FILE* as an "Artists' Directory" and "Image Bank Request List." A selection of more than 270 names and addresses was compiled in 1972 as a stand-alone publication, *International Image Exchange Directory*, published by Talonbooks. Each name and address is accompanied by a short series of statements, which function as an "image request" for pictures supposedly desired by the person named in the listing. On left-hand pages, and sometimes across double-page spreads, more than ninety black-and-white images are reproduced. This article explores two of these images as entry points into the non-linear narrative space cultivated by the *Directory*—and the urban imaginary of which it acts as a trace.

As a material object that compiles a series of references to significant figures, events, and organizations, the *Directory* constitutes a nexus, a site where artistic counter-publics were fostered, and where a sense of locality—an urban imaginary—arose for Vancouver on both national and

international registers. As such, it constitutes a significant entry in Canadian print culture histories. On one hand, the *Directory* listings suggest a regionalized localism cultivated in relation to a multi-locational associative belonging fostered within Vancouver's varied countercultures; on the other, there are national dimensions, as many addresses connect Vancouver with Toronto. Andreas Huyssen explains that a city emerges as a "cognitive and somatic image which we carry within us of places where we live, work and play" (3). Urban imaginaries arise as affective relationships accrue through everyday spatial practices that contribute to the sensation of being in a place. The circulation of mediated images generates shared imaginaries with individuals physically located elsewhere who participate in the production of a sense of place through their reception. Reading the *Directory* as a material remnant of this reticulated gaze through mediated networks allows for an appreciation of multiple experiences of Vancouver, which converged to produce this city's urban imaginaries.

Taking a non-linear approach that mirrors the constellation of people and places brought together throughout the pages of the *Directory,* this article will situate Image Bank in its local, national, and international networks of artistic and poetic community. The section "Mapping Convergences" outlines existing scholarship and introduces key figures and organizations. "Urban Preoccupations" serves as an entry point for mapping overlapping social scenes, countercultural spaces, and politics of sexual liberation in the register of the local. "National Orientations, Transnational Fascinations" considers an image depicting homoerotic rural bliss, as it places the *Directory* within the bibliographic field of a national gay press, at the same time that it elicits transnational sensations of belonging. Although ironically situated in a rural setting, this image is nonetheless connected to Image Bank's distinctly urban imaginary of Vancouver as a cross-border locus for artistic and poetic community. The article concludes that, in retrospect, it is possible to appreciate how the early phase of intermedial list-making activities gestured towards what José Esteban Muñoz has described as a state of "queer futurity" taking shape through international correspondence art networks, in which Image Bank took part. Muñoz reads the material culture of the correspondence art networks of the 1970s as a perceived utopian social space, where a sense of associative belonging arises through a performative critique of heteronormative constraints in the present, which simultaneously generate a future-oriented collective desire towards a different world (116-130). This article complicates the geography of Muñoz' queer futurity, as it is centred

on New York, by situating the Image Bank *Directory* both within the transnational space of correspondence art networks, and with regards to the national publics fostered through post-Centennial Canadian print culture.

Mapping Convergences

Existing scholarship situates Image Bank at a local convergence of countercultural movements, Fluxus, and correspondence art networks. According to Scott Watson, Image Bank can be included within a generation of Vancouver artists who, in the 1970s and 1980s, overcame regional isolation by exercising broad cosmopolitan curiosity while insisting upon specific locality ("Urban Renewal"). The *Directory's* inclusion in Canadian exhibitions of conceptual art makes it a case study of a moment when locality was experienced on a national register. The *Directory* and its address lists provoke reflection on the place of Vancouver in a post-Centennial national imaginary marked by the consolidation of "Canadian Literature" and "Canadian Art" as discursive fields through cultural funding aligned with federal labour policy. Bringing the *Directory* into conversation with the discursive field of Canadian Literature foregrounds the overlapping counter-publics fostered through intermedial exchange networks of correspondence art and visual poetry and reframes the familiar centre-periphery dynamics discussed in nationally-bound art exhibition catalogues.

The *Directory* is in keeping with Canadian avant-garde practices that were not bound by disciplinary areas, that engaged with advertising and popular culture as the myths of modern societies, and that deployed language from the geographic position of Canada in order to work within and against the media landscape as an ideological order (Betts, *Theory* 220-39; Betts et al. xxii). Under the editorship of Sheila Watson, Image Bank's correspondence with the Toronto-based General Idea collective was printed in the Winter 1972 issue of *White Pelican* alongside contributions from Elizabeth McLuhan and Wilfred Watson.[2] While critics have frequently discussed the influence of Marshall McLuhan's theories of media upon the activities of the Intermedia Society, Adam Welch has further observed that Image Bank's list-making activities are in keeping with McLuhan's belief that Canada's artists, working from within a national media space reinforced through protectionist cultural policy, could act as a "counter-environment" to the global hegemony of American mass media (100-102). Furthermore, the homoerotic subtext of the *Directory* resonates with Peter Dickinson's argument that national cultural expressions are preoccupied with themes of sexuality, gender, and ethnicity (4).

Scholarly discussion of Image Bank's activity on a national scale, however, is dominated by their early collaborations with the General Idea collective, as a precursor to longer histories of *FILE* magazine.[3] Gwen Allen further correlates the marginalized status of artists in Canada, such as Image Bank, with General Idea's appropriation of the magazine form and "queering" of the mainstream media (147-73). Image Bank and General Idea shared a tendency towards an ironic politicization of sexuality, just as their affective bonds arose from a particular sense of locality defined by activities surrounding the Intermedia Society, where they met in person—as Christina Ritchie notes (14-15). The Intermedia Society from which the Image Bank collective and their urban imaginary emerged, came into being because the Canada Council conferred an unprecedented forty-thousand-dollar grant, due to the enviable reputation that Vancouver's artists had accrued in national and international media (Arnold 88). As a hub for communications-based, technologically driven artistic activities, Intermedia was outwardly aligned with Centennial-year policies of decentralization and urbanization. For instance, the first two issues of *FILE* featured Image Bank's address lists alongside reports from a place named "Art City," announced boldly by the headline as a "collective urban fantasy" produced by artists such as Gary Lee-Nova and Mr. Peanut who reinvented Vancouver through photography. The accompanying "article" is a transcript of a Local Initiatives Project grant request. This combination of performative reinvention through photography and creative grant application writing is an example of the tendency, noted by Grant Arnold, for artists affiliated with Intermedia to understand media exposure and access to public funding as parallel systems dependent upon imposed identity categories and social roles (85-88). Scott Watson has also observed that conditions of media visibility were of keen interest to artists such as Michael Morris, who worked reflexively from a peripheral location to international art centres—and who identified with both artistic and gay subcultures ("Mirrors" 65-66).

Such multi-sensory approaches cultivated at Intermedia generated an urban imaginary that hails counter-publics who might participate in more than one type of collective identification. As Michael Warner argues, certain kinds of artistic publics can cohere as counter-publics as they self-identify with explicit expressions of sexuality which transgress the social norms separating "private" life from the public sphere (96). Other counter-publics can form through the code-switching of bilingualism. This shifting between linguistic identities will be further explored in the next section.

Image Bank's relationship to *FILE* magazine and to the shifting public status of gay culture in the early 1970s is key to understanding the *Directory* as an aesthetic project that uses a print culture form to address counter-publics attracted to urban imaginaries that are in excess of national boundaries. Minutes of a meeting for affiliates of the Intermedia Society show that both publications were conceived in relation to each other, as if the appropriated forms of directory and tabloid magazine were complementary ("Notes" 23 Feb. 1972). Letters shared between Image Bank and General Idea show Morris encouraging and advising members of General Idea on federal grant applications to bring *FILE* to fruition (*Dear Paul*).

Image Bank's *Directory* also works as a counterpart to little magazines such as *Ganglia* (1965) by bpNichol and David Aylward (later became *grOnk*, 1967-1981). Like the *Directory,* these magazines act as a "conceptual apparatus" that uses the printed page as a site of international exchange, which simultaneously connects writers on the West Coast with Eastern Canada (Bayard 105). By 1973, Image Bank address listings featured artists and writers associated with Toronto's Coach House Press (bpNichol, Steve McCaffrey) and others who were frequent visitors to Vancouver (Victor Coleman, Stan Bevington, Robert Fones, Greg Curnoe, and David Hylynski). The *Directory* also shared aesthetic and social affinities with bill bissett's *blewointment* magazine (1963-1978) and later editorial periods of *Tish* (1961-1969).

Talonbooks was the *Directory*'s publisher, though histories of that press that are focused on its more conventional and business-oriented post-1975 period tend to omit the *Directory* (Scherf 138; Butling 29, 48), or list it as a mere commercial job (Walker 71). However, the social and aesthetic worlds of the press were closely related to the Intermedia Society (Scherf 132). Further, in his chronology *Lesbian and Gay Liberation in Canada*, Donald W. McLeod includes publications by Talonbooks, Coach House Press, and their shared authors as essential moments within Canada's lesbian and gay liberation movements.[4] The national and transnational counter-publics generated by artistic and literary scenes in Vancouver can therefore be understood as a shared creative project with political connotations. Ultimately, the images and address lists circulated through the *Directory* and related publications helped to attract overlapping counter-publics of readers to expanded poetry scenes and sites of artist-run culture, such as the Western Front (1973) in Vancouver, as well as Coach House Press (1965) and Art Metropole (1974) in Toronto.

Urban Preoccupations

Image Bank's *International Image Exchange Directory* features a Vancouver street scene that documents its moment of publication and thwarts attempts to periodize it for viewers without local knowledge. There is no caption on the page to situate the street in time and space, and a reader unfamiliar with the scene must flip to the "List of Illustrations" at the end of the *Directory*. No page numbers are assigned to these captions, however; only after flipping back and forth does one discover the image title: "Grin on Powell Street, Vancouver." Such suppression of authorship echoes a similar play with structural sequencing in *blewointment's* pages (Betts, "In Search of Blew" 4). Likewise, the experiential navigation through the book as a field of composition of personal correspondences resonates with the San Francisco Renaissance and Black Mountain model of poetic community, and with Charles Olson's principles of locus and proprioceptive verse adopted in the 1960s by Vancouver-based artists and writers.

In this Powell Street photograph, commercial signs juxtapose languages to produce an indeterminate sense of place. A row of storefronts recedes into the distance. Signs affixed on the perpendicular declare the purpose of the businesses along the thoroughfare. Figures mill about the broad sidewalk at the entrance to a "bakery" and a "hotel." In the foreground, a sign announces "Japanese Food, Pastry, Records, Magazines, Shimizu Shoten." A mixture of English and Kanji characters does not conform to the official French-English bilingualism of Canadian federalism heavily promoted in the post-Centennial period. The time-worn signage predates the multiculturalism policy introduced in the same moment. Readers hailed by these signs are oriented away from the symbolic bilingualism of national culture, as this linguistic policy enveloped multiculturalism, towards identification with a language of diasporic subjectivity. One of the signs is simply an empty oval frame. This gap or absence in the found text opens up a space for deviation from a linguistic order, and by extension, the strictures of social life in public spaces as shaped by the circulation of publicity forms.

This image of Powell Street encourages the formation of a counter-public through a shared failure to shape their bodies in accordance with emotional states upholding post-Centennial social norms. As Sarah Ahmed explains, the circulation of images and texts delimits emotional responses and shapes the orientation of bodies and the social and physical spaces they come to occupy (4), thereby generating a sense of affective belonging on multiple urban, national, and extra-national registers. In the last category, Ahmed

attributes "queer feelings" to bodies that are oriented away from the nation as an object of patriotic love, as structures of state governance are predicated upon a heteronormative "script" for social reproduction: "the reproduction of life—in the form of the future generation—becomes bound up with the reproduction of culture, through the stabilisation of specific arrangements for living ('the family')" (144). Importantly, these "queer feelings" are not a property of subjects or objects, but emerge from the process of circulation and repeated contact with images and texts that attach positive or negative affect to socially acceptable and unacceptable "ways of loving and living" (8, 145). When circulated in the multiple copies of the *Directory,* the Powell Street image supplants the abstraction of national identity and works as a visual analogue to queer orientation away from normative sexualities and family formations.

While this analogy between queerness and diasporic subjectivity may seem tenuous, it is worth considering because as part of his own exploration of identity, *Nisei* poet Roy Kiyooka penned a letter describing an urban imaginary shared among artists and writers surrounding the Intermedia Society, many of whom are also featured in the Image Bank Directory. In this imaginary for "Our City" of Vancouver, Kiyooka perceived "polymorphously / perverse porosities" (Kiyooka, *Transcanada* ["Dear Judy," 4 Oct. 1971]). Kiyooka's use of "polymorphous perversity," a Freudian concept deployed by Herbert Marcuse to describe the politics of sexual liberation in North American countercultures, opens up the possibility for a Vancouver urban imaginary that arises through an eroticization of the body in relation to natural and mediated environments.[5] For Marcuse, subconscious desire could be disengaged from passive consumerism and reoriented towards new, eroticized social relations. Image Bank's *Directory* gathers together multiple counter-publics as it performs what Jonathan Katz has termed a "politics of *eros,*" within a national public sphere and beyond (13). At a formative moment for lesbian and gay liberation politics of the 1970s, many of the artists featured in the *Directory* shared an investment in *eros* as a common psychological drive (or universalist biological trait), and refused to accede to juridically produced categories and identities. The 1968-69 Canadian Criminal Law Amendment Act (Omnibus Bill C-150), which decriminalized same-sex sexual relations between consenting adults over the age of twenty-one, resulted in a material change of status for many of the gay correspondents listed in the *Directory.* However, this limited provision for individual freedom in private life was a minor gain in comparison to

calls for revolutionary sexual liberation in public spaces in the pages of magazines such as *The Georgia Straight* or *The Body Politic* (1971-1987). Canadian readers of materials advocating for sexual liberation experienced contradictions because the articulation of public gay identities conflicted with freedoms newly afforded to them in private life (Goldie 16). Following this logic, the *Directory* doubly-indexes Vancouver as a site that figures in transnational extra-legal geographies, while simultaneously working to produce a sense of belonging for a cohort of "Canadian" correspondents, who, as Sharla Sava argues, circulated materials that produced a shared imaginary based in gay signifiers ("Determining" 22).

Furthermore, Image Bank's literary counterparts, such as bill bissett, bpNichol, and Victor Coleman, shared a creative investment in libido, and arguably called forth counter-publics who disidentified with the representation of "straight" existence in mass media without anchoring sexual identity in a particular orientation. As Katz has observed, also with reference to Marcuse, the opposite of "straight" citizenship in this moment may have been "polymorphous perversity, bohemian libertinism or even simply sex," but the radicality of this position was circumscribed by a persistent "dominant masculinity" (13). Scott Watson has noted specific instances of homophobia that delimit the permissiveness of the social milieu from which the Image Bank *International Image Exchange Directory* emerges (Watson, "Mirrors" 74-75; *Hand* 21-23). Maxine Gadd has also explicitly articulated oppressive conditions limiting women's full participation in Intermedia circles (Gadd 3:10). Virginia Solomon has further noted tensions arising from the "disdain for sexual liberation" in groups using New Left organizing strategies, as these groups viewed shifts in consciousness and culture as secondary to the reinvention of economic substructures (94). Nonetheless, Vancouver's neo-avant-garde is recognized as having created spaces of libidinal permissiveness, at least for a limited time, before the first issue of *FILE* magazine and the *Directory* were published. Watson has described this avant-garde social scene as one fuelled by curiosity for new experience, where distinctions between "gay" and "straight" sexualities were dissolved in favour of countercultural ways of life (*Hand* 21). Shifts between registers of publicness and tolerance in the city's neo-avant-garde are mirrored in the *Directory's* multiple registers of coding and list-making activities that emerged from the city's gay culture.

To return to "Grin on Powell Street, Vancouver," as an example of ambiguous coding within the *Directory,* this image indexes an important

site for the creative practices and social life affiliated with the Intermedia Society. The flattened picture plane provokes a reading of the signs as a continuous text. Punctuation is provided by an unkempt black-and-white dog lying on the sidewalk, redirecting the pedestrian flow. The colophon for the *Directory* lists an address for Image Bank at 358 Powell Street: the same address is also listed for several residents of the "New Era Social Club." That name was taken from existing signage on the door that referenced an earlier "members only" meeting place for *Issei, Nisei*, and further generations of Japanese Canadians; artists, including Glenn Lewis, Gary Lee-Nova, Michael de Courcy, Gerry Gilbert, Dave Rimmer, and Taki Bluesinger, were the late-1960s occupants of the site as a live/work studio environment (Sava, "Roy Kiyooka" 26-32). Notably, the street scene appearing in the *Directory* bears a striking resemblance to *Background/Vancouver,* a documentary photo series produced by de Courcy, Gilbert, Lewis, and Bluesinger as they walked through the city on a single day in the fall of 1972. The New Era also served as interim housing or studio space for artists, including Morris and Trasov of Image Bank, forced out of their West End apartment by encroaching urban development (Wallace 36).

By reproducing this photograph, the *Directory* points to the New Era Social Club and its neighbourhood as a physical and conceptual site of administrative processes, community displacement, and renewal in an urban context. Tacit details help in mapping out this imaginary geography. "Grin" is the name of the dog in the photograph, whose canine contribution is evinced in Intermedia meeting minutes recorded at this address: "Grin completely chewed up a *Georgia Straight*" ("Notes" 27 Oct. 1971). The offices of the countercultural newspaper *The Georgia Straight* were situated three blocks away at 56A Powell Street. Irregular meetings during the fourth editorial period of *Tish* also took place at the New Era (Sava, "Roy Kiyooka" 26-32). Under the co-editorial direction of Dan McLeod, *Tish* poetics of locus and proprioception had evolved by that period to make textual space for sexually explicit content. When McLeod left *Tish* to publish *The Georgia Straight* (1967), Stan Persky became co-editor, and gay authors and content gained prominence within the publication, including contributions from Robin Blaser, Jack Spicer, and George Stanley (Aubin, "Reintroducing"). Talonbooks, located at 1019 East Cordova, was only a fifteen-minute walk away from this site.

In the overlap between photographic conceptualism and process-based poetics, "locus" is a sensibility derived from socially imposed ideological

structures (Arnold 98; Tayler 146). Kinship and, by extension, the relationship between sexual identity, urban social scenes, and nationhood, can be structurally altered through collagist strategies that intervene in a media-saturated world. These interpenetrating dynamics of identity formation, which define a sense of locality or locus, can be traced in the *Directory* listings, as they point to other publications and exhibitions appearing in this period. Local Vancouver critic Joan Lowndes slyly observed that the exhibition *The Collage Show* (1971) made visible the libidinal pulsations of "intermedial penetration" in "a mysterious substructure that has existed in Vancouver for about five years in the form of mailings between artists, or private showings." Image Bank was featured in this exhibition, and their *Directory* subsequently includes listings for their co-exhibitors—Gerry Gilbert, Edwin Varney, and bill bissett, among others—whose shared locus bridged *blewointment* magazine and the Intermedia Society.[6]

This hidden social structure perceived by Lowndes had earlier been situated within international networks of concrete and visual poetry when the same contributors were featured in *The Concrete Poetry Show: An Exhibition in Four Parts* (1969). Lee-Nova and Morris were both exhibiting artists, and Morris acted as co-curator alongside Alvin Balkind. The catalogue for *The Concrete Poetry Show* was conceptualized as an unbound collection of letter-sized contributions from concrete poets and participants in correspondence art networks. Michael Turner has noted this moment of overlapping missives, and its similarity in form to later unbound mailings circulated by Image Bank (136). New York-based artist Ray Johnson and the local contributors named above were later included in the *Directory* address listings.

Johnson's New York Correspondence School was a complex system of sending letters and collages through the mail, linking artists (who did not previously know one another) according to his own personal identification with some aspect of their lives or practice. This preoccupation with mechanisms determining who had status, or who was "in" or "out" of the group, reflected Johnson's ambivalent relationships to peer artists of the American neo-avant-garde at Black Mountain College or in New York's Greenwich Village. Many artists who arrived in Vancouver throughout the 1960s and 70s, including Robert Rauschenberg, Ray Johnson, Yvonne Rainer, John Dowd, and General Idea, feature in Katz's and Muñoz's accounts of this era's politics of *eros.* These artists also feature in the *Directory.* Importantly, the *Directory* is modelled upon a list of international gay bars sent by Johnson to Image Bank's Michael Morris in 1968 (Trasov, Personal interview).[7]

This mimeographed list is an example of pre-Stonewall print culture that addressed a covert public, which cohered both on the page and in "real" life places (e.g., bars and other cruising grounds) through a shared understanding of coded references. Once they found each other, members of this covert public conceived of their local experience as participation in an extra-national community existing outside the law. Within such a model of a covert transnational community, the ambiguous coding of the *Directory* resonates with the delayed reception in Vancouver of Stonewall and related activism communicated through US-based alternative media channels (T. Warner 66).

Lee-Nova disengaged from Image Bank about the time that the *Directory* was published amidst conflict regarding the role for sexual identity, intermedial aesthetics, and collective practices in the formation of new social realities (Wallace 46 n. 1). A letter dated March 1972 by Intermedia member Gary Hovind notes a change in attitude in the local alternative press. A list of fifty community organizations had been compiled which positioned Image Bank's correspondence network as equivalent to the Woman's Centre, the *Progressive Worker* newspaper, and the Vancouver Welfare Rights Organization. But, as Hovind reports, it was impossible to get the New Left newspaper, *The Grape,* to print this listing. In May 1972, an anonymous letter was printed in *The Grape* launching an incendiary critique of the early issues of *FILE* magazine and Image Bank's list-making for allegedly replicating oppressive power structures and for not acknowledging the political dimension of their ironic play with normative gender and sexualities.[8] This controversy over list-making in countercultural media marks a poignant rupture for Image Bank's urban imaginary in a moment of high cultural nationalism.

List-making has been acknowledged as a post-Stonewall strategy: to "feel historical" by tracing kinship relations through lineages of non-normative desire (Nealon 177). Although comparable to tracing ancestry through genealogical charts, such list-making, when oriented away from the heteronormative family structures that uphold national culture, draws on an understanding of identity as socially produced, rather than biologically determined. The sense of transnational belonging solicited through Image Bank's list-making activity was predicated upon the historical knowledge that men who could be publicly identified as "homosexual" were perceived as a moral threat to the security of the nation in both Canada and the US (Tomaszewska 72; Kinsman and Gentile). In this sense, the publicness enacted through the *Directory* listings is comparable to that of the little magazine *Pacific Nation* (1969) edited by Robin Blaser and Stan Persky,

which used the affective field of projective verse to orient readers away from identification with established nations and towards a shared imaginary among transnational counter-publics on the West Coast (Tomaszewska 1-2). Morris' contribution of a cover image to the second issue, an excerpt from the later series "Mechanix Illustrated" (1972), co-publishes his forays into concretism with contributions from Jess Collins and Charles Olson.[9] The contributor biographies describe Morris as a "martini glass," a wink towards the homosocial scene surrounding poets who relocated from California to Vancouver.

Image Bank's list of addresses is a "directory" in ironizing quotation marks. Their appropriation of a directory as a "non-art" form of print media transforms the banal into high art. Counter-publics generated by the *Directory* shared an appreciation for camp taste, famously described by Susan Sontag as an in-group enjoyment of cultural forms considered in "bad taste" according to the tenets of high culture (279). Several images in the *Directory* depict camp-friendly characters from Hollywood movies, including Marilyn Monroe and James Dean, as well as portraits of gender-bending or drag queen glamour. Other images reproduced in the *Directory* transform male nudes into fetish objects, offer homoerotic or ejaculatory puns, and upend mother-child relations. The visual and textual coding in these images, as in "Grin on Powell Street, Vancouver," can be read as an expression of consciousness shaped by the shifting boundaries of public and private expressions of sexual identity across North America, as the conditions of everyday life remained overwhelmingly discriminatory. The implications of these shifts on a local and national scale will be explored in the following section, with reference to a photograph that infuses the national genre of landscape imagery with homoerotic subtext.

National Orientations, Transnational Fascinations

When positioned within the circulatory space of a Canadian national public sphere, the *Directory* becomes legible alongside the print culture forms and counter-publics fostered by the tabloids and paperbacks of a national gay press. A final photograph included in the *Directory* shows a male nude surrounded by lush thickets of ferns. His buttocks are caressed by sunlight. Though the scene is pastoral, a compositional emphasis is placed upon the image as an artificial construction. An imposing plank of wood extends to the right of his hip, humorously alluding to the size of his penis. A grey-scale pattern has been painted onto the plank, serving as visual reminder of the photographic processes involved in creating this image-as-media-environment.

The title, "Light-On Babeland," references a series of joint projects undertaken with General Idea in which mirrors, light beams, and cameras act as metaphors for mutual recognition. *Colour Bar Research* (1972-1974) and *On the Set at Babyland* (1972-74) are similar photo series produced at "Babyland," a communally owned piece of property in Robert's Creek, BC. The homoeroticism of these images subverts the persistent West Coast motif of landscape in visual art to produce what Grant Arnold has called a genre of "nature boy eroticism," in which a utopian yearning for an alternate social reality can be felt (94).

Much like "Grin on Powell Street, Vancouver," "Light-On Babeland" indexes a real site in Image Bank's social world. Despite its location adjacent to a very small town on the Sunshine Coast, these artists inhabited this place as an extension of their libidinally-charged Vancouver urban imaginary. Before Morris and Trasov became co-owners of Babyland, it had been the site of Intermedia-related activity, such as the Mushroom Festival (1969), when the presence of several pregnant women inspired the name. Carole Itter, who bought shares in Babyland at the same time as Image Bank, sought a writing retreat, and an antidote to her crushing experience of "the city, this foul asshole that we live in . . ." as she raised her daughter (Itter).[10] Alternately, Image Bank conceived of their inhabitation of this place as a parody of the countercultural retreat from the social pressures of "straight" city life. They hoped to cultivate avant-garde community at this site following the model of Black Mountain College; further, the rural surroundings served as a film and photo set, where gay desire could be acted out and then transmitted as images through transnational correspondence networks (Wallace 36).

As such images circulated, the "Artists' Directory" pages, which Image Bank provided to *FILE,* look much like the classified listings found at the back of tabloid newspapers. Small advertisements are inserted between the address listings for artists, many of which include innuendo or offerings of sexual services. Whereas it was anticipated by Image Bank that the *Directory* would point to international addresses and images as artifacts, *FILE* would print "Canadian addresses" alongside "gossip of ongoing: rumours, fake events, etc., classifieds, personal columns" ("Notes" 23 Feb. 1972). In this way, *FILE* magazine mirrors the gossip columns of Canadian tabloids such as *Hush Free Press* (1927-1974) or *TAB Confidential* (1956-1959), pre-Stonewall print culture formats that used coded language to communicate covertly with gay and lesbian readerships (Churchill 828). According to Donald W. McLeod, the sense of belonging accorded to a marginalized secret public was cultivated

in these tabloids' readers through the coded celebration of non-normative pleasure, which ran parallel to content that attracted a wider readership (and greater profits) through sensationalized exposé of "perverts"—that is, anyone engaged in sexual activity deviating from heterosexual norms ("Publishing" 326).

The *Directory* cross-references relationships between Vancouver (sixty-five entries), Toronto (thirty-six entries), New York (forty-three entries), and Los Angeles and San Francisco (thirty-two entries, combined).[11] These listings suggest that the international imaginary of these Vancouver artists is not only defined in terms of their peripheral relationship to art worlds in New York, Los Angeles, or London (Watson, "Mirrors" 66) but also that Toronto figures as a cultural centre of some importance to them in the early 1970s. This peripheral feeling can also be discussed in terms of the conceptual and legal limits for gay life in Canadian cities prior to the 1970s, and the tendency to look to international destinations for community—New York's Greenwich Village or Black Mountain College—due, in part, to imported media representations arriving via American-dominated distribution chains. As a result, Terry Goldie explains that after Stonewall, "the reworking of American trash as a vehicle for Canadian sophistication" was one of the ways by which a broad spectrum of sexualities was sorted out in relation to the shifting limits of Canadian identity (16). For a neo-avant-garde actively engaged in reimagining Vancouver as a multi-nodal site of transnational relations, the local adaptation of international modernisms, both poetic and visual, was a parallel strategy to the collagist appropriation of imported Hollywood imagery and lifestyle magazines by visual artists.

However, contributors to Image Bank's networks, and to *FILE*, rejected the social role of an "artist" if it meant upholding official national culture. In a parody of trade publisher catalogues, the editors of *FILE* define these national media stereotypes ("Catalogue" 57). Most major art book and magazine publishers are located in Toronto and cover topics such as Tom Thomson, Lawren Harris, and The Group of Seven, which the anonymous reviewer believes are "guaranteed to cause insomnia." Magazines are described as "conservative" and "dull." In stark contrast to their overwhelming ennui, Joyce Wieland's conceptual bookwork, *True Patriot Love/Véritable amour patriotique,* an erotically charged take on mediation and national icons, is praised as "our very favourite." Other positive mentions go to offerings from small presses such as Intermedia Press and Coach House Press, with special appreciation shown for the American publisher Grove Press' "pornographic style."

These positive reviews attest to Image Bank and General Idea's shared interest in a transnational media space that persistently tests regulatory boundaries at a national level, through a reflexive engagement with artificially imposed genre distinctions between pornography and high culture. William Burroughs, a Grove Press author listed in the *Directory*, inspired their subversive collage aesthetic; and his novels served as examples of inconsistent international censorship. Through the 1960s in Canada, Burroughs' novels were subjected to obscenity laws that regulated homoerotic content as "pornography" in mass culture; yet these novels passed as "literature" when approved by a censorship review board based in Toronto (Carefoote). Alternatively, an extra-legal counter-public who shared similar camp sensibilities might consider these representations of sexualities to have a refined aesthetic value.

Wieland's *True Patriot Love* offered an example of an erotic subversion of patriotic feelings. Wieland's work reinterpreted Canadian iconography, especially the visual conventions of the landscape genre, to present an image of Canada as a nationally-defined utopian space that rejected American corporate and militaristic interests (Sloan 78). At the same time that Image Bank produced landscape images such as "Light-On Babeland" discussed above, they pointed to Wieland's inversion of these pictorial conventions in their production of a networked space named "Canadada"—the publishing location for Talonbooks listed on the title page of their *Directory.* Virginia Solomon has described "Canadada" as a space where identity is understood as a socially constructed aesthetic phenomenon, and sexuality as politicized relationships that extended beyond bedroom practices relegated to the realm of private life (84-85, 147-173). Listed in the *Directory* at a New York address, Wieland supposedly makes a request for "Made in Canada, Canadada contents, true patriot love images." Like many other listings in the *Directory,* Wieland's image request was invented by Image Bank (Trasov, Personal interview).[12] That act of female impersonation creates a projected relationship through which these artists could shape their affective sense of group belonging on both national and extra-national registers.

Future Art Cities

"Grin On Powell Street, Vancouver" and "Light-On Babeland" are a small sample of the vast materials circulated through Image Bank's address lists and mailings. Both images point to an urban imaginary for "Vancouver, Canadada" as it is located within and exceeds national culture. Unlike

heteronormative forms of social reproduction, which perpetually put off an engagement in the present through an investment in child-rearing, in this social space of queer futurity, "every genealogy is a fiction" that can be altered in the present tense by aesthetic means (Muñoz 121). The counter-publics fostered through the *Directory* have indeterminate temporalities—affective relationships and sensations of locality are formed, and then dissolve, as the address list opens up the potential to reach out to future influences, friends, and lovers. Rather than depicting their sense of place as a landscape with vanishing point perspective illusory depth (as per the Group of Seven), the *Directory* listings use the performative effects of text and image to link bodies together in space. Ultimately, the *Directory* opens up a possibility for their reader-correspondents to imagine a present and future for Vancouver, their "art city," on whatever perceptual plane it might be socially produced.

NOTES

1 Trasov's practice developed when he met Morris, and is influenced by a familial tradition of utopian socialism. A descendant of Doukhobor settlers to Canada, he met Morris while canvassing for his father, a federal New Democratic Party candidate. Morris and Trasov were lovers at the time the *Directory* was published (Trasov, "Email," 16 Dec. 2013).

2 See "Michael Morris and the Image Bank." *White Pelican,* vol. 2, no. 1, Winter 1972, pp. 18-34.

3 General Idea is a collective of three artists, Michael Tims (AA Bronson), Slobodan Saia-Levy (Jorge Zontal), and Ron Gabe (Felix Partz). Formed in 1969, the collective initially included other people also involved in Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille, Coach House Press, and Rochdale College.

4 The imprint statement gives design credit to both David Robinson and Gordon Fidler. Talonbooks paid for the production of the book, though Image Bank did most of the production work (Trasov, "Email," 2 Dec. 2013).

5 See Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation.* Beacon Press, 1969, for ideas he transmitted in a lecture at Simon Fraser University, and in the full transcription printed in the issue of *The Georgia Straight* vol. 3, no. 51, 28 Mar./3 Apr. 1969. Kiyooka cites this reference in his *Transcanada Letters*.

6 Gary Lee-Nova contributed a series of collages using geometric forms and celestial charts to *blewointment,* vol. 5, no. 2, June 1967. The *Directory* image request listed for bissett and blewointment press references this magazine as an assemblage of materials: "Images of 8½ x 11 paintings, drawings, photos, anything."

7 See checklist entry 63 in Sharla Sava's *Ray Johnson: How Sad I Am Today*. . . . (145).

8 See *"FILE:* The Great Art Tragedy," *The Grape,* May 1972, pp. 24-30. The author of this article is widely acknowledged to be Dennis Wheeler, editor of *The Georgia Straight Writing Supplement*, a poetry imprint that split from *The Georgia Straight* newspaper, at the same time that *The Grape* was founded in 1972. For more details on this incident see Watson, "Hand" 22-23; Solomon, 99; and Allen, 171.

9 Michael Morris works in multiple series, as the repetition of tropes creates slippages in time. While Morris has explained that this cover image was designed in 1969, and later printed in a silkscreen edition titled "Mechanix Illustrated" (1972), a version of this graphic icon appears in *Image* (1968), produced the same year as a related series of drawings, "Untitled (Mechanics Illustrated)." This phallic icon also later featured on the cover of Victor Coleman's book of poems *Stranger* (Coach House, 1974) (Morris, "Email," 12 Nov. 2012).

10 See Itter's conceptual bookworks *The Log's Log* (Intermedia Press, 1972) and *Location—Shack* (1986) for an idea of her vision for a "free" space where she and her daughter could escape from city life.

11 European locations have the next highest frequency, with a smattering of addresses listed across Latin America and Asia.

12 Though responses to image requests were a voluntary act, the address lists soliciting these responses were compiled from pre-existing sources. As Image Bank "relied on friends' address lists," these borrowed addresses functioned as "wish lists" for future correspondents (Morris, "Email," 16 Mar. 2018). For an account of the pre-existing sources compiled in the "Artists' Directory" and "Image Request List," see Trasov, "An Early History."

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Ajmer Rode

Cynosure

1.
"Silly girl".
Has renamed
her newborn, Vancouver.

Says the city whispers
in her ear: I will keep my air clean.
Waters too. Will keep my soul green,
skies blue. Will let my earth spread
more root-runs not pipe runs.

Says the city promises to celebrate
Salish dancing, Sufi whirling.

"Silly girl".
Believes the city will keep its word.

2.
When in his native village in Punjab Sampooran used to dream of the Saptarishi stars and a city among them with a cerulean glow and a celestial tremolo. He would wake up amazed by the tall poles painted red and black with supernatural divine and animal faces. Sometimes his dream took him across oceans to a city of nirvana where apples and loonies hung side by side from the trees. Vancouver beckoned him in many forms until he reached the city at last.

Now sitting in a park of the cynosure he's all confused. Every night dreams take him back to his village where he walks the same old streets ploughs the same fields talks nonstop laughs a lot. Sampooran wonders if something's gone wrong in his head or the city is trying to tell him something he doesn't understand.

3.
Probability of finding Pauli
a lost friend of mine, is high, they say
on a downtown street called Hastings

where movements of
men and women
and birds with broken wings
follow the Uncertainty principle

like quantum objects
whose existence is fun to explore
fun to talk about

Jason Wiens

Minutes over Monuments

Rereading the Kootenay School of Writing (as) Archive

On October 22, 1983, a benefit reading for MacLeod's Books, which had been the target of arson, was held at the Western Front in Vancouver. The reading took place just months after BC's Social Credit government had been re-elected and implemented deep cuts to government services, including to education, one result of which was the closing of the David Thompson University Centre (DTUC) in Nelson, BC. This closure led faculty and students of DTUC's now-defunct writing program—including Tom Wayman, Jeff Derksen, and Colin Browne—to establish the Kootenay School of Writing (KSW), initially in both Vancouver and Nelson, though the school would eventually be based exclusively in Vancouver. KSW was envisioned as an independent, writer-run centre modelled on the artist-run centres that had emerged as important sites for contemporary visual art in Canada in the 1970s. While education in writing was part of KSW's remit in the years following its foundation, the "Kootenay School" came to reference a particular language-focused poetics that offered a critique of neoliberal policies then taking hold in the Anglo-American world. It also became associated with a group of emerging poets with differing degrees of affiliation with the school.[1]

Among the twenty-three readers at the benefit was seventy-four-year-old Dorothy Livesay, introduced by George Bowering as having "just about invented the Modernist movement in poetry in Canada."[2] The first poem Livesay read that night was her recently composed "Anything Goes," which closes with the following lines:

Above all
a poem records speech:
the way it was said
between people animals birds
a poem is an archive for our times

That is why NOW today
a poem must cry out
against war (Livesay 245)

Livesay's poetics as articulated in this poem appear now both sympathetic and antithetical to the poetics that developed within the context of the KSW: sympathetic in its insistence that poetry can and must embrace a political stance; antithetical in its belief that poetry is a transcription of speech. In prefatory remarks to another poem she read that evening, Livesay insisted that "poetry must become communication, not just playing with words." The idea that poetry should be "communication" was anathema to the poetics that emerged from the context of KSW, if we understand communication in a narrow, didactic sense. Livesay, a major figure in the development of literary modernism in Canada, as Bowering noted, was also key in forging connections between literary cultures and the political Left, and the degree to which Kootenay School poetics would diverge from hers reflected a changing understanding of the relationship of poetry to oppositional politics that KSW would come to represent, as we can see in the work of the poets I discuss below. But her line "a poem is an archive for our times" is one I want to consider here, in the context of the Kootenay School. Emerging from the unique institutional context of a writer-run centre and independent school—complete with a collective administrative organization, whose activities are recorded in minutes housed in the archive[3]—to what extent did the poetry affiliated with KSW document—archive—its contemporary moment?

In his study on KSW, Clint Burnham—himself a writer with some affiliation to the school—considers "why some things are or are not in the archive, as well as what those 'things' are and, indeed, what the 'archive' is" (161). Attempting to "examine the historical record dialectically," Burnham turns "from the archival and historical minutiae to the aesthetic record" (182). This is a strategy I wish to pursue here as well. But I would like also to expand the notion of the archive in relation to KSW in two ways: first, by considering "the aesthetic record"—that is, the poetry itself—as an extension of "the archival and historical minutiae"; and second, by reading this extended archive as an instance of what Diana Taylor calls the repertoire: a "repository of embodied practice / knowledge" (26). In the belief that work

produced within the context of a collective is best read collectively, I want to read work by several writers affiliated with the school both *through* the archive and *as* an archive. The poetry produced by writers differentially affiliated with a loosely-structured collective, circulating in ephemeral sites such as readings, talks, chapbooks, little magazines, and bar conversations, and characterized by enigma and local contextual reference, was always more concerned with the minutial than the monumental. The work as such invites archival investigation.

Taylor's distinctions between the archive and the repertoire are useful here, though they are distinctions I wish to challenge. For Taylor, archival memory "exists as documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change" (19), whereas the repertoire "enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge" (20). These distinctions, premised as they are on the opposition between written and spoken, absence and presence, would not stand up to post-structural interrogation, and indeed Taylor acknowledges that the relationship between archive and repertoire is not a binary one; as she points out, "[o]ther systems of transmission—like the digital—complicate any simple binary formulation" (22). Online resources like KSW audio, which provides access to digitized recordings and talks delivered at KSW, adds to the archive recorded moments from the repertoire. But given that so much of the poetry associated with KSW is gestural rather than referential, ephemeral rather than canonical, documenting of affect rather than of information, we could read the poetry as similarly complicating the binary between archive and repertoire. One way to approach the poetry emerging from KSW is to read it both as an archive and a repertoire of embodied memory, at multiple scales: of the social subject; of a literary scene; of a community, literary or otherwise; of a global situation.

Another reader at the benefit for MacLeod's Books was Kevin Davies, who would go on to become affiliated with KSW, and whose performance that night has, in Peter Culley's words, "passed honourably into the folklore of Vancouver poetry" (190). Culley's narration of Davies' performance—written in 1993, ten years after the event—is compelling. After inviting "the now clearly volatile and eager audience to heckle him,"

> Davies began to read, as rapidly as advertised, but every word was clearly audible, filling the room. His poems of that era were as extreme in their content as they were in that evening's presentation, and might best be described as a series of more or less discreet statements designed to exact the maximum

> amount of terror and regret from their author. Their effect, especially when read aloud, was that of a long implosion of personality enacted for the moral edification of the onlooker. . . . Presented both with this virtuosic evisceration of self and a built-in framework of response, the audience was pleased to do just that, the air filling with jeers, laughter and shouts of encouragement. It was a revival meeting of a most peculiar hue. (190)

In a reflection on a recording of Davies' performance held at the Western Front, Michael Turner writes that "[g]iven the precision of Culley's text, I was curious about the discrepancies between what Culley remembered and what could be seen and heard on tape" (Turner). In Turner's reading of the performance as archived on the tape, only the laughter and shouts of encouragement that Culley reports can be heard, not the jeers. The hecklers in the audience become "ghosts" who "haunt" Davies' performance, "who, though unseen and unheard, turn the audience from passive listeners into a chorus of active laughers" (Turner). Based on my own viewing/hearing of the recording, I would agree that the content of the "jeers" cannot be heard, but one can discern shouts from the audience to which the rest of the audience responds with laughter: the "jeers" are heard as material signifiers, but their signification is unclear. Put simply, both archive and repertoire are similarly open to interpretation. That performance, and its multiple narrations—by me, by Culley, by the video itself, by Turner's reading of both Culley and the video's documentations, by "the folklore of Vancouver poetry"—provides an example of the dialectical relationship and mutual interpenetration of archive and repertoire, rather than a clear separation between the two.

How might we read the poetry not merely alongside the archive, but the poetry *as* an archive (or repertoire) of the moment? Burnham alludes to a further extension of archival parameters when he observes that beyond the official archive there is also "the private or personal archive, the messy collection of texts that accumulate around any author" (189). These are what Linda Morra, whose recent work on Canadian writing and the archive has similarly expanded notions of the archival beyond the institutional repository, calls "unarrested" archives (9): archives withheld from conventional repositories due either to an institution's disinterest in them, an author's refusal to surrender them, or some combination of the two. If archives operate through principles of scarcity and recovery, of restricted access, of site specificity, then much of the KSW poetic production—largely limited to the small press and little magazine context, and produced out of a particular institutional and pedagogical scene—can be read as an articulation of these principles. In other words, the writing produced

through the KSW in relation to the archive illustrates concretely the relationship Steve McCaffery—a writer, like Burnham, loosely affiliated with the Kootenay School—describes between general and restricted economies of writing: "a complex interaction of two contrastive, but not exclusive economies, within the single operation of writing" (203). The archive, like a restricted economy, is "based upon valorized notions of restraint, conservation, investment, profit, accumulation and cautious proceduralities in risk taking" (203). Reading the poetry emerging from the KSW not just through the archive but as an archive functions as a restricted economy upon an otherwise general economy of writing, striving "to govern writing, to force its appearance through an order of constraints" (203). At the same time, the archive also operates as a general economy, provoking endless investigations that will continually lead to differing conclusions. Attempts to read both the archive and the poetry, and the poetry as archive, necessarily impose a restricted economy upon an otherwise general one. That is to say, an otherwise *open* text, be it a poem or an archive, becomes to some extent *closed* through any provisional reading of it.

It soon becomes apparent to a researcher spending time in the KSW archives that the school organized itself as a quite conventional, if less hierarchical, bureaucratic structure. Hundreds of pages of the minutes from weekly meetings from 1986 to 1993; drafts of grant applications; correspondence with administrative figures in positions with funding agencies; office logs; phone records: these are the banal documents at the disposal of the cultural historian interested in a collective like KSW. Such documentation may appear disjunctive when read alongside the poetic texts which emerged from this administrated context, but the collective members of KSW appeared to recognize what Theodor Adorno had pointed out decades earlier: that culture and administration, long considered oppositional, are necessarily (if ambivalently) intertwined, and that "[w]hoever makes critically and unflinchingly conscious use of the means of administration and its institutions is still in a position to realize something which would be different from merely administrated culture" (Adorno 113). If the relative autonomy of the cultural attenuates its social praxis, then that autonomy, in the eyes of the activist artist, must be reduced. KSW's unashamed adoption of a bureaucratic structure was not only a pragmatic necessity, but an effort to close this gap. The collective's hope for social praxis was related to the extent to which it engaged with administrative cultural apparatuses. Moreover, the poetry emerging from the collective and the minutes that record its activities

may not be as discursively disjunct as they first appear. Just as the minutes can only gesture towards an absent context—we can see a record of who was at a meeting, for instance, and have one person's summary of what was discussed—so too can we read the poetry as offering a kind of recording of a moment: the minutes of life under late capital.

The various collections relating to KSW in the SFU Contemporary Literature Collection demonstrate how the archive at once shapes and reflects canonicity. In addition to the KSW fonds themselves, the collection also includes the Lisa Robertson fonds, which are processed and described in an online catalogue, as well as the Jeff Derksen/*Writing* Magazine fonds and the Tsunami Editions fonds, both of which are listed as collected but are neither processed, described, nor catalogued.[4] But the papers of other individual writers associated with KSW remain, as far as I am aware, unarrested, located in no repository other than the private archives of the writers themselves. This situation implies a hierarchy of recognition among the writers associated with KSW: Derksen and especially Robertson have to date received more critical and academic attention than the other writers variously affiliated with the school. A read through the Tsunami substrate unearths a document which may also reinforce this hierarchy of recognition: a list of Tsunami titles sold from May-October 1994. These titles include the first perfect-bound releases of a number of writers most often associated with KSW:

TSUNAMI SALES
MY 1 – OC 31 94

Title	Sold	Price	Ext
Ambit [Gerald Creede]	2	7.95	15.90
Pause Button [Kevin Davies]	5	8.95	44.75
Relative Minor [Deanna Ferguson]	6	9.95	41.70
XEclogue [Lisa Robertson]	25	8.95	223.75
Ape [Dan Farrell]	4	7.00	28.00
Braids of Twine [Peter Ganick]	3	4.00	12.00
Oral Tragedy [Dorothy Trujillo Lusk]	3	7.00	21.00
rImage [John Byrum]	4	6.50	26.00
Ready Terms [Robert Mittenthal]	3	5.00	15.00
Visualized Chemistry [Calvin Wharton]	4	5.00	20.00
			448.10
		Less 60%	(268.86)
		Payable	179.24

(Tsunami fonds)

Assessing the relative canonicity of writers affiliated with KSW through the measure of the market is ironic indeed, and we need to be wary of assigning too much significance to the numbers here; it is possible, even probable, that sales of Robertson's *XEclogue* were so much higher because someone elected to teach it. Also found in the Tsunami papers, incidentally, are a series of uncashed cheques made out to Tsunami Editions from Small Press Distribution totalling $143.21: material evidence, perhaps, of a sincere refusal to commodify this writing, but also possible evidence of administrative neglect (Tsunami fonds).

The Derksen and Robertson fonds provide traces, among the many drafts of texts that would eventually form *Dwell* and *XEclogue*, respectively, not only of the compositional process of these books, but of the community within which the writing took place: the papers here become an embodied archive of social relations. The Derksen fonds, for example, provide substantial materials relating to his composition of the poems that would comprise *Dwell* (1993), including typescript drafts with holograph notations of texts from the various "excursives" that make up "Hold on to Your Bag Betty"; a preliminary outline of the poem that would become "Interface" (a note card written in Derksen's hand reads "-written during Gulf War / -popular culture, TV ads, lines from songs etc" [Derksen fonds]); as well as the source texts from which Derksen would draw his decontextualized quotations that thread through "If History is the Memory of Time What Would Our Monument Be." The line "Countries exist because people think they do" (*Dwell* 60)—which sounds like a pithy summary of Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities"—was apparently lifted from a document entitled "Culture, Nationhood, and our Constitution," a statement developed by Darlene Marzari, BC's Minister Responsible for Culture at the time, "in consultation with B.C.'s cultural community" (Derksen fonds). The various statistics that thread their way through the poem—"Male 98%, married 92%" (60), for example—are taken from an article describing Canada's "corporate leaders" entitled "Life at the Top" in the July 1992 issue of *Canadian Business* (Derksen fonds). We also see that Derksen wrote and dated many of the sentences that would make up this long poem on the back of flyers for a show featuring the artists Aaron Van Dyke and Laurel Woodcock at Artspeak Gallery, KSW's parallel artist-run centre; promotional materials here become transformed into the poetic drafts that comprise the archival substrate. One of these drafts, dated "March 4 / 93," for example, has the handwritten line "Try a little triceps," alongside another

line, "It seems / appears cancer grows faster than hair or fingernails," both of which would appear in the poem as published in *Dwell* (62, 69). Although the lines were composed on the same day, they are not placed in sequence nor even in proximity in the published poem. Derksen's poem is assembled in such a way that lines like these, that share a similar referential vector—in this case, the body—thread through the text in a relationship of structural repetition rather than hypotactic reference. Here the archive itself—messy, incomplete, ultimately misleading—provides one possible answer to the question raised in the poem's title, a title which itself offers a response to Charles Olson's poem "History is the Memory of Time" in *The Maximus Poems*.

Within Robertson's fonds are notebooks that contain the drafts of texts that would become *XEclogue* (1993), drafts that show the writer revising back and forth between singular and collective pronouns, and between present and perfect tenses. On one holograph page Robertson (presumably) has drawn a square around a paragraph that would eventually become an important part of "How Pastoral," the "Prologue" to *XEclogue*. The version published in *XEclogue* reads: "Ontology is the luxury of the landed. Let's pretend you 'had' a land. Then you 'lost' it. Now fondly describe it. That is pastoral" ("notebook"). The holograph version reveals Robertson had been considering other pronouns: rather than the "you" in the published text, she had written "pretend we 'had' a land. Then say we lost it," over which she had superimposed "he," so the text would read "pretend he 'had' a land. Then say he lost it" ("notebook"). Similarly, in the holograph Robertson had revised the sentences that would become the opening lines of "How Pastoral." Those lines read in the published version as follows: "I needed a genre for the times that I go phantom. I needed a genre to rampage Liberty, haunt the foul freedom of silence." In the holograph version, we can see that Robertson at one point had considered writing these lines, "We need a genre for the times that we go phantom. We need a genre to rampage liberty" ("notebook"). The implications of shifting from "we" to "I" and from present to perfect tense in this passage are multiple, but to me the most significant would be that the holograph version reads more like a manifesto in its collective, present tense address ("We need a genre"), whereas the published version reads less like a manifesto than a personal reflection or explanation of her project: an exploration of the politics of pastoral and how pastoral might be written at the end of the twentieth century.

Reading through this palimpsest within the substrate throws into relief the implications of the "final" version through juxtaposition and contrast.

Such a reading follows a "genetic" critical model, which examines archival evidence of the evolution of a work not through an attempt to recover authorial "intent," but to consider the significance of the "final" version of a text through juxtaposition with its earlier iterations. The notebook in which these poems are drafted also contains the addresses of various writers and intellectuals within the Vancouver community, including those writers associated with KSW, as well as a time and directions for a meeting with "Clint" (presumably Burnham) one afternoon in Toronto ("notebook"). The close proximity of these more quotidian details with the drafts of work Robertson would publish reminds us of the collective matrix for this writing: just as Robertson vacillates between "I" and "we" in the drafts cited above, so too do we need to read these texts dialectically between the writing subject and the collective in which she is embedded.

The genetic critical approach that we might take with Robertson or Derksen's work can still be performed with the work of writers whose papers remain unarrested. In this case, rather than comparing drafts of poems within an archive with published versions of the poems, we could compare different versions of the same poem published in different venues. This suggests an inherent instability to KSW poetic production even in the ostensibly less-ephemeral venues such as anthologies, little magazines, or even books. Take as an example the case of Colin Smith's "Indolent Corollaries," published in both *East of Main* (1989) and Smith's perfect-bound Tsunami title *Multiple Poses* (1997). Here is the second stanza of the poem as published in *East of Main*:

> Anyhow I wake up (a habit, can't seem to break)
> and tie off my wrist for my morning coffee. Bath stuff-face out
> for love and shopping. I trundle along the drive, newspaper boxes leer
> misfortune out their faces, the gist of too much is "we killed
> something or someone and stand to clear a profit." Good intentions hunt
> Nicaraguan coffee and politically correct bananas. Looking for the mountains
> through trolley wires, spelling "thru" with an "ough" so it rhymes
> with "trough." Am I showboating my social construct,
> i.e. personality? Verified I have no girlfriends or boyfriends
> but every day I do get fucked in the head, heart and pocketbook
> by the President of the Free World, using only his hair dye for lubricant. (128)

This is the second stanza in the version published in *Multiple Poses*:

> Anyhow I wake up (unbreakable habit) and
> tie off my wrist for my morning coffee. Bath stuff-face out
> for love and product. I write and tote a slim "text"
> so I'll know which groceries to buy. Bigots are 55¢,

> veggie back bacon $2.29. Trundle buggy, newspaper boxes leer
> misfortune out their faces, the gist of too much is "we killed
> something or someone and stand to clear a profit." Good intentions hunt
> Sandinistan coffee and politically correct bananas. The mountains as
> through trolley wires, spelling "thru" with an "ough" so it rhymes
> with "trough." Am I showboating my social construct,
> i.e. personality? Verifiable no girlfriends or boyfriends
> but every day I do get fucked in the head, heart and pocketbook
> by the President of the Free World, only his hair dye for lubricant. (53)

Both versions of the stanza attend to quotidian details and the ubiquity of consumerism, and both tend to emphasize discontinuity, *ostranenie*, and the disruption of the lyric subject, indicating a poetics determined towards the disjunctive. Both versions situate a subject attuned to his privileged position within neoliberal globalism and aware of both the cynicism and futility of political action reduced to consumer decisions, and both allude to US foreign policy and imperialist interventions—although the "President of the Free World" referenced in each version would be different in 1989 and 1997. Yet there are also substantial changes: sections are added or removed between the two versions, and topical references are clarified or updated: in the above passages "Nicaraguan coffee" becomes the more politically specific "Sandinistan coffee," for instance. Even a text like "Indolent Corollaries," which seems more "confessional" than most poems emerging from the context of KSW, cannot simply be read as such. It remains a documentation of an ephemeral structure of feeling in our long neoliberal moment, rather than a confessional narrative—and one that, as we see here, remains in process, even after publication.

It is unsurprising that the poetries emerging from KSW during the late 1980s and early 1990s have been associated with so-called Language writing in the US. KSW hosted the New Poetics Colloquium in 1985 that gathered a number of these American writers in Vancouver; significant Language writers such as Charles Bernstein and Lyn Hejinian held workshops at KSW in the late 1980s and early 1990s; and writers associated with KSW were in turn hosted at readings in San Francisco and New York during the same period. Klobucar and Barnholden emphasize this association in their Introduction to *Writing Class*, describing "the work associated with the journal *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, and Ron Silliman's essays on the 'new sentence'" as "important touchstones in the evolution of a KSW aesthetic" (29). Considering the poetry within the wider frame of Language writing suggests we read it as moving towards a horizon of diminished reference, of a deliberate poetic opacity in an attempt

to frustrate reference. Such writing situates the reader as producer rather than consumer of meaning, or engages in a critique of the word as commodity fetish. For Steve McCaffery, such writing privileges "the incidentality of the signifier rather than the transcendentality of the referent," with the reader "seen structurally as a theoretical location in a textual activity" (McCaffery 19, 27). For Ron Silliman,

> What happens when a language moves toward and passes into a capitalist stage of development is an anaesthetic transformation of the perceived tangibility of the word, with corresponding increases in its expository, descriptive and narrative capacities, preconditions for the invention of "realism," the illusion of reality in capitalist thought. (Silliman 10)

Following Silliman, a poetry which seeks to diminish or frustrate reference and call attention to the materiality of language is an anti-capitalist gesture at the level of the signifier. McCaffery's and Silliman's theories here seem appropriate frames through which to approach the poetry emerging from KSW in the late 1980s and early 1990s, insofar as these are conscious elements of the poetry. Burnham's reading of these texts as "social collage" follows this hermeneutic. "By collage" writes Burnham, "I mean work that operates with a high level of disjunction, and by *social* collage I mean that this disjunction operates as a critique of the hegemonic role of meaning in late capitalist society" (93, emphasis original). But the diminishment or frustration of reference is not the same as its elimination; as Derksen puts it, these texts magnify "existing social relations," and if approached as "*aesthetic rearticulartory practice[s]*," read as works of conjunction as much as disjunction ("Introduction" 9, emphasis original).

These approaches are not inconsistent with my practice of reading the poetry itself as an archive of context, as the embodiment of a community at a particular historical juncture. This becomes evident when we observe how frequently KSW poets return to their own texts—to reconsider them, reshape them, plunder them for new texts. This is probably most notable in the practice of Kevin Davies. Davies' *Pause Button* was composed, as Colin Smith recalls, out of slivers of longer texts written and destroyed with only intermittent and limited publication, "sequences in progress" he would read in public but refuse to surrender to Lary Bremner—the publisher of Tsunami Editions—until he finally published *Pause Button*, which Smith describes as "the accumulated and stitched-together pieces from these destroyed and renovated reading scripts" (Mancini and Smith 98). *Pause Button* presents text that, rather than leading to coherent reference, instead gestures towards a missing context:

—[ ] a little in his hand, an involuntary
movement. Punch-drunk & frivolous,
making holes, delivering versions.
Having everything one needs in-
side one bag that one carries, or
lugs. [ ] heated myself therein
& was very violent. Now they
understand – *we're* the punchlines. (13)

The empty brackets are the most obvious such gesture towards the missing context, but the entire text could be read as doing so: Davies' compositional method here is indeed one of "making holes, delivering versions." *Pause Button* is exemplary of the tendency among writers affiliated with KSW to employ enigma as a structural component of a text; as Alan Davies (no relation to Kevin) puts it, the enigma, "made to be unresolved, affords the opposition of immersion, of argument: it offers an opaque exterior; not offering entry or exit, it posits" (71). Reading *Pause Button* is comparable to exploring a particularly disorganized archive: one continually unearths intriguing scraps which are suggestive of an absent context, but the text is also akin to the repertoire in these gestural components and in the performative context of its gestation. As Kevin Davies relates in his acknowledgements, "This poem is made up of the interruptions, rewritings & 'translations' of many poems & poem series, most of which were originally written or assembled for public readings."

The archival history of Deanna Ferguson's recorded talk "And Weep for My Babe's Low Station," on a cassette tape deposited in SFU's Special Collections, presents a case study in the perils of the archival process. As far as I know, there is no record of the dating of the talk, nor any record of whether the talk was ever performed publicly. Nor is the talk included in the KSW online audio collection. The talk is therefore a repertoire available only in the archive, narrowly construed: a most ephemeral document that can only be found if one knows it is there. The tape is labelled with Ferguson's name and the talk's title, but in the process of its accession to SFU's collections, the title has been reinscribed as "Twiggy for my Babe's London Station." The archival process, in this case at least, corrupts even as it preserves. The talk provides a context for a reading of the work she was producing at the time, work that would comprise her Tsunami publication *The Relative Minor* (1993). This is a context that the poetry in turn further elaborates. "And Weep for My Babe's Low Station" is not a public talk as much as a recorded private monologue, evidenced by the absence of any

audience reactions and the occasional sounds of birds chirping, presumably outside a window where Ferguson talks. In other words, the tape records a "private" rehearsal of a public performance which may or may not arrive: a suspended repertoire of sorts. "And Weep for My Babe's Low Station" begins with a sociolinguistic analysis of the different speech utterances on the starship *Enterprise* from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, then moves on to a brief discussion of how Language Poetry would not be welcomed on the Enterprise because "instead of advocating openness and plurality in the interests of specific identities and specific groups" it would present writing as "counter socialization, unveiling the fundamental building blocks of sense." The talk further includes Ferguson singing a song about Lady Godiva; some of the definitions from the untitled glossary in the middle of *The Relative Minor*; a third-person narration of an encounter between "Deanna" and "Kevin" about the latter's upcoming move to "the big apple"; and concludes with a reading of section 24 of Kit Robinson's poem "Dayparts" from *The Champagne of Concrete* ("And Weep").

I would like to focus on one particular section of the talk, a reflection on growing up in a working-class section of Cranbrook (a reminder that Ferguson is one of the few KSW poets who actually hails from the Kootenays). Ferguson recalls how her father would imitate accents—of "Newfies," "Indians," "Scottish or high-class English," "a gay man"—and that she now realizes her "dad's conceptions of others, or of other cultures, were not only small-town-minded, but sinisterly deluded fabrication." She then considers how her own talk might be similarly problematic:

> But with even more horror I discover that that very legacy of irresponsible play at imitation persists in this prepared talk, replete with ersatz shrift of styles, sectional organization commanding hierarchy, subordination, and postponement, a dwelling on banal insight and counterfeit speech, the appropriation of form without regard to process, this wretched rhetoric, this sickening irony, makes me want to tear back to the redneck wrong side of a bad town where I belong. And so, just as the sun sinks behind immutable mountains, my heart sinks, and is as blackly disposed as this night, as the clouds gather, and weep for my babe's low station. ("And Weep")

Ferguson is careful in her talk to link this "irresponsible play at imitation" with her working-class background, her origins in a "redneck wrong side of a bad town," not to excuse the "irresponsibility," but rather to refuse to romanticize that class background while acknowledging it. Ferguson's talk reflects on the heteroglossia of language, employing a stylistic multiplicity while noting its "sectional organization commanding hierarchy,

subordination, and postponement." Reading her poetry alongside the talk, then, suggests we read the former as reflecting language's inescapable heteroglossia while attempting to flatten its hierarchies and tendencies towards subordination. Ferguson's questioning of a poetics reduced to apolitical formalist play anticipates wider ethical concerns within the avant-garde which seem only more timely in our contemporary moment, just as her reference to her father's imitating "Indians" alludes to the settler, colonial context of the Kootenays.

"Received Standard" is representative of Ferguson's work in *The Relative Minor*, moving to an extreme pole of opacity and disjunction. These are the closing two stanzas of the poem:

> Lady Godiva
> was a freedom rider she was
> a sister, convincing, collective. Through
> tubes. Choosing to leave Minneapolis the big
> apple swell clerical and oh Mister Grant
> quit teasing. Contaminant-free yet fish
> politic the received standard everyone here
> looking at those sheep getting horny or
> Scottish blood. Attaining refinement
> read herence bordering on epicurean
> crack wise synthesis because
> intrinsic units disco compost
> sushi font differ
>
> One must immediately and directly lead
> so on and so far
> Just upon one time
> in friendly market
> I'll miss you most of all. (32)

Overlapping allusions within both talk and poem—to *Star Trek*, to the Big Apple, to Lady Godiva—cue us to read them as companion pieces, as does the concern in both texts with the relationship between language, class, and power. We *can* track references in these lines: to Olson's "Projective Verse" or to *The Wizard of Oz*, for instance. But any attempts to construct a coherent narrative or argument from these lines will be frustrated. Sianne Ngai includes Ferguson in her discussion of poets whose work articulates a "negative potentiality of language as exasperated atonality" (105). Reading Ferguson's "Still Life" from her later book *Rough Bush*, Ngai asserts that in this writing, "the question of what a word means (the form it gives to a pre-existent thought) *as well as* the question of how it relates abstractly to

another word in the system (form deferring to form) becomes secondary to its simply 'being there,' in all its insistence and affective force" (106, emphasis original). This critical framework could also apply to "Received Standard," and it is a convincing reading. Yet when we read "Received Standard" alongside "And Weep for My Babe's Low Station," what appears to be an opaque exercise in extreme disjunction becomes a meditation on the stratification of language according to class, power, race, and region, and an ironic comment on the illusion of a humanist, diverse linguistic community which masks the assumptions implicit in the idea of a "received standard" of English. The poem does not simply advance the argument of the talk by different means; we might read the poem as a discourse which aspires to evade or exceed the rhetorical limitations of the talk.

In a reflection on the Kootenay School, Derksen asserts that "there obviously is a dialogic relationship in the circulation of social conditions and political aesthetic decisions that results in 'structures of feeling' (Williams) and a 'structure of necessity' (Grossberg) embedded in an aesthetic" (*Annihilated* 285). Colliding Raymond Williams' notion of structures of feeling with Ann Cvetkovich's understanding of an affective archive, in which cultural texts are "repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the content of the texts themselves, but in the practices that surround their production and reception" (9), leads to a reading of the writing emerging from the context of KSW both as and through an affective archive. Certainly, critics have addressed this work through the concept of affect, as Jennifer Blair does in her essay on affect and Derksen's "Happy Locally, Sad Geopolitically," for instance. Ngai also attends to affect in the context of the writers associated with KSW in her essay—an essay that could be read as an early canonizing gesture in terms of the KSW poets it discusses (namely, Davies, Derksen, Dan Farrell, Ferguson, and Dorothy Trujillo Lusk). Ngai's inclusion of several KSW poets as exemplary practitioners of a poetics of abjection aligns with a reading of their work as and though the archive, particularly if we think of the connection between archives and waste, of "the fragile border that is usually built between the two" (Bates 96). It is precisely the combination of the writing's lack of canonicity, its tendency towards the enigmatic, its diminishment of reference, its circulation in different forms and in ephemeral sites (small press publications, little magazines, readings, talks), its affiliations with the collective rather than the singular, and its orientation to the minutial over the monumental, that invite us to read it both *through* and *as* an archive, both *through* and *as* a repertoire.

NOTES

1 Throughout this essay, I focus on the period of KSW's existence from roughly 1984-1994, and my references to "writers associated with KSW" refers mainly to those writers included (or discussed) in Andrew Klobucar and Michael Barnholden's 1999 anthology *Writing Class: The Kootenay School of Writing Anthology*. These include the writers I discuss in this essay—Peter Culley, Kevin Davies, Colin Smith, Lisa Robertson, Jeff Derksen, and Deanna Ferguson—as well as others I did not have space to include, notably Gerald Creede, Dan Farrell, Dorothy Trujillo Lusk, and Nancy Shaw.

2 All references to the benefit are from the video recording "Celebration" in the Western Front archives.

3 I refer here to the collection of documents, including minutes, correspondence, financial records, publicity materials, and course catalogues, but also taped recordings of readings and talks, currently housed in Simon Fraser University's Special Collections as the Kootenay School of Writing fonds. When I was researching my doctoral dissertation, these materials were not yet acquired by SFU (it acquired them in 2004), but were made available to me in KSW's offices, at that time on Hamilton Street in Vancouver. My work on this paper has involved not only a return to that particular archive, but to the broader archive of my own doctoral research, conducted in 2000-2001. But the "archive" I reference in this paper extends beyond that particular collection, and includes the papers of Lisa Robertson, Jeff Derksen, and Tsunami Editions, as well as the various publications of the poets.

4 On a visit to SFU's Special Collections in September 2016, I was, through the generous assistance of the Collections staff, granted access to both the Derksen papers and the Tsunami papers. I would like to acknowledge that assistance, and the assistance of archival staff at the Western Front, in writing this paper.

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Joseph Dandurand

When the curious

at a gathering of fools they wept
and wept until daylight and then the
fire went out and everyone went home
to the insane streets of the pathetic
city where gloom and odor roam
around like an untied balloon as it
floats up into the darkness and the
street comes alive and the people
gather and steal and rob each other
for a bit of coin to buy a piece of
blackness that when burned becomes
the liquid devil that we all dream of
and I am there robbing and stealing
for a lick of the spoon and when I am
satisfied I float up like the untied
balloon and I watch the gathering
of the people as they wept and wept
and I climb higher and I am gone
and the only way back is when my
blood mixes with the liquid in my arm
and that is the only time I am real and the
only time I am unreal and I want
to heal them like I am healed but
when I try they all scatter
and hide in the corners of this
place where a healer like me
has very little power to even
heal himself so I float above
myself and when I look down
I see myself convulsing and kicking

and scratching at my arms as if
being attacked by a million spiders
and they over take me and I am
gone but not really gone
as I am the fate
of my addiction
and I am gifted with
the gift of healing
and when I try and heal myself
I fail as I float too far
over and when I look down
I am gone as the last spider
crawls to the corner
and this is where
the curious
wept for
me.

Dani Spinosa

Jim Andrews Drifting to (and from) Vancouver

At the "Digital Textualities/Canadian Contexts" conference in 2016, which was presented as part of the launch of CWRC (the Canadian Writing Research Collaboratory) in Edmonton, I presented a paper on the state of Canadian Digital Poetics. During the question period for this panel, new media and interface scholar Lori Emerson asked me if I was having trouble determining which works constituted "digital poetics" and which works were "electronic literature" in the broader sense. Being able to tell a digital poem from, say, hypertext fiction was quick work. But, part of the radical potentials of electronic literature is that sub-genres blur easily. So, how does one tell a digital poem apart from other sub-genres of electronic literature? During that question period, I told Emerson that I didn't care about doing that sort of taxonomical work, and she admitted that she didn't either. Bringing her signature media-archaeological perspective to the discussion, Emerson argued that, for the most part, these generic and sub-generic designations are vestiges of print culture and print criticism and have little to offer to scholars of new media literary arts. This taxonomical work, I argue in this essay, requires the clear demarcation of various "scenes" of poetry: the scene of "digital poetics" alongside the scene of "electronic literature"; national and regional scenes in Canada and the US; scenes of interpretive and scholarly communities, and so on.

One of the pioneering works of kinetic poetry, Jim Andrews' "Seattle Drift" (1997) is about this very issue, drifting to and from the scenes of poetic production, reception, and interpretation to resist the categorical and taxonomical limitations they require. In this paper, I will look to "Seattle Drift" as metonymic and emblematic of the diverse Canadian, Vancouverite,

transnational, and transgeneric contributions to the fields of electronic literature and digital poetics. This paper tries to situate a work that "used to be poetry" but "drifted from the scene" (Andrews, "Seattle Drift") to begin to theorize the role of place (Seattle, Vancouver) and nation (US, Canada) in a digital literary scene that increasingly works to blur borders and collapse national and generic conventions alike. This poem, I argue, uses its deceptively simple language (in the content and form of the poem and its code) and relationship to place (real and imagined, physical and digital) to complicate the scholarly tendency to align authorship and poetics with locus (particularly national locus), genre, and tradition. This process of complication ultimately results in a blurring of various borders, implied and expressed by the poem's ergodic[1] engagement with its readers, its relationship to various "scenes" of poetic writing and study, and its tongue-in-cheek reference to sadomasochistic eroticism.

"Seattle Drift" is fairly representative of Andrews' animated digital poetics, what he terms "animisms" (Andrews, "Seattle Drift"). The poem has become a classic work of kinetic poetry that extends the use of language as visual medium seen in concrete poetry by using the potentials of digital technology to have the poem's words literally move across the screen. What is striking about "Seattle Drift," and what differentiates it from many other kinetic, animated poems, is that the poem itself moves at the (partial) behest of its readers,[2] who start and stop the movement by clicking hyperlinks on the page. While the poem is hosted and still accessible on Andrews' website, *Vispo.com*, "Seattle Drift" was originally distributed through the foundational journal of web art and digital writing, *Cauldron & Net*, in its first volume in 1999. Andrews wrote it in Javascript. He and Marko Niemi updated the DHTML in 2004 to make it work on PC and Mac, and in 2015 adapted it for mobile users. When a reader visits "Seattle Drift" on either Andrews' site or the *Cauldron & Net* original publication, they encounter a fairly simplistic page layout. The poem, written in white sans-serif font on a black screen, looks like a fairly traditional poem and reads:

> I'm a bad text.
> I used to be a poem
> but drifted from the scene.
> Do me.
> I just want you to do me.

This last line provokes the reader to look at the hyperlinks above the poem, provided they realize that the smaller red text at the top of the page is indeed

a set of hyperlinks (this is not an obvious assumption as the text lacks the now-standard blue text with underline that signals a hyperlink). The red text provides the reader with three link options to click at their leisure: if they choose, they can "Do the text," which results in the algorithmically randomized and erratic movement of the words to the right and bottom of the screen until no words are visible (see Figure 1); at any time during that movement, the reader can then "Stop the text," leaving the words and punctuation marks wherever they ended up; at this point the user has the option to "Discipline the text," returning the words to their "rightful" order in a traditional Western left-aligned lineation.

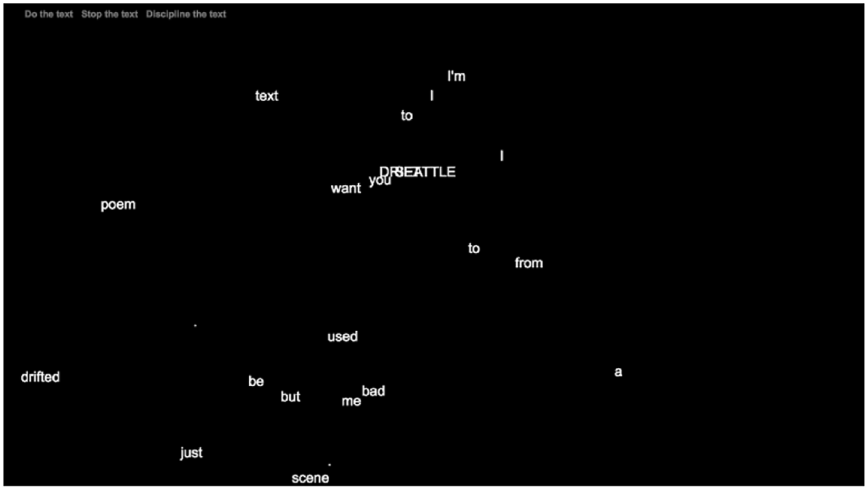

Figure 1
A screen capture from "Seattle Drift" by Jim Andrews, taken on my 17.5" monitor for PC desktop. This is the poem as published on Vispo.com, reprinted with permission from the author.

Despite the fact that those red commands are links, the reader never actually leaves this webpage. The poem has a tendency to disperse as the words spread out across the screen, but otherwise the work is fairly cohesive. It expands and constricts but the words or punctuation marks are never altered. "Seattle Drift" focuses on presenting words and punctuation marks as separate entities relating to each other but acting independently. In this poem, the words and punctuation marks move individually. In turn, much of the work of making sense of this poem relies on the way the individual pieces move; the semantic sense of their cohesion in their original format

(or even in the dispersed, undisciplined format) is largely secondary. Andrews recognizes this facet of his work, writing in "Digital Langu(im)age" that

> each object might have various properties in addition to its usual appearance and meaning and place amid other words. . . . When you click the text that says "Do the text," the words in the poem eventually drift independently off the screen. Each word has its own behavior, its own partially random path of drifting off the screen. Each word is a kind of little language widget, langwidget.

The "langwidget" neologism is humorous in the work it does bringing the understanding of the linguistic unit as an element in a field into the digital context. The poetic "field of composition" (Olson 239) takes on a radically altered definition in the digital, where those units can literally move as a part of the piece, and where readers are invited to engage on an interventionary level that Charles Olson and the Black Mountain School could not have dreamed. What is clear about the "langwidget" is that despite Andrews' own statement, the words simply do not have their "own behavior." They may move independently, but that behaviour is not the words' "own." In fact, the level of mediation required for these langwidgets to migrate across the screen is what makes this work interesting in media-specific and national contexts.

On one level, the understanding of linguistic elements as material units acting independently and on their own recalls conceptualist or "uncreative" ideas about poetry and language more than the active, interventionary readership suggested by the ergodic potentials of digital poetry. Langwidgets as material units that act on their own, that move as "stuff" without requiring or being dependent on the engagement of a user or reader, risks treating digital language as "stuff" rather than user- and hardware-contingent material. In other words, this conception of language "risks treating the Internet as a poetic plunderground without really feeding back into it," as Florian Cramer tells us is a shortcoming of uncreative writing. But, the text of "Seattle Drift" is not stuff; it requires some engagement on the ergodic level via the basic (but integral) use of hyperlinks. Andrews' language in the hyperlinks suggests a great deal of reader engagement, maintaining that the reader *does* the text rather than simply passively receiving it. Of course, the "reader" here does not do much more to the text than a print reader; the pressing of buttons that initiate and then delimit the movement of the poetry is only a small step further in engagement than the turning of a print page. We might even say that Andrews' suggestion that the words have their "own behavior" betrays the poem's explicit call for active and anti-traditional reader engagement in the opportunities to "Do" and then "Discipline" the text. But again, these words *do not* and *cannot* have their *own* behaviours.

While Andrews may have written of each word's own independence and activity, his recognition of the only partial randomness of the langwidget's path shows, however subtly, the importance of the elements of the poem's movement that are distinctly not random. The movement of the words of "Seattle Drift" across the page is designed to seem random, but it is quite clearly controlled by three primary factors: first, by the reader who starts and stops the movement; second, by Andrews who wrote the code and the algorithm for the movement and made the necessary choices of design and content (and by Niemi who helped to alter this code); and third, by a pretty straightforward algorithm governing the movement itself. A quick look at the webpage's source code unearths a pseudo-randomizing function that determines if each word will move left or right, up or down, with a heavy bias towards downward and rightward movement (see Figure 2).

```
function moveIt() {
  // This function is run upon loading the document (see the BODY statement).
  // It is always running when the document is loaded. This is done by means
  // of the setTimeout function. Essentially, there is a 15 millisecond
  // delay between calls to this function.
    moveMe(document.getElementById('SEATTLE').style, 4, 2);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('DRIFT').style, 3, 2);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('Iml').style, 4, 1);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('a2').style, 5, 3);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('bad3').style, 3, 3);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('text4').style, 2, 1);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('period5').style, 4, 4);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('I6').style, 4, 1);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('used7').style, 3, 3);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('to8').style, 4, 2);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('be9').style, 2, 3);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('a10').style, 5, 5);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('poem11').style, 1, 2);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('but12').style, 3, 3);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('drifted13').style, 1, 3);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('from14').style, 4, 2);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('the15').style, 5, 5);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('scene16').style, 2, 3);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('period17').style, 1, 4);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('Do18').style, 2, 4);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('me19').style, 3, 3);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('period20').style, 2, 2);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('I21').style, 4, 1);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('just22').style, 2, 3);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('want23').style, 3, 1);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('you24').style, 3, 1);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('to25').style, 3, 1);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('do26').style, 3, 3);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('me27').style, 4, 5);
    moveMe(document.getElementById('period28').style, 2, 3);
  setTimeout(moveIt, 15);
}
```

Figure 2
A screen capture of source code from "Seattle Drift" by Jim Andrews, published on Vispo.com and reprinted with permission of the author.

The range of movement is regulated by a function, with the numbers in parentheses determining how far, in pixels, each word will move, the first for the x-axis, the second the y-axis.

Looking at these movement ranges shows that some words, like "a" and "the," and some of the punctuation, are given much greater range of movement, causing them to recede from the text much more quickly. On the other hand, some words, like "poem," "text," and "drifted," move more slowly and remain on the screen longer: "text" is almost always the final word on the screen, moving two pixels horizontally and one pixel vertically where others, like the "a" that precedes "poem," move at five pixels in each direction. While each "doing" is different, for the most part a similar outcome is reached. The movement of "Seattle Drift" is partially randomized, partially organized, with the reader determining when and where that movement begins, ends, and begins all over again. Paola Trimarco points out that the ergodic interface of "Seattle Drift" is essentially optional; you can read and engage with the poem on a traditional level by visiting the page but not clicking the hyperlinks. The poem only drifts "if readers choose to become an active participant in the work" (89). For Trimarco, the poem literally begs an "active" readership (saying "Do me. I want you to do me") to engage ergodically with the work via the hyperlinks and their algorithms that reformat and alter the spatial and temporal properties of the poem, and this suggests a role reversal of the typical power structure of reader and poem. She writes,

> The tenor in this brief poem is informal and suggestive of a relationship between reader and text which might be interpreted as similar to parent and child or sadistically between two lovers, which in a sense reverses the power relationship between reader and poem, as the poems gives the order (in the command 'Do me') and the reader follows by clicking on the words on the screen. (89)

While reading the engagement between text and reader in "Seattle Drift" as that of parent and child recognizes one level of the text's desire for its own "Discipline," this interpretation does not fully address the erotic and sadomasochistic poetics explicit in this poem and the power dynamics therein.

"Seattle Drift" expresses a very intimate desire to move the power of the poem (its signification, its meaning, and its potential for exegesis) into the hands of a reader who controls the poem by starting it, stopping it, and disciplining it back to its original, traditional lineation. The poem desires its own abuse, desires that it be made bad (or perverse) by the reader's "abnormal" or non-traditional actions upon it. While these erotic readings

are exciting, I am most interested in the ways that they invite an intimate and close relationship between the text, its producer(s), and the readers who thus engage with the work.

In his book-length study of the visual properties of contemporary poetics, *Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry* (2007), Ian Davidson describes the movement of "Seattle Drift" as "slightly jerkily" (173). Alistair Brown draws out this phrase, not because it is inaccurate, but rather because the "slightly jerk[y]" movements of the words in "Seattle Drift" point to two issues: the relationship between the code and the tech that is used to view it, and the multiplicitous and reader-centric readings this variability suggests. On the first issue, the reader's experience of "Seattle Drift" depends on which device the reader uses to engage with it (as is the case with all digital technologies). After all, there is no software, as Friedrich Kittler reminds us. In the influential essay "There is No Software," Kittler argues that we must stop the popular and academic tendency to see software as somehow distinct from or prioritized over hardware "because software does not exist as a machine-independent faculty" (151). Instead, the theoretical separation between the physical hardware of computing and the various software we use in these computational processes allows for the copyright, commodification, and "property" status of the programming language as separate and independent from the hardware on which we use it. Rather than viewing software as separate from, or a consequence of, hardware, Kittler insists on "the virtual undecidability between software," arguing that "there are good grounds to assume the indispensability and, consequently, the priority of hardware in general" (152). So too there is no "Seattle Drift" save through the devices each reader uses to engage with the poem. On the second point, Brown remarks: "Displaying the text on a larger screen (such as my 27 inch monitor) means that there is more black space to the right and below for the poem to move into, before the words drift entirely off screen. The poem would offer a different sense if played on a mobile phone screen. . . . [T]he poem is not medium-neutral[.]" Each device and each screen presents artificial, constructed limitations to the reading of this poem. As Leonardo Flores writes in his doctoral thesis on Andrews, the words of "Seattle Drift" will continue drifting even after they leave the constraints of our screen: "[I]f allowed to drift for a long period of time, [the words] would create an enormous virtual space in the browser that would require serious exploration of that space using scrollbars to find them" (81). Because of this, any starting and stopping of the work draws artificial borders and limitations

on the "poem" no matter when its movement is started or stopped. While this fact—that our readings and interpretations place limits on a text—is true in the abstract of all texts, "Seattle Drift" and other digital poems like it make this artificiality explicit through both the visual representation of the poem in flux and the tongue-in-cheek language of the ergodic links.

"Seattle Drift" reveals its artificiality, placing it within the context of a canon of formal print-based avant-garde. This explicit artificiality also requires a rethinking of the generic and nationalist divides that make such canon formation possible. As Flores observes, "this e-poem enacts a critique of current and historical poetry scenes in order to create a space for a new e-poetry scene" ("Typing" 172). Pursuing the line of connection between digital poetics and concrete poetry is fruitful, particularly for kinetic works like this one that boasts its indebtedness to concrete as one poetic scene. Following this trajectory of influence also helps to reveal digital poetry's relationship to concrete poetry and other formalist and visual avant-garde traditions. Besides Andrews' own articulation of this connection in his work on the digital edition of Lionel Kearns' concrete poem "The Birth of God," the few existing studies of Andrews also trace this lineage. While I acknowledge this indebtedness to visual experimentation, I am much more interested in the fact that drawing such a direct, causal relationship between "Seattle Drift" and concrete poetry does not fully acknowledge how the poem works against such generic classification. Instead, the poem positions the scholarly desire to situate texts within historical, geographical, and generic classifications as the kind of "disciplining" that creates the "scenes" from which we must "drift" in order to move towards new forms of poetic and artistic practice.

By "disciplining" the text, the reader forces the poem into traditional lineation, but really, that is all. Andrews' invitation to the reader to "Do the text" signals the kind of reader engagement we might expect from a text-based computer game, but the fact that the words' movement is governed by algorithm shows that what the reader can "Do" to the text is fairly limited. The limitations placed on reader engagement turn the tables on the limiting practices of reading and interpretation; rather than an interpretation that limits the potential readings of a poem, the material, technological, and semantic elements of this poem ultimately limit what a reader can or should do, all while convincing the reader that they are more involved than they ever were. While the interventions a reader has access to in "Seattle Drift" are limited, by allowing readers the option of starting and stopping the movement and altering the positions of the visual elements in space and

time, the poem encourages readers to be aware of the ways that they are agential in their engagement of this digital poem, of digital text, and of poetic texts of all kinds.

In this way, the "scene" in question is both deSadean tableau (the term used to denote these scenes in *120 Days of Sodom*) *and* a scene of digital and electronic literature that must be differentiated from the canon of visual print poetics. The scene is also geographical. Andrews is often credited as a Vancouver-based poet, but this poem is called "Seattle Drift" and it is written, as Andrews tells us in an aside hidden in the source code, "in the spirit of Seattle" during the approximately four years that Andrews lived and wrote there. Moreover, "Seattle Drift" signals Andrews' collaboration with Joseph Keppler and the rest of the "Seattle crew" (Flores, "Typing" 111) from 1996-2000 when he produced this work and others like it (Andrews, "a few").

In email correspondence, I asked Andrews if he considered himself to be a Canadian poet, a Vancouver poet, a transnational poet, etc. Andrews' response tellingly points to the kind of border-blurring conversation "Seattle Drift" initiates: "I am a Canadian citizen. But nationalism is a blight upon the world" ("a few"). The drifting, overlapping, and obscuring movement of the words in this poem suggest another reading, recalling the visual and phonic similarities between "Seattle" and "settle," an act that Andrews' transnational collaboration and his border- and genre-blurring poetics resists; this blurring and obscuring movement also challenges Canadianness as a "settler" construct. That is, as the words continue their seemingly independent movement across the screen, they resist settling into their appropriate spaces, much like Andrews' movements throughout Canada, and into the US momentarily, similarly resist such geographic settling. Author and poem move alike, and as "Seattle Drift" drifts back and forth between Vancouver and Seattle, it interrogates the closedness of assigning geographical boundaries to poetic "scenes" (which might make texts "bad" or require "discipline"). Canadian literature here is resisted as a categorical model. "Seattle Drift" instead theorizes that any conception of a "Canadian literature" is only ever a collection of "scenes," between which we must always be drifting in order to blur the settler poetics of such a taxonomy, to reveal the arbitrariness of these lines.

Vancouver is a well-known site of many "scenes" of poetry like TISH and the Kootenay School of Writing. Known for a thriving literary scene that encourages the formation and exchange of many communities and schools of writing, Vancouver is an especially fruitful location from which to draw this

line of argument. Moreover, Vancouver's poetry "scenes" have always been in cross-scene, cross-genre, and transnational conversation. TISH, to take just one example, has close connections to many other American schools of poetry like Black Mountain College and the San Francisco Renaissance. In other words, Vancouver has long been one of several Canadian cities that scholars have painted as sites of Canada-US transnational collaboration and poetic exchange (see, for example, the entry on Canadian poetry in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*). Consider, too, the explicit internationality of the now-famous UBC summer class of 1963 that we now discuss as the "Vancouver Poetry Conference," which encouraged transnational connection and collaboration. These and many other nodes of connection between Vancouver-based poetries and poetry in the US continue, and are now facilitated even more by the communicative and collaborative potentials of networked computing. Andrews himself does not feel a particular alignment with any school of poetry, figuring that digital poets share much in terms of medium, but vary greatly in terms of the uses of that medium. In the aforementioned correspondence, Andrews wrote to me: "I don't know that I'd use the term 'school of' to describe the sorts of groups I feel aligned with. For instance, my approach to digital poetry is programmerly, multi-and-inter-medial. Hypertext poetry/fiction has never really interested me" ("a few"). Here, Andrews' concerns recall Emerson's discussion of e-literary genres at the start of this paper. For Andrews, it is not a separation of digital poetry from hypertext, but rather different artists working in similar mediums to different ends. This perspective necessarily encourages treating each digital text as independent but in conversation, not unlike the conversational drifting and occasional overlap of the distinct units of "Seattle Drift" itself.

Because of this, we can also read the movement of "Seattle Drift" as mapping or visually representing Andrews' Vancouver-based poetic concerns that literally drift toward Seattle. The words move south and east and the term "drift" suggests a movement by water to present visually, rather than simply geographically, the work as heading toward Seattle. This visual implies the movement metaphorically rather than using geo-tagging or mapping, as digital meditations on geography have tended to do. In this way, "Seattle Drift" does not simply resist category and exegesis; it makes you as a reader feel very naughty for wanting these things at all. Working against these histories and categories, the "scene" from which "Seattle Drift" drifts thus connotes subversion in light of the mainstream, as in an underground "scene" that opposes or resists popularity.

The implicit critique here of poetry scenes, including ones defined by geographic—city or national—borders means that my own desire to read the work as emblematic of a genre called "Canadian electronic literature" is difficult and problematic. What, precisely, does it mean to read the nation in digital writing? Electronic literature is marked by the kind of transnational and international conversation exemplified by Andrews' movement from Vancouver to Seattle and back again. It is also frequently defined by the collaboration suggested by Niemi's involvement in rewriting the code, as well as the intertextual and interauthorial conversations that permeate *Vispo.com*. But, these elements are obviously not exclusive to the digital. Loss Pequeño Glazier writes in his groundbreaking *Digital Poetics* (2002), "poets are making poetry with the same focus on method, visual dynamics, and materiality; what has expanded are the materials with which one can work" (1). What Glazier suggests here is that the difference between digital poetics and the procedural, visual practices of contemporary poetries are of degree rather than kind.

The "scene" of the poem also draws on meanings of the term that suggest construction. The *OED* shows that "scene" has clear connotations of theatrical performance, including the subdivisions of a larger piece, but also the literal construction of the stage. With usage in English dating back as early as 1481, the word "scene" has an early meaning as "the whole area set aside for the dramatic action, including both this background structure and the proscenium . . . where the actors stood; the stage" ("scene, n."). The term also refers to "the view presented to the audience at any time during the action of a performance by means of the scenery, lighting, etc.," suggesting that what is important in its use is not simply how the scene is set, but that it is set with the intention of being viewed by an audience in a particular way, revealing only certain parts and leaving others within the purview of the actors or producers of the performance. Andrews' use of this term draws attention to the text's performance of its "poemness," stating the fact of its being a "poem" (however bad) in its first line. The theatrical connotations of "scene" also suggest that the reader who clicks the hyperlinks carries out the action of the poem as an actor in this performance rather than as a passive member of the audience.

"Scene" also necessarily refers to the material construction of that space. As the *OED* also notes, the term has a long history of use in the phrase "behind the scenes," which is of particular use to us in discussing "Seattle Drift." The *OED* explains "behind the scenes" as the space both figuratively and literally "[b]ehind the stage or the scenery of a theatre where the public is not usually admitted; out of sight of the audience" ("scene, n."). The fact that "Seattle

Drift" presents a "scene" from which it "drifts" reveals a performance of poetry that is constructed on a material level. This is especially important in the digital realm where text is frequently understood as ephemeral and immaterial, despite the work of media theorists like Emerson, Kittler, and many others to reveal the extent to which the ephemeral metaphors of cloud storage and unstable code are grounded in the (highly politicized) materiality of the technological. Technological material is *always* connected, as Kittler reminds us, with corporations, planned obsolescence, and detrimental international labour and environmental relations. Andrews invites his readers to look behind the scenes of "Seattle Drift," and to engage with his source code, which includes intimate notes like "This is the first DHTML piece I did" at its start, and a personal dedication ("inspired by Seattle's own California girl Anne, who knows who she is") as an aside. Andrews writes a considerable amount of discussion in the source code that would not be available to readers who do not look behind the scenes.

Like an introduction, footnote, or paratextual clue that guides the reading process, the code of "Seattle Drift" contains some explanatory notes, but refuses to direct interpretation. Andrews, for example, explains the div tags (tags that group together or contain a small part of HTML code) that govern the movement of the poem, writing that "Each of the div tags holds one word of the poem," and then concedes "OK it's a poem." Rather than enforcing or explaining a certain kind of reading, Andrews' reluctant "OK" in this aside suggests a concession to an external (reader, critic) voice who insists "Yes, this IS a poem despite its first two lines." Moreover, Andrews comments in this section about how the text is written in response to questions he was thinking about regarding poetry and the digital medium, but that it is designed to encourage discussion rather than make an argument. Connecting his commentary here on the digital medium in poetry to the questions posed by abstract visual art about representation, Andrews states in the code that "[b]oth prompt, rather than raise the questions directly," placing the onus again on the reader who must ask and answer these questions on their own. These intimate, conversational suggestions throughout the code reveal an authorial persona invested in questions and collaboration rather than answers. The author revealed in this behind-the-scenes space is tentative at best. In fact, the voice in the code doesn't even know what to call the space from which it speaks: "And this neath [*sic*] text, what is it?" Looking "behind the scenes" of "Seattle Drift" reveals a space where questions are prompted and readers are invited

to engage in the very same space where the authorship makes manifest its presence and its constructedness. This "neath text," this "behind the scenes," undergirds the ergodic engagement and poetic "drifting" of the work, and here we find the poem's most clearly authorial voice. The importance of the source code in this work makes it ergodic more than the clicking of the hyperlinks that supposedly "Do" the text. This poem, then, theorizes authorship of electronic literature as an ambiguous site of authorial power; "Seattle Drift" relegates these authorial intrusions to the "neath text" to lay bare the ways in which the ergodic invites active readerly engagement, but at the same time relies heavily on the author's construction and control of the digital space. The source code here is not "the text," but it is nonetheless central to our interpretations of that text.

I do not mean to suggest that "Seattle Drift" is codework in the proper sense. Codework is most clearly defined by critic and author of electronic literature John Cayley in "The Code Is Not the Text (Unless It Is the Text)." In this essay for the *electronic book review*, Cayley defines as codework any "literature which uses, addresses, and incorporates code: as underlying language-animating or language-generating programming, as a special type of language in itself, or as an intrinsic part of the new surface language or 'interface text' . . . of writing in networked and programmable media." While this continues to be the tried-and-true definition of codework, Mark Marino points out in "Critical Code Studies" that Cayley takes issue with unexecutable codework, of which Andrews' brief, personal asides hidden in his code are one tenuous example. Marino writes that "Cayley's chief complaint is that the analyzed 'code' in many of the celebrated codeworks exists merely on the surface of the work, output." Marino observes that if we take Cayley's understanding of unexecutable code as purely aesthetic, then we must also admit that these "surface depictions of coding elements are but partial representations, presenting a fraction of code's signifying force." Rather than viewing code as meaningful only insofar as it is functional, Marino proposes instead "that we no longer speak of the code as a text in metaphorical terms, but that we begin to analyze and explicate code as a text, as a sign system with its own rhetoric, as verbal communication that possesses significance in excess of its functional utility." "Seattle Drift" is not codework, and Andrews' hidden asides do not interfere with the execution of the code, but they do constitute a "neath text," a secondary code written for human readers rather than machines that is only available to the reader who intervenes in the work, thus evoking Marino's call to read the source code of electronic

literature because it moves us beyond "surface depictions of coding elements" and into the close reading of surface and code as intrinsically linked.

Thus, if we are to follow Marino, we must consider these authorial intrusions in the source code as "unexecutable" by machines, but encouraging new and more intrusive readings by human readers. These brief glimpses into the authorship at varying points in time reveal the importance of the author in the digital poetic text, making that authorship one node in the production and reception of this work. In various versions of the work, from *Vispo*'s archive to *Cauldron & Net*'s early publication, the intrusions of the authorial voice into the source code change. Flores indicates, too, that there were shifts in these authorial commentaries in the code from the earlier Javascript versions to the updated DHTML and with the help of Niemi. So, unlike poetics essays, introductions, or other paratextual clues that use the authorial voice to guide interpretation of experimental poetry—that would otherwise be opaque or illegible without these supposed skeleton keys—Andrews' intrusions into the code reveal an authorial avatar rather than an authoritative, guiding voice. These "lines intended for humans" reveal the limitations of the authorial self in expression, but they also reveal the limitations of computing, an issue that Andrews speaks of often. By hiding these "Easter egg"-style messages in the code of this work, Andrews points out how often we as readers are seduced by the colours and movement of digital writing and image, and how little the average reader notices, cares, or understands the workings of the back end.

For Andrews, recognition of the limitations of computing is important for the new media artist. In a Vancouver interview with David "Jhave" Johnston, Andrews insists that careful thought about the affordances and the limitations of creative computing is "useful for digital artists to be cognizant of because sometimes I think the horizons for digital artists aren't broad enough" ("Jim Andrews"). Though the video was posted in 2013, Andrews' comments still ring true about the tendencies of poetic production for traditional print and digital media, where for the most part writers treat the "computer as a glorified typewriter," as Andrews says in the same interview. One of the great powers of the kinetic is to present, in Andrews' own words, "programmed thought as art." And to consider not (or not only) human thought, but the potentials of "machine thought" as well. The algorithmic drifting of the words and punctuation marks in "Seattle Drift" signifies the work done in the late 1990s to encourage the use of computing in arts as more than just word processing.

While we cannot rightfully classify Andrews' work in "Seattle Drift" as hacker, in its use of the ergodic to reveal the constructedness of the poem and its classification in genre or geography, it is clear that the work is operating in and informed by the hacker and net-art culture of the mid- to late 1990s. As Rob Schoenbeck writes in the entry on "Seattle Drift" for the Electronic Literature Organization's *Electronic Literature Directory,* Andrews' kinetic poem "has the experimental, minimalist quality that characterizes much of mid-90s net art, exploring the role of particular code functions in the construction of Web aesthetics while also playing with the code's distance from (and closeness to) the surface of the Web browser." Demonstrating, then, new levels of affiliation with 1990s net art, ASCII art, early codework, and hacker culture, the deceptively simplistic aesthetic of "Seattle Drift" reminds its readers of the slippery, tenuous, drifting nature of all of these signifiers, exemplifying the transnationality, genre- and border-blurring, and conversational elements of Vancouver's poetry scene throughout the last fifty years, and suggesting not an affiliation with any one poetry scene but rather a diverse and rhizomatic connection to multiple scenes, multiple places, and multiple poetic conversations. The diffuse nature of "Seattle Drift" reminds us at once of the futility of national literatures in an age of digital writing, and the potential usefulness of a national literature that knows that it is always already multiple.

NOTES

1 "Ergodic" is the term electronic literature scholars use to describe a work that requires substantive engagement on the part of the user/reader for the work to function. The term was adapted by Espen Aarseth in *Cybertext* (1997) from physics scholarship. In Aarseth's words, the ergodic is any work of transmedial or born-digital literary media that requires "nontrivial effort . . . to allow the reader to traverse the text" (1).

2 In this essay, I use the term "reader" to describe the audience of the works in question. Obviously, ergodic reader engagement in digital writing complicates the passive connotations of the term "reader," and some digital humanities scholars have opted for the term "user" instead, or the clunky combination of "reader/user." For my purposes, I want to situate electronic literary and digital poetic practice in terms of a literary tradition and poetic community, so I use the term "reader" to make clear the relationship between audience and text as well as the shift towards the ergodic, interactivity, and engagement.

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Jeff Derksen

From: *The Present*

Today, that phatic day, presses upon the present
a feeling that goes past its possible experience.
a knowledge that outstrips
the damage done. And the damage to come.

Today optimism is
to take over the building
you have lived in and then
got evicted from.
Occupation, the turn over
and not the disposition.
The ships are always in the harbour—they are a network
we are a network and I'd like
to differentiate, to make different—against the tide
the world made smoother

Centre and periphery, finally abolished
by the same violence that made
them both, "subjected to force by police"
now, or the army or the invading forces, then.
and that can be, must of been wrong place
wrong body, wrong technology, wrong continent.
~~Is there ever a right time?~~

Even the sea
is on fire when you cross it
out of necessity.

Today, a coup or a stunt coup, or a media coup
made the present appear
as history and not a screwing down
onto itself, double down against the others.
"I know a place, ain't no smiling faces."
The economic draws the cultural in,

then the cultural leads at one point, justifying not love
dusting disdain, revenge, some form
of cruelty we have become accustomed to.
The point, where they cross, the economic
and our lives, is the point to place the explosives.
Is that what work is.

Today, was a day to get things done
where things get done
as acts that replenish themselves.
Working, I did not
see it this way, day *reproduces itself*.

Today is not going to happen
like de-schooling Adorno or having the state
apologize through a networked software
the joy, the pure joy
the workers jumped up
all having finished their tasks.

Today, not even here yet and already
there's been pleas like Little Willie John's
"Talk to Me" at midnight, at midnight
America again.

Today, the present has compressed
autonomy. In 1934, when the miners
in Asturias took it for ten hours
the fascists scouted with an autogyro
what we might
now call a drone. And the present
compresses into a form
of foreboding that never arrives.

What can make this break.

Today, Calais.
Today, Charlotte.
Today Aleppo.
Today Tulsa.
Yesterday L.A.
and not so long ago Baghdad.

Christopher Gutierrez

Anxious Speculation

Vancouver(ism), Indebtedness, and Everyday Urban Affect

In her 2012 sculpture, *49°14′29″N , 122°58′17″W (to describe space, to divide it, to name it),* South African-born and Vancouver-based artist Lyndl Hall reconfigured the Burnaby Art Gallery along both real and imagined lines by reconstructing the intersecting latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates of the gallery through two small, crossing, white walls that meet on the gallery floor. The two walls then follow their precise coordinates out the door, across the lawn, and through the garden before disappearing over the horizon. Here the material remainder of cartography is made at once visible and impeding for the gallery visitor. By cutting through the middle of the gallery, these small walls force the viewer to consider both the real and conceptual spaces of the cartographic coordinates.

Beside these intersecting structures, Hall placed a large, 44″× 60″ digital print that reads from top down, "Latitudes and Longitudes of the Principal Ports, Harbours, Headlands, Etc., in the World—circa 1924—Longitudes are East and West from the Meridian of Vancouver," adding another possibility to the gallery's fixed lines. This second piece, titled *There are other ways of inhabiting the world*, reorients the grid that had just materialized in the gallery by shifting the centre of the system of coordinates from London to Vancouver. As an imaginary and novel way of organizing the world, the numbers on the print offer a glimpse into a different way of organizing, and creating, our everyday environments.

The timing of this particular piece, which opened in June of 2012, revealed more than just the historical connections between the two sites. The cities at the centre of this show were sharing an extended spotlight as Vancouver

had hosted the Winter Olympics in 2010, and London was preparing to host the Summer Olympics in 2012. In the run-up and drawdown of these events, each of these cities had been discussed as exceptional sites, as spaces of multicultural, liberal success, and yet both had, in the previous summer, undergone major moments of civil unrest and rioting. These moments of unrest, a riot that developed following a hockey game in Vancouver and several days of both protest and violence sparked by police violence in East London, are obviously very different in origin, yet they reveal an unease at work in the idealized image of each city. That is, these sudden eruptions of violence reveal another materialization of an anxious cartography.

This paper will chart this particular anxiety as it emerges within the fantasy, and reality, of Vancouver as both a model for urban planning and a material space. As Jeff Derksen argues, "The life of any city, and our lives within it, is always a dramatic testing of the possible against the contained, a friction of the imagined and what can be made material." By considering the city as both a discursive and material site, I aim to further our understanding of the particular mechanisms of both individual interpellation and social belonging that are written into our urban landscapes. As urban life is increasingly understood as a space for affective intervention, one where "the creation and mobilization of affect have become an integral part of the everyday urban landscape" (Thrift 58), this paper contributes to debates on the intersections of affective experience, discursive construction, and everyday urban life by paying specific attention to how the language and practices of urban planning are drawn into imaginations of the city. In particular, I focus on the moments when ideational and material structures collide, when affect and thought intersect, and when plan and reality come together and pull apart. Because one such moment, the 2011 riot that broke out in the downtown core of Vancouver following the Vancouver Canucks' loss in the National Hockey League's Stanley Cup Final, marked a rupture in the image of Vancouver as an exceptional site, my exploration of Vancouver's particular anxiousness begins in the urban history that preceded this riot. This history is a long and complex one, marked by colonial occupation, racialized violence, and capitalist expansion, and each of these forces intersected the morning following the riot when then-Premier of British Columbia, Christy Clark, joined a crew of volunteers in downtown Vancouver to board up smashed windows and sweep up debris. During this visit, she paused in front of the Hudson Bay flagship store and wrote, "This city belongs to us! Keep it Beautiful!" on the plywood covering a broken

window. As a message designed to distinguish the morning's volunteers from the previous evening's rioters, Clark's writing reminds those aligned with the colonial merchant that the city is, once again and as always, theirs to claim. In so doing, the history that preceded the riot is reimagined the morning after as a post-political urban experience where all conflict is transformed into potential partnerships.

The first part of this paper will explore the relationship between the "communicative turn" in urban planning discourse, the increasing number of comparative and quantified metrics for understanding the city, and the development of a post-political image of the city. The following section considers how Vancouverism, as a model for urban planning, has come to be understood as a commodity within this post-political realm, and how this particular commodified and imagetic form of Vancouver is felt in the city as an anxious structure. Here, I will consider Vancouver's image in relation to both the particularly racialized imaginary landscape of empty condos and the ongoing indebtedness of a city where speculative real estate investment continues to dominate an already expensive housing market. Finally, by combining these discursive, ideational, and material realities, this paper concludes with a reading of Douglas Keefe and John Furlong's report on the June 15, 2011 Stanley Cup riot to consider the affective forces of both the riot and the response to the riot. As I understand this moment as one where the anxiety of the subject is snapped into a present material reality, I conclude this paper by considering the events of that night as a particular affective worlding; as a moment when the popular image of the city disappeared and a moment when the subject encountered the violent reality of present-day Vancouver.

1. Post-Political Plans

Increasingly, in some academic and popular spheres, the *city* has become identified as a repository of utopian hope and as the home of pluralism, liberalism, and tolerance. This uplifting and hopeful image of the city finds its genesis in at least two separate spheres: first, in the increasing presence of planning as both an academic and public endeavour, and second, in the discursive circulation of the planned city in an ever-increasing number of lists, metrics, and rankings in the public imagination.

These two spheres are obviously not mutually exclusive; rather, each benefits from the affective amplification of the other. Equally important to this amplification is that these two forces share a genealogy, as they are

both largely credited to the work of a generation of urban planners trained in the midst of their discipline's "communicative turn" in the 1990s.[1] This methodological turn, famously laid out by Patsy Healey in her oft-cited 1992 article, "Planning through Debate: The Communicative Turn in Planning Theory," aimed to incorporate Habermasian ideals of communicative action into the broader practices of urban planning in order to shake the image of planning as a particularly modernist, individualized, and rationalist field.[2] The goal was to open planning up to the very citizens it was planning for and to employ language that was "*future seeking* but not, like its physical blueprint and 'goal directed' predecessors, *future defining*" (158, emphasis original). This opening came in the form of an invitation for wider dialogue with all citizens interested in the future shape of the city. As a necessarily public process, the communicative turn shifted the image of planning away from the singular planner and towards a model of plurality and community. In short, as Healey explained in 1992,

> What is being invented, in planning practice and planning theory, is a new form of planning, a respectful argumentative form, of *planning through debate* [emphasis original], appropriate to our recognition of the failure of modernity's conception of 'pure reason,' yet searching, as Habermas does, for a continuation of the Enlightenment project of democratic progress through reasoned inter-subjective argument among free citizens. (160, emphasis original)

Through this democratization of planning practice and theory, the discursive tone of planning becomes equal parts public, egalitarian, and hopeful, while the goal remains necessarily utopian. Thus, where before a singular planner could draw evidence from within their particular ideological position—think of Haussmann's renovation of Paris, Le Corbusier's sketches of Chandigarh—the process of communicative planning instead creates an evolving array of metrics, techniques, and technologies that are presented as objective and non-ideological in order to rank the virtues of a given space.

As forecasts for a city's future are repeated, critiqued, questioned, re-evaluated, reimagined, and recycled again and again in the public debates, there is a particular affective amplification to the accrual of these ideas. In this sense, the ongoing construction and maintenance of dialogue around, about, and in the service of ranking cities further inculcates a normative image for all cities. This image is meant to represent not just what a city is, but also what a city should be. As Eugene McCann, Ananya Roy, and Kevin Ward explain of the list's aspirational, and prohibitive, functions:

> There seems to be an unending number of benchmarks, measures, metrics, and rankings produced by various sources, from international and national

> state agencies to NGOs, from activist groups to consultants and media outlets. All seek to *position* cities within a global frame. In some cases, the coordinates used to put cities in their (global) place are "aspirational," highlighting certain characteristics or features that cities *should* exhibit: the tallest building, the most creative "types," the most sustainable industries, the highest growth rates, or the most progressive social policies. (581, emphasis original)

By thinking about the accrual of lists in disciplinary terms here, as a field of comparison that creates "a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed" (Foucault, *Discipline* 182), the prospect of being acknowledged as an urban space worth visiting or living in is a potentially profitable one for the places included on the list in aspirational terms. Piled up again and again, the weight of these rankings, reactions, theories, and ideas becomes not just fodder for journalists, or even the disciplinary mechanism of policing good and bad cities that McCann et al. articulate, but they also become the discursive weight for a specific form of governmentality where this discursive circulation produces a regime of knowledge and truth for cities, planners, and citizens to work through.

In what we might consider the politics of good ideas, then, the popular image of urbanism today revolves around transforming these increasingly numerous metrics into a set of best practices that mix government and private industry, a particular urban lifestyle image, and a movement away from political antagonism. This image aligns historically with another 1990s political and economic development, when, as Slavoj Žižek proposes in a 1999 interview, there is a similar dissolution of political conflict in different spheres and a post-politics emerges that focuses on compromise, negotiation, and consensus. Alongside Heatley's call for a communicative model in urban planning, the post-political emerges in urban discourses as an appeal to more inclusive (i.e., consensus, compromise, and collaboration) and broader (i.e., sustainable, profitable, walkable) ideas that function by expressing a normative position as a common sense one. In the language of urban planning, then, conflict is foreclosed through a specific vocabulary of impossibly good ideas. As Phil Allmendinger and Graham Haughton explain, "Concepts such as 'sustainable development,' 'climate change,' 'zero carbon development,' 'urban renaissance' and 'smart growth' are post-political in that they encourage support (who could be 'for' 'dumb growth' or 'unsustainable development'?)" (94). The language and affects of communicative urban planning and post-politics take on similarly sensible tones, inviting the quick inclusion of divergent viewpoints that can be easily accommodated in the model.

This extension of planning shifts the post-political from the realm of the discursive to, as Jodi Dean has argued, a post-politics of life itself, where "[t]here is an attunement, in other words, to a micropolitics of the everyday" (57). As both a home for a growing number of people and a site of affective intervention, the city is increasingly conducive to governmentality where, as Jeff Derksen makes clear, the binding of affect and planning policy has opened up a space for neoliberal intervention to profit from popular desires for sustainable, ecological, or culturally vibrant spaces. Thus, inasmuch as planners understand cities largely as post-political spaces of (and for) economic development, the major civic activity becomes the harnessing of capital towards the city and the task of urban planning is to "lure highly mobile and flexible production, financial, and consumption flows into its space" (Harvey 11). In this sense, there is a parallelism between the turn to communicative planning, the post-political city, and the rise of the entrepreneurial neoliberal subject where, just as the subject "is an entrepreneur of himself who incurs expenses by investing to obtain some kind of improvement" (Foucault, *The Birth* 230), the city looks to harness these investments through an image that offers the imagined future, and the imagined income-stream, the subject envisions.

2. Mapping Vancouver(ism): Entrepreneurial Resonances/Material Remainders

As the inspiration for an urban planning model, Vancouver provides a particularly fruitful site of investigation into the affective anxiety emergent in the gap between imagined urbanism and present reality. The most oft-cited definition of Vancouverism comes from a laudatory *New York Times* article that explained the model as being "characterized by tall, but widely separated, slender towers interspersed with low-rise buildings, public spaces, small-parks and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes and facades to minimize the impact of a high-density population" (Chamberlain). This relatively benign set of principles has afforded Vancouverism great traction in its ability to travel from city to city as a potentially replicable system.

In this sense, the near full-scale replications of Vancouver-esque buildings and neighbourhoods in diverse sites—including Toronto's Cityplace neighbourhood and Dubai Creek in the United Arab Emirates—are like most commodities: they are couched in the language of exceptionality, where Vancouver's urban success is understood to have been the result of foresight, planning, and intelligent decisions that can be deployed in any given cityspace. Thus, Vancouverism melds the particular communicative turn in

urban planning with models of neoliberal subjectivity to offer an image of a city that is at once planned, democratic, and profitable. This image finds its way into popular press books about the city, such as Lance Berelowitz's 2005 *Dream City: Vancouver and the Global Imagination*, which begins by explaining that

> Vancouver has emerged as the poster child of urbanism in North America. In recent years, through a series of locally grown strategies, Vancouver has consciously willed itself into becoming a model of contemporary city-making. Like the most vivid of dreams, the city is reinventing itself: something curious, perhaps even miraculous, is happening here. The visitors—mostly from American cities seeking to find the key to their own urban renewal—come in steady droves, eagerly shepherded around town by local planners, politicians and academics. (1)

Vancouver, in this fantastical origin story aptly captured by Berelowitz, is a remarkable site willed into existence through the determination of its inhabitants and the foresight of its planners. Following this logic, Trevor Boddy notes in his review of Berelowitz's book that this moment in the mid-2000s was one where Vancouverism, first identifiable only in the sense that the city had the ability to build tall residential buildings, was "evolving a second or more interesting sense: that of latent character, the subjective quirks of urban identity hidden behind these shiny facades" (Boddy 18). This second sense, one that saw writers increasingly "producing books that capture this precious moment of self-knowledge" (18) acts as the moment where the planning model—a model built over decades, by dozens of people, with dozens of competing ideas, with dozens of political positions, and developed under the weight of federal and provincial budgets, a natural environment carved out of mountains, oceans and forest, and good old happenstance—becomes a noun and a commodity. That is, Boddy draws out the moment here where Vancouver's planning model, now in the form of Vancouverism, becomes as much an asset, in the Marxist sense as crystallized labour, as a vision of the city. Vancouverism becomes exchangeable, replicable, and profitable based on the perceived labour of its development, which allows for not just the replication of its relatively minimal design principles in different places, but also the exchange of Vancouverism for the profits of academics, planners, and architects.

In this sense, the circulation of Vancouverism as a planning model superimposes an image of Vancouver over the already existent space. This superimposition involves the recognition of a spatial imagination within everyday life and a type of satellite body for the city dweller. As Noriyuki Tajima explains, the satellite body is a type of doubling where everyday life in

the city is overlaid with an imaginary image of the city and the citizen moves between "the scale of the map and the scale of experiential perception" (84). The accrual of texts about Vancouver, in this sense, can translate into the accrual of material forms, and the space in between plan and reality becomes the affective world of everyday life.

This in-between-ness, a middle ground that is highlighted discursively in Vancouverism as the commingling of the public and the private in the name of the good, livable city, is equally manifested at the level of the everyday. As Matthew Soules has explained, Vancouverism operates materially as a "synthesis of formerly conflicting spatial ideologies—the urban and the suburban—[and] is the example par excellence of post-politics in the making of cities" (145). Making literal what an overarching plan can offer only theoretically, this compromised spatial form is articulated in attempts to combine urban levels of density and proximity with suburban images of space and leisure. Thus, Vancouver and its most emblematic and enthusiastically reproduced neighbourhoods offer a consistent and comforting repetition of podium towers, manicured lawns, and leisure space; a blend and reiteration that, as Soules notes, "forecloses spatial practices that have the potential to challenge existing frameworks: new and unforeseen programs and interrelationships, alternate ownership and rental structures, and the architecture that responds to these demands" (146). There is a mirroring effect, then, between Vancouver's spatial practices and planning model; just as the image of Vancouverism is meant to operate above the political fray through a narrative of planning and impossibly good ideas that foreclose discontent from the very beginning, the spatial, architectural, and material structure of the city equally closes avenues of possible conflict, and even politics, prior to their emergence.

If Vancouver(ism)'s successes, as both a city and a plan, are predicated on a cohesive binding of the plan to the place and an equal binding of the entrepreneurial subject within the entrepreneurial city, it is in the speculative resonances, in the imagined futures, of these bindings that the city's anxiety is manifested. Matthew Soules has further noted that one of the main criticisms of Vancouver(ism) is that it is boring: that for a city built on livability, it is equally "bland, conformist, and oddly quiet and inactive, especially given its exceptional density" (146). This eerily quiet sensation, often called *empty condo syndrome* in reference to the lack of people, and even lights, in certain high-density parts of Vancouver, complicates the city's livable status. This strange nothingness that can be palpable amongst some

of Vancouver's tallest residential towers has been the site of great speculation for the city's residents. While Soules points specifically to the architecture and plan of the neighborhood as the cause of this creeping anxiety, some have speculated that this vacancy has to do with the particular recreational activities available to Vancouverites, and still others place blame on foreign speculators for snapping up condos as investment opportunities and leaving them empty while waiting for a profitable return.

It is this third theory—speculation of potential speculation, speculation that links Vancouver as a city to its wider reputation as a model for urban life and planning, and speculation that seeks out foreignness in the everyday cosmopolitan space—that most clearly resonates with a specific urban anxiety of the entrepreneurial subject and city, and, furthermore, a specific urban anxiety drawn from an enduring history of racialized panic. Here, speculation that searches for the number of foreign, and especially Asian, investors in a given development is complicit with the historic, and racist, fears of foreign invasion that marred local, provincial and national politics throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[3] These politics are laid bare in historic events such as the internment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War and in racialized legislation such as the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885 that placed a head tax on Chinese migrants or the British Columbia Elections Act of 1895 that denied the vote to persons of Asian ancestry. Such historical events are disposed of by the careful dialogue of communicative urban planning and post-politics, yet they remain a persistent spectre in contestations over urban space; they remain a haunting force and an affective resonance on quiet city streets.[4] Consider the particularly fearful language that Vancouver journalist Frances Bula deploys in describing the atmosphere of one Vancouver neighbourhood often cited as evidence of a foreign takeover:

> Take a walk through Coal Harbour after dark and you'll see some lights in the towers along the water, but many windows are dark, silent. We can believe they are all owned by foreign speculators, as empty sidewalks away from the seawall suggest. We can believe that few are so owned, since few notices overall are mailed out of country. But we know that's fear in our hearts, a fear that needs more than one lonely researcher looking for answers. (4)

Capital, and speculative capital in particular, haunts both the image, and the affective resonance, of Vancouver's oddly quiet streets. Bula's piece, in which she chased this resonance by combing through the mailing addresses of owners used by the city to release annual property tax assessments for

two Coal Harbour condo buildings, revealed only a small minority of out-of-country addresses on the list. This seeming lack of foreign ownership failed to necessarily dispel any anxiety on her part, though, because no matter the level of foreign investment in new buildings, the amount of overall speculative investment in downtown Vancouver is enormous. As she explains of the Woodward's conversion on Cordova Street:

> But as it turns out, only 153 of 367 units in the taller of the complex's two towers were bought by people planning to live there themselves. The other 214, aside from nine units of social housing, are owned by a breadth of investors—from big to penny-ante, foreign to local . . . The vast majority are testament to the hold that investment culture has on Canada's middle class. (Bula 5)

Working through a particular post-political lens here, Bula draws attention to the amount of speculative investment taking place as an everyday phenomenon in Vancouver. The anxiety of life in Vancouver, marked here by the evacuation of social life in the city because of the force of this speculative capital, is often processed as a racialized threat of foreignness that, rather than confronting the effects of capital, reinforces an exclusionary sense of who can claim ownership over a civic space. Thus, in the buildings Bula describes, we see the gap between the plan—the image of Vancouver as exceptional, multicultural, and diverse that is being bought by investors in the hopes of a making a profit—and the reality—an increasingly siloed and unaffordable city which reinforces an enduring, racialized imaginary.

In this way, speculation, and its necessary indebtedness, most clearly functions as an attempt to bridge this gap between an imagined and lived reality without falling into paranoid racialized imaginary. Just as city planning and subject planning involve a speculative investment in the future, a different type of indebtedness, in order to achieve a desired outcome, the accrual of financial debt in the city marks the aspirational hopes of its inhabitants. Debt-based speculation—whether in the form of distant or suburban investors snapping up downtown condominiums, local buyers saddled with swollen mortgages, or students taking on larger and larger loans in the face of growing educational costs—can be understood as an engagement with the future. Going back to school, buying a house, starting a business, extending lines of credit, refinancing a mortgage, and deferring payment for a brighter future can all be read as modalities of anxiety because they are ambitious leaps at negotiating, or merely outlasting, present uncertainties.

The uncertainty of this leap is lived in the city proper, as mapping debt across Vancouver reveals that it is both Canada's most indebted metropolitan

area at an average household debt load of 266.2% of disposable income, and also a city where this debt is concentrated in the outer suburbs and newly gentrifying areas of the inner core.[5] As incomes have failed to rise with the growth in housing costs, the imagined promise of Vancouver(ism) becomes a distant possibility in the everyday lives of most of the city's inhabitants. In place of the promised everyday experience, the entrepreneurial subject and city are left only with the speculative future of the plan and pure speculation on space itself.

3. "A Positive Anxiety"

But what happens when the plan never materializes? Or when the promised return is stolen from those most invested in the imagined future? Alongside the ongoing speculation on the future of Vancouver's housing market and as the spectre of capital that haunts the city demonstrates, the structure and saturation of Vancouver's debtscape reveal a city deeply invested in a future arrival. At times, these investments might emerge in different forms—in the cumulative shaping of the desires of the citizens for a reward, or in the hopes pinned to a shared civic object. In this sense, hope in the face of an anxious future, or a speculative housing market, or an indebted investment remains a vital force in the fabric of a city.

Manifestations of hope arrive in the present through a historical channelling, attaching themselves to objects and orienting these objects to an emergent future. The utopian desires of planning are invested in the creation and accumulation of hopeful objects, and the 2010-2011 Vancouver Canucks operated as just such an object, as a historically meaningful and sentimental force whose emergence offered hope for a novel future arrival. Already deeply engrained in the community, as is typical for a professional hockey team in a major Canadian city, the 2010-2011 version of the Vancouver Canucks offered a particularly hopeful and optimistic object for the collective attachment of the city's population. As John Furlong and Douglas Keefe explain in their report following the June 15 rioting, the franchise's forty-two-year history without a Stanley Cup championship seemed to be culminating in this particular season: "For years, supporters yearned for a Stanley Cup victory. In 2010/2011 the team enjoyed its best regular season ever, winning the President's Trophy as the NHL's top point getter and qualifying for the Stanley Cup Finals. Anticipation in the community was palpable" (127). Coming off the success of the Olympics and experiencing unprecedented winning on the ice, the Canucks' victory in the finals seemed predetermined, and as the team moved towards this

inevitable end, the city became a playground to celebrate each of the team's victories. At the same time, though, this anticipation was marred with a particular anxiety—the city had been home to famous hockey losses, and famous hockey riots, before. In 1994, following a loss in the deciding game of the Stanley Cup Final, fans in Vancouver rioted and, as Furlong and Keefe note in reviewing recommendations for future events, "The long shadow of the 1994 Stanley Cup riot falls on this issue . . ." (101).

In this way, Furlong and Keefe's report, controversial for both its enormous budget and city-friendly conclusions, can be read as a particular testament to modulations of hope and anxiety in the city.[6] In a document designed to investigate both the causes of, and the city's preparedness for, the riots, Furlong and Keefe open up the very affective gap between plan and outcome, and between expectation and reality, that mirrors the city's anxious relationship to planning, speculation, and investment. In their introduction to the report, the authors find themselves repeating a now familiar refrain of Vancouver's successful planning, noting the confluence of the city's space and the citizens' anxiety:

> That day, the city was filled with a positive anxiety for the team as anticipation grew to sometimes frenzied levels that this would be the year the Canucks would finally debut as National Hockey League champions. By some estimates, there were nearly 200,000 revelers downtown.
>
> But by the early afternoon people began to feel a sense of unease.
>
> Vancouver is a great city that has managed to get a lot of things right. It has a clean and efficient regional transportation system; a large, tech-savvy, and diverse cadre of young people; and a downtown entertainment district that is lively and attractive with major sports venues nearby. . . . That night, however, these strengths combined to produce a bad result. (Furlong and Keefe 7)

Highlighting the successful labour of building the city, and making visible its seeming ability to attract an equally successful, tech-savvy and diverse labour force, Furlong and Keefe parrot the language of inter-city competition before folding the virtuous into the riotous. Two insights are quickly gleaned from this rhetorical device, though: first, that the city's strengths are located in its centre—in its commercial- and consumer-focused core and entertainment district—and second, that the population that fills this core arrives from outside through a clean and efficient public transportation system. These two particular characteristics of the city are more than just the typical language of Vancouverism, as here they operate as the particular channels of both the riots' physical and temporal unfolding and the public reaction in the following days.

Specifically, the riots' physical expansion through the consumer channels of the city, moving up West Georgia Street towards Granville Street and avoiding less desirable areas for looting, gives a sense of the structured spontaneity of the crowd. As the game on the ice and the riot outside unfolded largely in synchronicity, it wasn't until the game seemed lost that the first report of looting was heard over police radio.[7] This attack, reported at 7:33 p.m. and a full twelve minutes before the end of the game, targeted the Gucci store on West Georgia. As the riot unfolded after the game, it spread from the stadium along this same channel, connecting the crowds in the entertainment district on Granville Street with those that had surrounded the stadium, and allowing for increased looting of everything from department stores and drug stores to tuxedo rental shops and hair salons. This channelling, as a disgruntled sports fan turns into an opportunistic consumer, reveals an affective alignment to the violence: it reveals that the anger apparent here was attached not just to the symbols of the city, but rather it was focused on the material stuff of the city, on the matters left unfulfilled and the promises deemed broken. As Peter Darbyshire explained in a *National Post* piece, the geography of the riot is marked through the space of products:

> The commercial district ends a block away. Where the stores stopped, the rioters stopped, even though there were plenty of other symbols ripe for attack nearby—the *Province* and *Vancouver Sun* newsrooms, the transit stations, government offices, the convention centre. It was like the only symbols worth attacking to them, besides the police cars, were the brands of capitalism. (Darbyshire and Taylor)

In this sense, the affective alignment here is an anger that attempts to reclaim a debt. By reaching for the very stuff of the city, the commercial products and inventory that is otherwise untenable, the violence of these riots is a material response to an unfulfilled fantasy. If the Canucks came to stand in for the positive anxiety of hope in the city, the response to their failure to live up to this emotional investment was to reclaim the stuff. Divorced from the ideational awards promised by the city that quelled these anxious investments, the rioters momentarily reimagined the materiality of the space as just that, as simple matter.

Alongside this consumerist channelling, though, is the secondary flow of people into the city, and the riot, from the outer suburbs. As Furlong and Keefe describe by introducing the value of the city's transit system originally in aspirational terms, only to see it as a drawback on this particular evening, the many public buses and trains that connect Vancouver to its suburbs were moving at an astonishing clip that day: "Crowds poured into downtown

most of the day at a rate of up to 500 every 60–90 seconds from trains alone, effectively filling 'the stadium' beyond capacity. Huge numbers of people took the day off from work, a unique factor compared to the previous six games. History was unfolding and almost everyone wanted to be part of it" (113). As the city channelled people into the streets in anticipation of an event, it acted as a particular type of stadium for Furlong and Keefe. That is, while the title of the report, *The Night the City Became a Stadium*, at first glance indicates the movement of the spectacle from inside Rogers Arena to outside as the riot develops, effectively transforming the rioters into participants in this unfolding history, Furlong and Keefe are instead deploying the city as a stadium, as the very physical space to house a larger audience. The history unfolding in this moment is one that invites viewership and not participation—the crowds joined together to watch the Canucks make history are invited into the city as observers, but are never folded into the process of history-making. The flow of citizens from across the Lower Mainland into the core is meant to be purely circulatory here: it operates not as an invitation and engagement to shape the city, but only as a moment of urban consumption and tourism.

In Furlong and Keefe's report, then, the city is understood as an image itself; it is the backdrop for planned events where the duty of civic workers, volunteers, and citizens alike is to ensure the seamless production of these spectacles. Participation in both the historic events and the future developments of the city is relegated only to the plan and its few actors. And while dialogue, public consultation, and open spaces are included, this inclusion is permanently at arm's length, demanding a type of vicarious participation as spectators in the imaginative, and not physical, space of the city.

That so many of those seen participating in the riot were deemed outsiders to the city brought in to celebrate, but not participate, fuelled a sense of release for many observers in the popular press and reconnected this suburban invasion with the enduring history of racialized panic over foreign speculation. The images of the suburbanite destroying the city that were repeated in social media and the press allowed for Vancouver proper to maintain an image of tolerance, sophistication, and acceptance while pushing the violence of the city towards its outer edges. This movement operates under particular classist and racist structures to dissuade the aspirational desires of those outside of the city's financial flows. As one particularly well-circulated article from *Scout Magazine* exemplifies in its portrayal of the rioters:

> Look at the age bracket, the haircuts, the shades at 10pm, the clothes, the shoes, the gold chains and the irrational steroid + Red Bull + cocaine rage. These aren't kids from East Van, Kits or the West End, and that guy with the skateboard isn't a skateboarder. . . . I reckon the overwhelming majority were Skytrain and souped-up Honda Civic bandwagon imports from the strip malls of Maple Ridge, Surrey, Burnaby, Coquitlam and other points beyond our city limits . . . (Morrison)

Morrison's language here constructs these outsiders as the source of intolerance and violence that plagued the otherwise idealized space. The meeting of these multiple channels, the flows that brought the outsider into the city and the flows that moved the rioting along the city's commercial channels, meet headlong with the enduring history of racialized panic around foreign invaders and the haunting force of speculative capital in the city to give a sense of everyday life in Vancouver. Objects of hope, imagined futures of life in the idealized city or of celebrating hockey championships, are modulated through anxiety and can come back to hurt us. The material remainders of these objects are made present when the plan falls apart and the object fails to meet our expectations. In these moments, the search for a material present and a new object of hope begins and the city, however temporarily, is opened up to a riotous crowd that reimagines, and reinvents, the urban landscape.

NOTES

1 See Allmendinger and Haughton, p. 90.
2 See Healey, pp. 145-50.
3 As this paper concludes with a reading of the 2011 riot, it is worth drawing a parallel to the 1907 anti-Chinese riot in Vancouver. In each of these cases, the racialized figure of foreign otherness is embedded within discourses on urban life in Vancouver; where the 1907 riot was an explicitly racist act, the 2011 riot relives this enduring history in popular press attempts to link the riotous crowd to the cities surrounding Vancouver in the Lower Mainland. For more on the connection between the 1907 riot and the present moment, see Sismondo.
4 For a concise history of anti-Asian racism in the late-nineteenth and twentieth century in British Columbia, and Vancouver in particular, see Wang, pp. 52-55.
5 See Walks, p. 165 for a complete picture of the spatial distribution of Vancouver's debt load and, for more recent reporting on interurban debt comparisons, see Ferreras.
6 For information on the cost of the report, see Mackin. For broader evaluation of the report, see McMartin.
7 The timeline of events that follow in this paragraph are taken from Furlong and Keefe, Appendix I, pp. 3-6.

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L'exiguïté en question

Ariane Audet
Présences intermittentes des Amériques. XYZ 27,95 $

Gaston Tremblay
La littérature du vacuum : genèse de la littérature franco-ontarienne. David 39,95 $

Compte rendu par Louis-Serge Gill

Dans *La littérature du vacuum*, Gaston Tremblay propose une réflexion sur la genèse de la littérature franco-ontarienne. Le projet, en soi, est digne d'intérêt. Il faut savoir que, comme il l'annonce lui-même en introduction, l'auteur a participé à la fondation des éditions Prise de parole et qu'en tant que membre de la Coopérative des artistes du Nouvel-Ontario (CANO), il a été un agent actif de cette genèse.

Le premier chapitre permet, en outre, de mieux connaître ce que l'auteur nomme « L'implosion du Canada français », du XIX^e^ siècle à la formation de l'institution littéraire franco-ontarienne. Essentiellement, l'avènement d'une littérature québécoise autonome au tournant des années 1960 crée un effet de vacuum, « au moment où les infrastructures canadiennes-françaises se recentraient sur le Québec . . . Il ne saurait être question de vivre en français en Ontario, car seule la survie importe dans le vacuum. Étant donné ce mot d'ordre, un tel lieu est nécessairement ouvert aux arrivants, si ce n'est que pour renouveler les effectifs sans cesse amenuisés par l'immersion et l'assimilation. » Par ce concept de vacuum, Tremblay souhaite donc ajouter à l'analyse déjà intéressante et pertinente de François Paré dans *Les littératures de l'exiguïté* (1992). C'est ainsi qu'alors que la littérature québécoise se dote d'une sphère de grande production, la littérature franco-ontarienne maintient son statut de littérature coloniale. Cette dernière connaît néanmoins ses premiers balbutiements par l'entremise du Bureau franco-ontarien du Conseil des arts du Canada en 1970 pour promouvoir le fait francophone en territoire ontarien.

Les chapitres suivants seront donc dédiés à l'illustration des moyens mis en place pour façonner, à force d'engagements divers, une institution littéraire autonome : bibliothèques francophones, regroupements d'écrivains formels et informels (le CANO et les Communords) et des trajectoires individuelles, notamment celle du dramaturge André Paiement. Sur le plan de la sociologie des institutions, Gaston Tremblay propose une conclusion intéressante : « En dix ans, le champ littéraire franco-ontarien s'est complètement transformé. D'une province abandonnée du Canada français, il est devenu un centre dynamique d'activité littéraire. Par contre, la période de développement est terminée . . . La dynamique du vacuum se transforme en dialectique de l'exiguïté. Dans le vacuum, les artistes et les instances de production ont tendance à se développer plus rapidement qu'ailleurs . . . ».

Dans un prolongement intéressant, l'essai d'Ariane Audet aborde la présence au monde et à l'espace dans les écrits des poètes chicanos et québécois. Au gré de ses observations, l'auteure souhaite montrer que le poème participe « au développement d'une expérience unique de l'habitation marquée par

une énonciation du lieu constituée de discontinuités » et que cet espace ainsi habité « n'est pas représenté de manière fixe et que la création d'un espace à soi ne s'effectue pas dans une optique de propriété, mais bien dans un sentiment de perte qui remet en cause les ancrages des sujets dans un espace ». Par conséquent, les présences dans l'espace (celui du poème, le territoire local et le continent nord-américain) se comprendraient par l'entremise des notions d'intermittences et d'ancrages puisque, comme le souligne Ariane Audet, il est rare que l'on jette l'ancre pour toujours. C'est ainsi que dans les « Spatialités », les origines, les « Traversées » et l'« Urbanité », l'auteure de l'essai cherche le mouvement entre les poésies chicanas et québécoises, entre les diverses présences au monde et à l'espace. Au fond, « le passage intermittent entre les deux espaces [référentiel et celui du poème] permet au poème de s'inscrire dans un espace médiatique qui modifie le rapport que les individus entretiennent avec le monde. »

Les propositions et les conclusions de recherche stimulantes d'Ariane Audet permettent non seulement la rencontre de deux univers poétiques qui se méconnaissent (tout en étant méconnus), mais surtout d'illustrer les similitudes et points de rencontre entre deux manières d'habiter le / son monde, d'en délimiter les frontières. Moins qu'une question de survie, ces interrogations tiennent compte de considérations existentielles et communautaires propres à la conscience écologique de notre époque.

En somme, tant l'essai d'Audet que celui de Tremblay nous présentent comment des littératures, sur les plans institutionnels, géographiques et poétiques, cherchent à sortir de la marge pour une visée universelle.

Into Madness and Night

Edem Awumey; Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott, trans.
Descent into Night. Mawenzi $20.95

Martha Baillie
If Clara. Coach House $19.95

Reviewed by Karen Charleson

At barely one hundred and fifty pages each, Edem Awumey's *Descent into Night* and Martha Baillie's *If Clara* are short novels. Their brevity, however, should not fool anyone into thinking that they lack big themes. Both novels deal with blindness and sight, redemption and healing, madness, and refugees. Perspectives behind the rationale for writing also anchor both novels. It is in those ways of looking at the creation of the written word that we see the contradictory nature of the two works.

In *Descent into Night*, Ito Baraka tells the story of futile protests and resistance to a brutal and oppressive state. He relates his struggles as a student protester, and his time spent tortured and brutalized in the prison camp where he comes to read for his blind friend, teacher, and cellmate Koli Lem. Baraka's story continues with his eventual escape to his parents' home, and finally his moving to Canada. Baraka is dying of cancer as he tells his story. He strives desperately in the little time he has left to write down what is basically a confession. His story is a way for him to flee "his painful body through words," but more importantly it is a way for him to keep his promise and honour Koli Lem, whom he credits with pushing him to "keep moving towards salvation."

While *If Clara* is told by four narrators—Clara, Daisy, Clara's sister Julia, and Julia's friend Maurice—it is Clara who is the main character. Mentally ill, she is urged by her psychiatrist to write a novel to develop her own coherence. Clara creates the story of a young Syrian refugee, Kamar, and her "descent into madness" upon arriving in

Canada. Though Clara is obsessed with and afraid of eyes, her novel revolves around two Syrian folk tales, one of which involves an eye being pierced with a needle, and the other, eyes being plucked out. Unwilling and unable to act publicly as the novel's author, Clara sends the manuscript to the temporarily disabled writer Daisy in the hope that she will arrange for editing and publishing under a pseudonym.

Clara pretends to be Julia in order to write, a process that she describes as having to "stick to the page, ink scratch on paper, dry as can be, pattern begetting pattern until the voices, crushed under the weight of the written, can do no more than whisper." Daisy tells us that she is moved to tears by the magnificence of Kamar's "crumbling of language." Baraka talks about his writing as "a way to keep talking to someone." He describes writing as "dead flesh that you stroke with your pen in order to get a sound, an echo, out of it." The sometimes torturous efforts of the two writers appear similar. Clara talks about giving away, putting up for "adoption," her character Kamar. She says "I could have aborted her, but I wanted her to live." Clara says of Kamar that she "refused to go back where she'd come from. I had to continue writing for her sake." Daisy describes Clara's manuscript as a work of great creativity. Like the exhibits in Julia's gallery, it is art created for art's sake. In contrast, it is the redemptive worth of Baraka's telling his story and the honouring of Koli Lem that are emphasized in *Descent into Night*. Clara gives no acknowledgement of the Syrian folk stories she freely uses. An author's right to use fiction however she likes is claimed by Daisy. Baraka, on the other hand, frequently mentions Koli Lem and writers like Samuel Beckett and Bohumil Hrabal as a way to pay homage to those who have led him to where he is today.

The stories told in the two novels come from different physical, social, and mental environments. Baraka sweats and toils in poverty to reveal/confess the truth and trauma of what he knows, his own experience. Clara relates the story of Kamar out of a mind governed by mental illness. The most profound differences in the two stories, however, arise from perspective. Each novel looks at questions of why, how, and what their writers create. The answers from *Descent into Night* and *If Clara* prove illuminatingly different.

Then as Now

Nelson Ball; Stuart Ross, ed.
Certain Details: The Poetry of Nelson Ball.
Wilfrid Laurier UP $18.99

Margaret Christakos; Gregory Betts, ed.
Space Between Her Lips: The Poetry of Margaret Christakos. Wilfrid Laurier UP $18.99

John Reibetanz; Jeffery Donaldson, ed.
The Essential John Reibetanz.
Porcupine's Quill $14.95

Reviewed by Geordie Miller

The world's leading imperialist power is currently headed by a demagogue whose every utterance appears to dispense with truth. Twitter, his preferred platform, has helped ensure that the written word is woven more loosely into the fabric of our everyday lives than ever before. Introducing poets against this backdrop of imperial duplicity and digital threads may seem like leaning a feather against the base of a derrick. It's always been a strange time to be a poet, and now—as before—language needs their support.

The release of these three retrospective collections under review is therefore timely, for one thing that feels new about the contemporary moment is that language is too busy being information. Moving through several decades with these three remarkable poets is an invitation to resist this ongoing "informationalization" of language.

In the prose poem that concludes *Space Between Her Lips*, Margaret Christakos asks us to "[i]magine" a garment "made of language,

which used to go on outside the head but now swirls from gaze to gaze with a new efficiency." "I'm passing you on this message and don't think it's casual," Christakos continues, with faint echoes of Frank O'Hara's playful urgency in "Meditations in an Emergency." "This is pure steam. This is something else. I think you should read it."

I think you should read Christakos for many of the reasons that Gregory Betts outlines in his superb introductory essay to the collection. Her "adroit combination of experimental and lyrical tendencies." Her feminist avant-garde expression of a "post-patriarchal literary perspective." And more. The poems shift so suddenly that these conceptual moorings sometimes slip. "I am condoning a space between my lips to suggest openness," Christakos declares. "Visual Splendour Coupons" is a wonderful title that could double as a description of the collection. The poem's humorous meditations on motherhood—"The scene / was musical and filled with milk"—are amplified when followed by the deadly serious "M1. UK Breast Milk Toxic: 13 July 99." On the whole, these poems summon and evade the toxicities of our digital world, marked as they are by the poet's pastiche of the flotsam and jetsam of posts and texts—the data of our lives. Much is sent, yet "so little's worth saying."

Nelson Ball knows exactly what is worth saying, and it is indeed "little," judging by the scale of his poems. Throughout *Certain Details*, Ball delivers on his certainty that a close attention to detail delivers meaning. The poems are sharp and slight, pocket knives but also paintings. He outlines his aims in a characteristically succinct fashion in "Note":

> I write
> poems, to
> stall
> or still
> life, here
> before
> my
> eyes

This ambition to "stall / or still // life" becomes particularly poignant in the tender fragments that include or address the visual artist Barbara Caruso, Ball's life partner. When they talk, "words / cling / to / words." When she's gone, "you / continue / speaking / to me / but not / nearly enough." And whereas Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" moves without verbs, Ball's imagist poems can be measured by their verbal precision, like the lightning that "ties / sky / to / earth." Stuart Ross' intimate introductory essay rightly champions Ball as a terrific guide for "[b]eginning poets [who] especially tend to overwrite." At the risk of overwriting, I would characterize Ball's poems as Dickinson with ontology instead of metaphysics as an accent.

If Ball's poems are portraits, John Reibetanz's are often profiles of the self and/as others. *The Essential John Reibetanz* reveals a poet for whom it is essential to be other people. Poets tend to be ventriloquists, and Reibetanz revels in this role. From the Frostian dramatic monologue "Lewis Bolt, Farmer" that opens the collection to a poem about Curious George on the run from the Nazis, we travel widely with Reibetanz's characters. What orients us is both a Romantic faith in the lyric's potential to expand our consciousness through the fleeting occupation of another's perspective and a deep understanding of the strange spaces memory makes for us to have been other people. As he reflects on a long-lost childhood friend in "What Just Was":

> Nothing
> earthshaking came of it—soon we went on
> to different schools, lost touch—nothing
> except
> the going on itself, a flowing through earth's
> nothing on something human that just was.

My classification of these three collections as "retrospective" implies closure. Of course, what is "earthshaking" about all three is the hope, vis-à-vis language, that there is more work to be done.

Skew-whiffing the Visible

Linda Besner
Feel Happier in Nine Seconds.
Coach House $18.95

Jennifer LoveGrove
Beautiful Children with Pet Foxes.
BookThug $18.00

Reviewed by Catherine Owen

Disorientation, permeability, and metamorphosis are some of the states that come to mind when reading *Beautiful Children with Pet Foxes*, a necessarily discombobulating text in which poems seep, rot, splinter, peel, shed, present a "sticky orange row of bobbing polyps" or, conversely, dress up embers while suitcases are "revising their wills" and a "mail order snowstorm" is returned to sender. Like a Magritte-being with fruit for its face flying over a strange wasteland à la Chagall, Jennifer LoveGrove's poems undertake a Shklovskyan defamiliarization of the world that's rarely comfortable or reassuring. Though "we're all just trying to be whole," these poems seem to present the impossibility of such a utopian project due to forces ranging from erosion to leakage to the illusion of boundaries between species, along with those dividing life from death, as dust turns into ghosts while we continue to breathe. The least potent poems are the Dream Specimen ones, possibly in homage to John Berryman's *Dream Songs* but resonating somewhat flatly as a set of declarative, almost robotic impulses. The titular poem is the most potent hinge in this castle of language, with its Roethkean, Grimms'-fairy-tale mode of anaphoric lullabying where the notion of serving as "apprentice" to the world is paramount. Although *Beautiful Children with Pet Foxes* at times clunks into clichés—such as "caked with mud," "fragrant bark," "ringed with blood," "faint shadow"—more often it soars into difficult spells that enact, as all memorable poetry must, its own deviant and delectable universe.

Linda Besner's *Feel Happier in Nine Seconds* is a conglomeration of hyperactive allusions with the texture of corrugated hallucinations. Dizzy readers "nose over ghost orchids," are guided by a politic ouroboros, and sunbathe on the head of Caesar, whirled in the vertiginous arms of Besner's impressive vocabulary ("chthonic," "hibernaculum," "cotillion," "ruffian," "collywobbles," "flibbertigibbet," "demesne") yet soothed by her severe attention to stanzaic form, as with this sharply honed syllabic couplet: "Tossing a gnarled tangerine to my ranch hand's gyno / Gunning the roaring noosphere's gorgeous engine." The section on the synesthetic associations between letters and colours, based on Fisher-Price magnets, is a Bök-like exercise that only infrequently lifts into the essential poetic ("perfection's invisible blackbird," say) but does provide a segment of visual respite as the eye shifts amid gradually accumulating hues. More deeply satisfying in its fusion of geography and intimate surrealism is the book's final part, "Zouviana." Linking apparently banal, everyday actions—such as eating dinner, following a blog, and jogging—are nonsensically compelling additions of glitter bombs, scuba masks, puns like "Bay of Fundy / mentalists," and oddities such as the "moon's pussy." The strongest piece may be "Self Portrait with an Armload of Parrots" in its brilliantly failed promises of binary relaxation ("Two kinds of anger: / the spoken") and its haunting ending image that unpacks the familiar into a sigil of cynosure: "madness / can resolve into Beauty, / like when a swan is unfolded / into a lovely towel." *Feel Happier in Nine Seconds* is a brainy, brawny deshabille of language that skates strange terrains unflinchingly.

La littérature-mosaïque

Hédi Bouraoui
La Plantée. CMC 18,00 $

Hédi Bouraoui
Vingt-quatre heures en Tesselles mosaïcales. CMC 25,00 $

Sergio Kokis
L'âme des marionnettes. Lévesque 30,00 $

Compte rendu par Kenneth Meadwell

Scruter et même se substituer à la vie de l'autre, c'est établir un rapport à autrui qui peut s'avérer désolant, enrichissant et parfois envoûtant. Se dépayser, s'incruster dans la vie immédiate, dans le *hic et nunc* de sa propre culture, ou ailleurs, n'est possible dans le monde littéraire que grâce à une connivence entre auteur et lecteur. Depuis des décennies, les ouvrages de Hédi Bouraoui et ceux de Sergio Kokis participent de cette complicité en jetant un regard avide sur le monde qui nous entoure ou qui nous sépare.

Dans *La plantée*, Bouraoui nous livre le portrait mystérieux d'Héloïse, « cheftaine artiste méditerranéenne », qui est entrée fortuitement dans la vie affective de Samir Ahrab. De Marseille à l'île de Djerba en Tunisie, la narration nous raconte leurs parcours respectifs, qui s'entrecroisent par moments. Héloïse exerce une fascination obsessive sur son confrère tunisien, épris d'elle et désirant à tout prix retrouver ses traces. Poétique et pittoresque, le style sensuel évoque désir, bouleversement émotionnel et nostalgie.

Vingt-quatre heures en Tesselles mosaïcales s'inspire de la métaphore de la mosaïque canadienne lancée par Pierre Elliott Trudeau, cette société où cultures d'origine et cultures du pays d'accueil vivent paisiblement et respectueusement les unes aux côtés des autres. Ces nouvelles de Bouraoui, totalisant un cycle de lecture de vingt-quatre heures, présentent ainsi une multitude de petites pièces juxtaposées — canadienne, roumaine, tunisienne, cajun — qui forment la belle composition socioculturelle que sont notre pays et notre monde. À titre d'exemple, dès l'incipit « Retour au pays de l'enfance », l'auteur nous amène dans un train allant de Sousse à Sfax en Tunisie. La nostalgie, la vétusté et une certaine tristesse se dégagent chez le narrateur : « Ce wagon plus cher que la Première, plus vide qu'une outre sans eau, dégage une atmosphère désuète à faire pleurer les pierres. » À son bord, deux hommes, dont le narrateur qui s'intéresse à son « compatriote de retour au pays », rentré de Suisse et « englué dans les affres de l'administration locale ». Cet unique compagnon de voyage incarne le « revenant », Tunisien ayant vécu à l'étranger et encouragé par la politique d'accueil de son pays natal à y revenir. Hélas, ce retour pour motif d'affaires et non de nostalgie n'aboutit qu'à l'échec, car ce revenant qui voulait monter un commerce d'exportation d'éponges se trouve délaissé par les autorités tunisiennes, malgré leurs belles promesses. Ironie du sort, il finit par s'imposer un exil dans son pays, « mendiant des routes *spontex* avec un couffin renversé sur la tête pour se faire oublier de ce monde! »

Dans *L'âme des marionnettes*, Kokis nous livre un questionnement philosophique sur la complexité des mobiles du comportement humain, à travers un dédale de péripéties et d'enquêtes dignes du roman policier, lesquelles nous mènent, depuis Montréal, jusqu'à Mexico et ensuite à Rio de Janeiro, en quête des traces d'une jeune femme montréalaise portée disparue. Professeur de philosophie à l'Université McGill et romancier, Leandro Cajol, d'origine mexicaine, sera la grande vedette à la Foire du livre à Rio de Janeiro. Mais avant d'y partir, ses amis montréalais, Ferdinand Morand et son épouse Madeleine, lui demandent de tenter d'y retrouver les traces de la sœur de Ferdinand, partie il y a plus d'un an pour y étudier auprès d'un maître marionnettiste.

Faisant escale d'abord à Mexico où son père traverse ses derniers moments, Cajol revit sa relation avec ce dernier, richissime homme d'affaires qui a traité son fils de « vagabond et sale communiste ». Aux yeux du fils, ceux qui assistent à son enterrement « ont l'air de vautours devant une carcasse pourrie ». Aussi Cajol, brebis galeuse, dit-il adieu à cette cellule familiale qui a su habilement lui enlever sa part de la fortune du patriarche en lui faisant signer des documents attestant qu'il n'a aucun droit à ce butin.

C'est une fois arrivé à Rio de Janeiro que Cajol entame bel et bien son enquête, initiée grâce aux quelques informations fournies par Morand au sujet de sa sœur disparue. Sur un arrière-fond où figure le monde littéraire huppé juxtaposé à l'univers des favelas sous l'emprise des caïds, Cajol se faufile entre de nouvelles connaissances, à la recherche de Liette. Ne sachant pas s'il s'agit de fugue, de meurtre, d'enlèvement ou de suicide, le romancier finit tout de même par retrouver ses traces. Au cours de ces rencontres, qui se multiplient et qui sont bien arrosées de scotch, il réussit à avoir droit de cité dans cette société loufoque : « [t]errains de macumba, spiritisme, guérisseurs, sorciers, sectes évangéliques à la sauce tropicale catholiques rock and roll ». Et cependant, la jeune femme n'est pas prête à rentrer au bercail. Pour le professeur de philosophie, le fait que Liette veuille rester « pour continuer sa vie de médiocrité à l'abri du regard de ses parents et amis, était malgré tout un désir de liberté ». Ce constat incite Cajol, moraliste, à se questionner sur « la prémisse morale qu'un projet de vie complexe valait mieux qu'une existence réelle plus simple, plus proche des besoins primaires de nature biologique ». En outre, il estime que dans cette histoire de liberté individuelle qui refuse les attentes et les désirs familiaux, mais qui en fin de compte semble ne pouvoir tracer son propre chemin à cause justement de l'emprise familiale, il s'agit « d'une plongée dans les eaux boueuses et stagnantes de la paresse et de l'envie sans passion, en dépit du foisonnement de la vie et du défi des aventures ».

Émaillée de références à Joseph Conrad, à Dante, à Kierkegaard et à Nietzsche entre autres, la narration a souvent recours au dialogue, outil qui fait agencer l'enquête linéairement, et cette impression de « vive voix », alors qu'elle est parfois surprenante à cause de la pléthore de détails et du style souvent étrangement élégant, rajoute à l'urgence de la quête qu'entreprend Cajol.

Ces ouvrages participent ainsi de la construction d'une certaine « littérature-mosaïque », reflet de la diversité et de la connivence culturelles au sein de la littérature canadienne actuelle.

A Day in the Life

Tim Bowling
The Heavy Bear. Wolsak & Wynn $20.00

Reviewed by Gisèle M. Baxter

It is tempting to approach Tim Bowling's fifth novel as a semi-autobiographical male mid-life-crisis narrative, complete with a sprightly, quirky, and much younger potential muse. However, that would be to overlook the way it works as a sort of thought experiment concerning the creative process, a meditation on various forms of literary culture and their engagement with mortality and hope, and a loose collection of precisely observed, often moving prose poems of acute observation. Of course, thought experiments make me think of D. H. Lawrence, who gives this novel its epigraph, which is taken from *Sea and Sardinia*: "Who would be a father?" Yet that epigraph evokes another modernist figure, James Joyce, and his conclusion to *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*—"Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead"—which sets up one of the preoccupations of *Ulysses*: the father figure and the burden of the past.

Like *Ulysses* (though also unlike *Ulysses*), Bowling's tale takes the reader, through its protagonist's perspective, on a daylong adventure that begins rather like *A Christmas Carol* (despite its summer setting), following a ghost through the window. But Tim Bowling (who shares his name with the author) pursues his adventure in Edmonton, where he works as a college writing instructor, accompanied variously by Buster Keaton (whose silent films have had an enormous impact on his own conception of art and artifice), a talking bear-like creature who is such a clear nod to Delmore Schwartz's poem ("The Heavy Bear Who Goes with Me," which gives the novel its title) that Tim names him Delmore and the bear increasingly becomes Schwartz, and a young student named Chelsea.

Chelsea is interesting in that she is reminiscent of, but not—unlike the others—a manifestation of, a specific cultural figure. Tim compares her to Pippi Longstocking, the resourcefully independent, uneducated, rambunctious, good-hearted eternal child figure of Astrid Lindgren's novels. Stieg Larsson claimed in a rare interview to have imagined Lisbeth Salander in the Millennium novels as a sort of grown-up Pippi. Chelsea seems not quite grown up, despite her resourcefulness, and in some ways functions more as someone who translates the contemporary world for Tim, who seems to be approaching fifty, living more and more in partly nostalgic appreciation of cultural products of the past, and is someone whose eccentricities take him outside his increasingly conventional habits. Chelsea also instigates much of the bizarre action of the narrative, much of which involves the theft of a valuable monkey and teeters between screwball caper comedy and (eventually) sudden, shocking violence, so that I found myself thinking of Jonathan Demme's 1980s road movie *Something Wild*. Though Chelsea doesn't continually reinvent herself as much as the worldlier Audrey/Lulu, and though the novel (mostly) evades the hornet's nest of a possible romantic angle, her presence enables the novel's conflation/confrontation of past and present, of creation and reception.

And in a way, that's what *The Heavy Bear* is about: conflation and confrontation, the knife-edge between comedy and tragedy, and the writer's use of perspective. Its adventure narrates the creative process, ultimately pulling perspective back from the imaginative instigations and cultural knowledge/baggage and raw materials Tim works with throughout his adventure, and suggesting they might yet be put to use, even as mundane "real life" resumes.

Expanding Eaton's Oeuvre

Mary Chapman, ed.
Becoming Sui Sin Far: Early Fiction, Journalism, and Travel Writing by Edith Maude Eaton.
McGill-Queen's UP $34.95

Reviewed by Sarah Galletly

Active recovery of Edith Eaton's contributions to the early Asian North American canon began in earnest in the 1990s following the republication of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (1912), a short-story collection written under her Chinese pseudonym, Sui Sin Far. However, as Mary Chapman outlines in her introduction to this edited collection of Eaton's early writings, these initial attempts to recover Eaton "were motivated by desires to make literary canons more diverse but have, paradoxically, oversimplified her complex subject position in the process." Eaton spent significant portions of her life on both sides of the forty-ninth parallel and has been claimed by scholars of both Asian Canadian and Asian American studies as a key figure in these national canons. Yet, as this new collection makes clear, Eaton's insertion into these literary traditions has been based on a relatively small proportion of her oeuvre.

Through its emphasis on Eaton's early writing career, Chapman's collection challenges the "presumed centrality of China and Chinatowns to Eaton's work" by shedding light on some of Eaton's earliest work, much of it written before she moved to the US. The early fictional and poetic contributions to the *Dominion Illustrated* display a more romantic and realist side of Eaton's writing, one heavily influenced by popular British and American literature of the era, while her journalistic writings for *Gall's Daily News Letter* (Kingston, Jamaica) trace the development of an effusive and energetic persona appropriate for columns focused on "The Girl of the Period" or "The Woman about Town." Given Eaton's status as an outsider in Kingston, Chapman argues that these journalistic writings evidence Eaton's commitment to avoid generalizing about individuals based on their nationality. As Eaton herself comments in a descriptive sketch of the Kingston Races: "Jamaica has an individuality of its own, entirely different from English-speaking centres generally; and it is a country where individuality must ever rank higher than nationality." Such comments offer a vital corrective to scholarly studies that have solely focused on Eaton's writing in relation to its representation of the Chinese North American experience, while also offering valuable insights into Eaton's early journalistic craft and her ability to take on multiple personas and pseudonyms in order to reach her intended audience.

Nevertheless, this collection does still offer valuable new materials for those who are especially interested in Eaton's writing about North American Chinese communities and subjectivities. Chapman's archival detective work has uncovered a slew of early journalism (largely unsigned) produced by Eaton in the early 1890s for the *Montreal Daily Witness* and the *Montreal Daily Star*. Her decision to remain anonymous (or else to use only the initials E. E.) for the majority of these pieces enables her to assert particularly strong and strident opinions with regard to issues of immigration or government policy in relation to Chinese people. Another fascinating section of *Becoming Sui Sin Far* collects a series of travel writings produced by Eaton under a male Chinese pseudonym (Wing Sing) for the *Los Angeles Express*. Although it remains unclear whether Eaton actually disguised herself as a man in order to produce the travelogues, or just wrote them from a male perspective, they nonetheless serve as an absorbing and captivating example of sustained journalistic cross-dressing. Released over a period of several months in early 1904, the stories follow Wing Sing's transcontinental journey via rail from Los Angeles to Montreal, with the journey itself serving as a metaphor for the character's experience of becoming a newly bicultural subject. This experiment in cross-continental travel writing is also illustrative of recurrent tropes that Chapman has identified in Eaton's work about border crossings and smuggling, which become increasingly prevalent in her later fiction.

Becoming Sui Sin Far collects seventy texts, mostly written in the first decade of Eaton's career, that offer invaluable insight into the origins of her more mature work. Chapman's comprehensive introduction contextualizes the different stages of Eaton's early career and offers important insights into the print culture of her day. Through Chapman's careful selection of specific stories and her deliberate emphasis on acknowledging their transnational themes and challenges to more fixed categories of national identity, the collection opens up new avenues for scholarly explorations of Eaton beyond the confines of Chinatown. Hopefully others will take up Chapman's call to acknowledge and to further explore the complexity of Eaton's expanded oeuvre, and continue to shed light on the prolific and chameleonic career of this early Asian North American author.

#AsianFails and Asian Canadian Studies

Roland Sintos Coloma and Gordon Pon, eds.
Asian Canadian Studies Reader.
U of Toronto P $58.95

Eleanor Ty
Asianfail: Narratives of Disenchantment and the Model Minority. U of Illinois P US $30.00

Reviewed by Malissa Phung

It has been almost two decades since Asian Canadian Studies (ACS) was established as an undergraduate minor program in Canada. What is even more remarkable is that these programs still exist, especially when undergraduate enrolment in the humanities keeps decreasing. Yet the editors of *Asian Canadian Studies Reader*, the first and only anthology of its kind, make an impassioned case for instituting ACS programs in post-secondary schools across Canada since Asian Canadians make up the nation's largest visible minority demographic and coverage of their historical and material experiences remains conspicuously under-represented in post-secondary curricula. Despite several systemic and political barriers that the editors rightly identify as obstacles to the field's institutionalization, a rigorous body of scholarship on Asians in Canada has flourished in the past two decades, as evidenced by the rich collection of essays assembled here. The anthology is indeed a showcase of innovative research from academics working from a broad range of disciplines. Covering a diverse range of topics and issues, *Asian Canadian Studies Reader* usefully organizes each subset of essays around the interrelational framework of "encounters" so as to emphasize the limiting and liberating aspects of analyzing settler-colonial, racial, ethnic, class, gender, sexual, national, religious, and disciplinary categories.

But while the *Reader* offers considerable value as an academic textbook for educators and students, it would have done well to include more junior scholars currently working in ACS, a limitation offset by the contribution of Laura Kwak, who provides insightful research interventions for junior and senior ACS scholars to consider. If the editors hoped that publishing this collection would advance the establishment of ACS in Canada by attracting and inspiring the next wave of scholars and students to work in the field, then would it not have been prudent to bring attention to the work of less established ACS scholars, especially when they observe that Asian Canadians are severely under-represented in university faculty ranks? Further, before the nation-wide implementation of ACS programs can happen, a demand for ACS is required. Given the ways in which neoliberal policies have increased precarious employment within and beyond academia over the past two decades, would the students of Asian descent supposedly overpopulating elite Canadian university STEM programs (according to the "Too Asian?" article in *Maclean's*) flock to the field if ACS were simply offered as a program of study?

Reading about the protagonists in Eleanor Ty's literary and cultural study would seem to suggest that they would—that is, once they hit a wall in achieving Lauren Berlant's notion of the "good life" by climbing the ladder of success inculcated by the model-minority discourse. In her study of literary and cinematic works produced by 1.5- and second-generation Asian Americans and Canadians in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, Ty observes a striking set of narrative shifts doing away with the pressures of achieving the American or Canadian Dream. In her perceptive close reading of a broad range of genres and storytelling approaches by Asian North American authors and artists, protagonists are increasingly failing to fit the model-minority stereotype. In a sense, they are #Asianfails—a popular hashtag for social media users to humorously report on all the

ways that they cannot succeed where Asians are supposed to excel. But in *Asianfail*, these failures are not always comical; in fact, they often result in affective responses of disenchantment, depression, unhappiness, and perpetual melancholy, inevitably leading characters to focus on cultivating their affective relations and pursuing other nonmaterialistic dreams that Asians are not supposed to excel at.

Asianfail is an engrossing and timely contribution to the study of contemporary Asian North American culture, but one cannot help but wonder if the book's transnational focus is as much a pragmatic choice as it is an important comparative methodology. Not as many Asian American Studies scholars would pay equal attention, as Ty does, to the creative output and cultural context of artists and authors from both sides of the border: the breadth and range of knowledge required to do so is impressive. What is most illuminating is the interdisciplinary research that Ty brings to the conversation, historically and culturally contextualizing these Asian failures as a result of racial discourses, neoliberal economic policies, globalization, and the traumas of war and dislocation. However, while it seems that reading youths, elders, refugees, and immigrants unequivocally as Asian failures makes conceptual sense—and for the most part it does—the connective thread does get lost in Ty's otherwise great analysis of lê thi diem thúy's *The Gangster We Are All Looking For* and Madeleine Thien's *Certainty*.

How to Remember Canada

Maeve Conrick, Munroe Eagles, Jane Koustas, and Caitríona Ní Chasaide, eds. *Landscapes and Landmarks of Canada: Real, Imagined, (Re)Viewed.* Wilfrid Laurier UP $34.99

Caitlin Gordon-Walker *Exhibiting Nation: Multicultural Nationalism (and Its Limits) in Canada's Museums.* U of British Columbia P $95.00

Cecilia Morgan *Commemorating Canada: History, Heritage, and Memory, 1850s-1990s.* U of Toronto P $26.95

Reviewed by Margery Fee

Exhibiting Nation examines some of the ways "ethnic minorities" and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people are represented in three museums: the Royal British Columbia Museum (RBCM), the Royal Alberta Museum (RAM), and the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). The overarching frame of "multicultural nationalism" is explained as a perspective that allows for the inclusion of groups that do not fit the dominant norm, as long as this inclusion does not "challenge the unity or authority of the national state," which allows "these groups a certain amount of sovereignty, but only up to a point." Caitlin Gordon-Walker notes the limits of the apparently expansive and welcoming multicultural frame and then moves to a detailed analysis of particular exhibits, such as the Old Town in the RBCM and its belatedly added Chinatown. Her account of the RAM's "cultural communities" program precedes her analysis of a travelling exhibit, "Chop Suey on the Prairies: A Reflection on Chinese Restaurants in Alberta." She notes that chop suey, an "adamantly inauthentic dish," was invented to please white settler-Canadian palates. These inventions disrupt any idea of a fixed, authentic culture, although she points out that no museum curator can predict how audiences will interpret any attempt to shift the notion of a monolithic

and inclusive Canadianness. Gordon-Walker's examination of the ROM connects its founding exhibits of the exotic and the strange to a present where the people whose cultures these exhibits display are living in Toronto. She concludes that these museums

> produce and reproduce a hegemonic understanding of national identity and cultural difference. But they also challenge these understandings and provide opportunities for visitors to articulate their own interpretations.

Although the book is grounded in museology, students in other disciplines (history, cultural studies, Canadian studies, visual arts) would find it a useful model for a way of working through and with spaces, objects, and histories that is revealing, flexible, and undogmatic.

Commemorating Canada contributes to the series Themes in Canadian History, which aims at undergraduate readers by filling the gap between specialist monographs and textbooks. Cecilia Morgan pays careful attention to the ways particular communities have fronted their versions of history, from Roman Catholic francophones in Quebec, to First Nations, to African Canadians. She is also attentive to gender roles. I found the book informative, but Morgan appears to have been constrained by the series guidelines to omit much analysis, not to mention direct quotations, specific examples, close readings, and images, which makes for rather dull reading. (I agree with Alice: "what is the use of a book without pictures or conversations?") I have read articles by Morgan that are far more interesting; the press and the series editor should reconsider the assumption that dull surveys will help undergraduates understand history.

Landscapes and Landmarks of Canada also deals with the intersection between memory and national identity construction. How are landscapes turned into landmarks? The collection discusses how a unifying narrative about Canada has been constructed in relation to "wilderness" and northern landscapes. Articles on specific people and their texts (Thomas D'Arcy McGee, Gabrielle Roy, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow) connect to those about particular places (the "Highway of Heroes," Greater Sudbury, wilderness landmarks in 1970s Quebec, Grosse Île) and particular forms of celebration (Irish traditional music, the contemporary powwow in eastern Canada). All these are assessed in relation to a homogenizing and reductionist narrative of the nation. Édith-Anne Pageot examines how LGBT and Two-Spirit artists have queered the dominant heteropatriarchal notion of landscape where heroic men take charge. Rachel Killick looks at how "the myth of an endless northern wilderness" has obscured mining and logging companies' destruction of the northern landscape and their neglect of workers' health and safety. She makes her point in an analysis of two documentaries about northern Quebec by singer-songwriter Richard Desjardins and Robert Monderie. Finally, Shauna Wilton examines how images of the land were deployed in fifty-nine television advertisements during the 2011 federal election. Not every reader will find every article salient, but I was inspired to cite or recommend several; others definitely added to my understanding of a wide range of memory sites. My only complaint is the book's retina-detaching tiny font.

Herbalists and Humanitarians

Catherine Cooper
White Elephant. Freehand $21.95

Reviewed by Stephen Ney

The Berringers relocate from Nova Scotia to an impoverished village in eastern Sierra Leone that is about to be engulfed in the civil war that reduced the country to tatters in the 1990s. *White Elephant* helps us understand

why their relocating, and by implication much humanitarian work in the "developing world," is a white elephant. Dr. Richard Berringer, the father of teenaged Tor and husband of Ann, eventually comes to understand the Sierra Leoneans enough to realize that "[t]hey didn't want what he was offering them. They wanted to continue with their traditions."

Richard's family is at war too—a war that began as soon as he and Ann met. Interspersed with their cruelties and insensitivities to each other are occasional gifts: Tor offers to help Richard kill the rats that torment his father; Richard stays up all night cleaning and caring for Ann when she gets dysentery; Ann cooks the delicacy of imported spaghetti for Tor, who has been on hunger strike in the hope of forcing his parents to take him back to Canada. But these all turn out to be white elephants too—unacknowledged, unreciprocated. They are succeeded by more cruelties and insensitivities. The end of the novel, when all three characters are at the end of their rope, brings the faint hope of an end to the dismal cycle—but only because desperation makes the status quo impossible.

White Elephant's brilliance is in deftly balancing the perspectives of these three utterly dissimilar characters, whose voices each occupy one third of the chapters and who each earn from the reader an equal degree of sympathy. And antipathy, because for every chapter of one character's account, we get two chapters of others' accounts, and self-justifying illusions are exposed as a result. The characters don't have much energy for humanitarianism because they're preoccupied by terrible memories of the deeds that motivated them to flee to the impoverished, isolated place that seems perfectly chosen for removing them from the consequences of their mistakes and distracting them from their miseries.

Cooper also balances a cultural relativism that would deny the possibility of any real understanding or helping with a universalism that puts the Berringers and the people of their village in the same sinking boat. This is evident especially in the conflict between spirituality and science that is near the heart of the friction between Richard and Ann, who throughout the novel becomes increasingly absorbed in the self-talk advised by *A Course in Miracles*: "This table doesn't mean anything . . . God did not create betrayal, so it is not real." This conflict is also near the heart of the incomprehension between the Sierra Leoneans and the Canadians that impedes the clinic's effectiveness. Canadian readers might prefer the scientific methods of healing promoted by Dr. Berringer's clinic to the incantations of the herbalist whom Richard comes to see as the chief obstacle to his humanitarian success. But the further we get in the novel, the more we realize that Tor's problem with Sierra Leone isn't really about food, Ann's sickness isn't really about mould, and Richard's reason for coming to Sierra Leone isn't really to provide medicine. The problems aren't essentially scientific. Neither culture has solid answers, but their questions look a lot the same.

Striking Sparks in the Darkness

Carol Daniels
Bearskin Diary. Nightwood $21.95

Jennifer Manuel
The Heaviness of Things That Float.
Douglas & McIntyre $22.95

Richard Van Camp
The Lesser Blessed. Douglas & McIntyre $19.95

Reviewed by Conrad Scott

If there is a truth about the current outpouring of Indigenous literature and other creative ventures, it is that Richard Van Camp fosters upcoming authors and artists. He is their enthusiastic champion. His support says to his cousins, to all his relations,

that there has never been a better time for Indigenous voices to ponder an unquestionably heavy past and work toward renewal together. As Van Camp says of his foray into writing, "I had fired an arrow of flaming light into the world and I had no idea who it would find. I was terrified." The present moment in Indigenous literature is one of wrestling with deep communal wounds, illuminating the past, and moving beyond the terror to lead the way forward.

Fittingly, the twentieth anniversary special edition of Van Camp's *The Lesser Blessed* features the addition of two short stories, "Where Are You Tonight?" and "How I Saved Christmas." They bring the novel into greater focus. *The Lesser Blessed*, set in fictional Fort Simmer ("an amalgamation of Fort Smith, Hay River, and Behchoko, NWT"), is the *Bildungsroman* of Larry Sole, who faces his traumatic past. Though his memories are hazy at first, Larry is the scarred poster child for the intergenerational abuse and violence of residential school. But he is also a healing force, for one of the powerful truths about *The Lesser Blessed* is that not only Larry's traumas are told: each character is in need of healing. As Van Camp suggests in his introduction, love is the potent force here. The healing role of Larry's angelic persona is contextualized further in "Where Are You Tonight?" when he says he "has wings but only he can see them," and then realizes that "[m]aybe Juliet can see them" as well, since he is "the Ambassador of Love." Larry carries love within him like a bright centre. He has become angelic out of the ashes of his "Destroying Angel" self, when his shadow "was the only one with fire in its eyes" and he literally sought to burn away past harms and the memory of his father's brutal trespasses. If he is angelic in the present of the story, it is despite the fact that his body has been burned and despite the drastic choices he made to escape his past. His wings lift him until he has fulfilled his role in bringing heartbroken Juliet love: after this, "all the wings [are] clipped." "How I Saved Christmas" demonstrates that Larry survives his terrible past to become a man who can still bring light to others: he no longer needs to feel otherworldly and outside of himself, but can now be a man in his community.

Van Camp's blurb on the jacket of *Bearskin Diary* states that Carol Daniels is "[o]ne of the most important voices in Canadian literature today": this praise highlights her important treatment of the Sixties Scoop and of sustained prejudice and violence against Indigenous women in the Prairies and the rest of the country. After the protagonist Sandy is hired at a news station, one of her few sympathetic colleagues tells her, "'[d]on't let the bastards get you down.'" Sandy's overcoming systemic prejudice to reclaim her cultural roots is an ode not only to victims, but also to those who have fought to a renewed sense of self. She is a survivor because of her transition to become Maskwayanakohp-Iskwiw (Bearskin Robe Woman)—a name change evident in the present-day scenarios that bookend the novel. The titular *Diary* aspect of the novel does not disappoint in its contemplation of memory. The main text is not formally a journal, and though Sandy's diary is indeed featured as an artifact of the past, as she explains, "I don't need it to look anything up." Rather, this is a narrative of memory-gathering, in which an individual always recalls how she was able to overcome the pressures of a system that divided her from her culture and then attempted to prevent her return. In the epilogue, she explains that "[t]he dark times . . . travelled through have been replaced by light and admiration." But the memories are still there, and still important to her return and identity.

While memory, in the form of secrets, also permeates Jennifer Manuel's *The Heaviness of Things That Float*, her protagonist's complicated perspective is that of an observer of an Indigenous community born

outside of its culture. Bernadette Perkal is a nurse in the fictional Tawakin, which is formed from the author's experiences "on the lands of the Ktunaxa, Tahltan and Nuu-chah-nulth peoples," and considers herself a community member even though she is not Indigenous—a position further troubled by her knowledge of others. As Bernadette says to the incoming nurse about community medical records, "'people have treated me differently now and then because I know too much.'" Bernadette is further unsettled by a comparison of these records to the other "pieces of paper" with which the colonial government attempts to define Indigenous people. Her sense of belonging is further thrust into uncertainty when Chase, the man she considers a son, goes missing. When his biological father, Frank, whom Bernadette loves, asks her whether Chase might consider suicide, she says that "'[h]e's got a light inside him.'" She persists in that belief even when Frank asks whether this is "'[e]nough to keep out the darkness.'" Ultimately, though, tragedy is at the heart of this story. Bernadette's crux of identity and uncovered memories is finally somewhat healed. Frank's gift to her honours that she is "like Son of Deer because [she] had brought fire and light and heat to his life." This precedes a further illumination, which occurs when she leaves the community after forty years and acknowledges a "fleeting moment" of insight into both culture and community: despite her losses and difference, she is afforded a moment of clarity and belonging to hold as close as the carved memory chest Frank gave her.

Which dark pasts must be faced in the uncovering of memory? Where will their release take Indigenous voices? Such questions permeate these works, which together help illuminate a vibrant process of healing Indigenous communities as they move toward a renewal of culture. The title of my review honours the authors for bringing their light to difficult topics. Adapted from seventeenth-century religious poet Henry Vaughan's *Silex Scintillans*, the image holds a creative, redemptive edge even for this non-religious person.

The Great Divide

Barry Dempster; Don McKay, ed.
Late Style. Pedlar $20.00

Beth Goobie
breathing at dusk. Coteau $17.95

Jamie Reid
A Temporary Stranger. Anvil $18.00

Reviewed by Dancy Mason

Each of these poetry collections is concerned with the ways poetry can overcome divisions—between life and death, between the authentic and the fake, between, above all, disparate ideas of the self, both in others and in ourselves. For Jamie Reid, Barry Dempster, and Beth Goobie, the poet and their poetry can act as a nexus between such disparate aspects of the world, even if that position comes with a price.

Jamie Reid's *A Temporary Stranger* is divided into three parts. The first section, "Homages," explores the styles of various old poets, both co-opting their imagery and mingling it with Reid's own poetic sensibilities; these homages tend to underline the continual shift in poetry between the original and the borrowed, between the poet and the selves that have come before him or her. The final section, "Recollections," is a series of essays that are largely about late writers in Vancouver's literary scene (Reid, too, passed away in 2015). In these recollections, Reid positions himself as the titular temporary stranger, observing personal friends from a broader viewpoint and toggling between their intimate lives and, as with the first section, their cultural legacy after death. However, Reid is never stronger than in the book's middle section, "Poems." "Poems" is composed of what Reid calls "fake" poems, which highlight the ways we

"cannot duplicate the quality of human sensual experience," an authentic experience that he associates with the moving current of life, with the "flow of water and the waving light." Yet although this section points out artifice and the difficulties of writing poetry, the poems (to use his language) "persist" and carve out a space around the authentic; the collection as a whole explores the poet himself as a moving, authentic current acting as a link between the living and the dead.

Like Reid, Barry Dempster is preoccupied with the effects of community, heritage, and death on the individual self, and in *Late Style* the poet also acts as a channel for these currents. Yet unlike Reid, Dempster focuses not on the merging of two disparate parts within the poet, but on the poet's ultimate loneliness as the broker of these currents. In "Genealogy," the individual poet reflects on his communal heritage, writing "I'd be alone if not for my people / My emerald mother, County Corked." Throughout *Late Style*, we sense that the poet *is* alone even as he is crushed (though comforted) by the weight of his long-gone ancestry, even as the world is transmitted through him; his perspective allows him to bring together disparate perspectives and pasts, but it also leaves him lonely. In "Elegy for Witches and Moles," the death of Dempster's grandmother transmits further familial sorrow as he writes, "Death was so much more than dressing up. Where would misery go now." The silent answer, it seems, is into the poet. It is only when Dempster imagines his own death in "Azucar" that he moves from nexus to flowing substance himself, as he imagines mortality, "squeezing me inside the tunnel to the slimness of a credit card." The conduit has become the current—but where will *his* misery go now? *Late Style* takes comfort in its inheritance, but that inheritance is also a burden.

Dempster's poetry is a testament to the difficulties of being a poetic conduit and to the burdens of reconciling different pasts and selves. Beth Goobie's *breathing at dusk*, however, represents both the heights poetry can reach as a nexus of experience, and the immense strains that often surround poetry. Her poems toggle back and forth between sites of childhood sexual abuse at the hands of both her father and, more implicitly, her mother. Throughout the collection, Goobie traces her repression and later recollection of the abuse and then, in small steps, her way forward from it. *breathing at dusk* thus carries within it many selves, some suppressed, others only in traces, others emerging. The second poem of the collection, "landscape," details the abuse as something far away, divided from the speaker—we are dropped into a "1968 guelph childhood dining room" and watch as the child Goobie follows her father's instructions to dissociate from her abuse. By the time we get to "breathing at dusk," Goobie has not triumphed over her abuse, but she has found a threshold state, the liminal, peaceful dusk that allows "a dreamer's breathing approaching sleep" but also "poems that speak themselves out of the ground / release all that has been held down." She cannot undo what has been done to her, cannot fully reconcile nor fully forgive, but the inbetween state that is the soil of poetry stirs memory, speaks words, and helps her cross over.

Although each of these collections is structured through certain divisions, poetry stands as the centre of these paradoxes, these gaps between past and present, self and other. Poetry is a way for Reid to seek the real, for Dempster to contact his communal past, and for Goobie to construct a future. Although these connections are made with difficulty—often heartbreaking difficulty—they persist.

The Retroactive Gaze

Joe Denham
Landfall. Nightwood $18.95

Kateri Lanthier
Siren. Véhicule $17.95

Christopher Levenson
A tattered coat upon a stick. Quattro $18.00

Reviewed by Evangeline Holtz

What braids together Christopher Levenson's twelfth collection, *A tattered coat upon a stick*, Joe Denham's fourth, *Landfall*, and Kateri Lanthier's second, *Siren*, are the poets' reachings into the past—for form and inspiration and to alert their readers to the tensions imposed by the retroactive gaze. Despite their temporal and formal disparities, there is an analogous urgency emanating from the three books.

For Levenson, looking backward occurs through a threefold structure: the temporal, which flashes anachronistically through events in human history—the tsunami in Japan, the Second World War in Europe, the return of a Biblical "second Noah"; the poetic inheritance of William Butler Yeats—"A tattered coat upon a stick" is the second line of the second stanza of "Sailing to Byzantium"; and the geographical splitting of a subject from the UK who has migrated to Canada, but continues to scour both landscapes for meaning. My reading of this collection hinges on the word *unless*—the word which directly follows Levenson's titular line in Yeats' poem. The human body may devolve with wear and years, Yeats explains, "unless / Soul clap its hands and sing." Levenson's poetic soul is nourished by this conjunction; each poem, in effect, could be called "unless" since, in each, Levenson's speaker enlivens with whimsical reverence occasions experienced by those in their later acts. Take, for instance, the simple, poignant lyric "Aquafit," in which the speaker-cum-Aquafit participant witnesses a Hindu goddess instructing "[s]ome antique ritual": "Like trainee astronauts / we follow her in slow motion . . . relishing weightlessness."

One of the primary conceits of Denham's *Landfall* is bound up with the word's oxymoronic dual definitions: the *Oxford English Dictionary* reveals that *landfall* is both an arrival at land on a sea or air journey, and a collapse of a mass of land. In Denham's twenty-year career as a commercial fisherman off the Pacific coast, the first meaning would have especial resonance. In a 2016 interview, Denham explained:

> Put yourself 200 miles offshore, the middle of the night, at the helm of a 60-foot boat bucking into gale force winds . . . Every year I go out there I'm reminded of the basic precariousness of life.

In lines from the long poem "Landfall"—"when we finally make landfall I'm going to eat / dirt for seven days and empty the bowels of my brain into the howl- /ing exegesis"—Denham's speaker intimates the *OED*'s first definition, to "make landfall" meaning to find safe harbour. However, this presumed safety possesses its own threats: the emptying of the speaker's brain into the howling exegesis. In such phrasing, *Landfall* reaches back to an ethereal cosmic plane that denotes both the creation and the combustion of the atmosphere and *terra firma*, while also postulating a present that requires the intellectual relinquishing of its inhabitants. In Denham's circular, evolutionary, apocalyptic mysticism, the Big Bang came and went, but it *will* return. The land may feel safe, but it's unstable, subject to physical as well as psychic erosion, in that earth's occupants are forced to empty their brains to satiate the ethnosphere's scripts.

In *Siren*, Lanthier transposes a medieval Persian poetic form—the ghazal, intended to connote erotic love and religious faith—onto apparently quotidian subjects of twenty-first-century Toronto. Lanthier's epigraph cites the pre-eminent architect of this form, the nineteenth-century Urdu poet

Ghalib, from a set of famous translations of his works by Aijaz Ahmad and Adrienne Rich. As in those translations, compiled in 1969, Lanthier strays from some of the stricter conventions of Ghalib's ghazals, such as the *radif* (in which each couplet closes on the same word). Her collection also moves in and out of couplets to free-verse lyrics and some of the funnier and more startling haiku on the CanLit market. Take, for instance, "Etobicoke Bay Bus Strut": "Rain cannot dampen / the pigeons of Islington. / Party, platform 5!" Lanthier's inheritance of the ghazal form is utilized most playfully in her take on the *takhallus*—a convention wherein the final couplet contains the poet's name or alias. In "Easy Street," Lanthier remixes and revitalizes old maxims: "You won't end up on Easy Street if you wear that hair-of-the-dog / shirt . . . You say you'll be my mirror. You're more like my indoor plunge pool." Lanthier's speaker signs off with "Your Melancholy Baby"—a *takhallus* to undermine misreadings of this poem's seemingly superficial facades.

There's Smoke

Elaine Dewar

The Handover: How Bigwigs and Bureaucrats Transferred Canada's Best Publisher and the Best Part of Our Literary Heritage to a Foreign Multinational. Biblioasis $29.95

Reviewed by Kit Dobson

Elaine Dewar's *The Handover* is a book by an investigative journalist who has decided to turn the lens on the very industry that supports her work, the publishing industry. Smelling something suspicious in the sale of McClelland & Stewart to the Random House/Penguin/Bertelsmann empire, Dewar begins an investigation to search out the details. She is looking for the fire causing the smoke, or, less cryptically, she is looking to uncover how M&S was transferred, via a partnership with the University of Toronto, to Bertelsmann—because the transfer, she argues throughout the book, violates Canadian cultural ownership regulations. As Dewar begins interviewing those who were directly involved in the transfer, readers find the *mise en scène* of a whodunit and dive into her exploration.

The public version of the story became well known: facing financial straits (and not for the first time), McClelland & Stewart was divided in 2000 by then-owner Avie Bennett between the University of Toronto (75% ownership) and Random House (25%). The 75% was given as a gift to the University; the remainder was sold to Random House. Bennett was hailed as a hero who had saved Canadian literature; the University was lauded for its role as steward; and Random House was to provide day-to-day operational backing. The setup enabled M&S to remain a Canadian publisher and thereby to qualify for grants from bodies like the Canada Council for the Arts. Over time, however, M&S continued to experience financial challenges and, in 2012, ownership was transferred entirely to Random House, where M&S now remains as an imprint of the larger publishing house, living on in "a virtual life" only, in Dewar's words.

Dewar is blunt in her role as a cultural nationalist who opposed the sale: "[T]his is a story about the slow, secret murder of Canada's nationalist publishing policy," the book begins. She situates herself as a boomer who has believed that "a culturally, politically, and economically independent Canada" is "a really good idea." She is herself, as she notes, implicated in the book, as a writer with many relationships in the industry, though she writes, she says, "with a pure heart." It is the final transfer of 75% of M&S to Random House for one dollar that sets her off on her mission to uncover how the transfer was taking place. That 75% of the major backlist of CanLit titles was only valued at a dollar, she argues, suggests that

there were other forces at play. Suspicious that Random House had in fact held de facto control of M&S since the University of Toronto transfer, Dewar sets out to find out what, exactly, was going on behind the scenes.

This reader, at least, is not quite convinced that Dewar found the fire behind the smoke. There are many things that don't line up, many people's versions of the story that conflict, and many documents that seem to contradict each other. Was the sale malicious? Was it a deliberate attempt to sidestep legislation? Dewar implies at times that the business moguls behind the scenes—the late Bennett at the centre of it all—were, at a minimum, out to maximize their investments. But she also goes further, bringing in the consolidation of the industry through Indigo-Chapters and the subsequent challenge to smaller presses in the country. She links Bertelsmann back to its connections with Nazi Germany and examines some of the troubling sides of Canada's business elite. She makes many worrying links in this book. Yet what readers will conclude is up to them, as Dewar herself notes.

The Handover reads as a risky book written by a vociferous champion of the literary arts in Canada. Dewar comes across as pugnacious but also, at times, as being as lost in the minutiae as everyday readers might be when confronted by business terms like *monopsony*, *oligopsony*, *puts*, *retainers*, and so on. As she files freedom-of-information requests in succession to the University of Toronto, readers see Dewar pursuing a goal that never quite seems to come to light, but that yields plenty of conflicting information along the way. At an absolute minimum, Dewar's writing should convince any reader that the publishing industry is just that: it is an industry, with industrial structures, a business framework, and a mindset equal to that framework. While publishing can be a labour of love, it is also a labour linked to money and markets and intellectual property and more. There is little room for romanticism about the industry as Dewar portrays it. Instead, CanLit, she reveals—at least in the most Toronto-business-centric sense—is about money, and sometimes lots of it. As the millions bounce around in *The Handover*, average writers in Canada (who earn a pittance in comparison) will have to either scratch their heads and wonder how it got to this point or else howl in indignation.

Indigenous Picture Books

Louise Flaherty; Jim Nelson, illus.
The Gnawer of Rocks. Inhabit Media $22.95

Roy Goose and Kerry McCluskey; Soyeon Kim, illus.
Sukaq and the Raven. Inhabit Media $16.95

Patricia McCarthy; Hwei Lim, illus.
Jon's Tricky Journey: A Story for Inuit Children with Cancer and Their Families.
Inhabit Media $19.95

David A. Robertson; Julie Flett, illus.
When We Were Alone. HighWater $18.95

Monique Gray Smith; Danielle Daniel, illus.
You Hold Me Up. Orca $19.95

Reviewed by Britney Burrell

As an elementary school teacher, it can be difficult to find Indigenous picture books that are representative of modern Indigenous peoples and experiences, which is why the following books make strong contributions to the existing corpus.

In *The Gnawer of Rocks*, Louise Flaherty presents a traditional Inuit story, used as a morality tale, in the form of a graphic novel. While their families are preparing for winter, two girls wander away from camp following a trail of strange, beautiful stones. The trail leads them farther and farther away, until they enter a cave and become trapped in the lair of Mangittatuarjuk, an ancient land spirit that devours children. Flaherty's approach to telling this dark Inuit

story in the style of a graphic novel acts as an entry point for those readers who may be familiar with the popular genre, yet unfamiliar with Inuit literature. The book's consistent use of only a few lines of text on each page, with the occasional speech bubble, offers a form that is approachable for younger readers; however, its dark themes and frightening content make this story more suited for a read-aloud with an older primary or an intermediate audience. The dark, muted tones of Jim Nelson's illustrations complement the alarming story.

In another Inuit tale, *Sukaq and the Raven*, Kerry McCluskey retells a traditional legend from storyteller Roy Goose using the frame of Sukaq, a little boy who loves to fall asleep to his mother's bedtime stories. As his mother tells him of the giant Raven who created the world, Sukaq closes his eyes and is whisked away on the back of the Raven. With its use of even blocks of text on each page but a more challenging vocabulary, this book would make an ideal read-aloud for primary ages. McCluskey's clear prose brings the legend to life, but it is Soyeon Kim's charming dioramas that make this a book that other children, just like Sukaq, will also want to find in their dreams.

Jon's Tricky Journey is also an Inuit story, but one with a different purpose. Written by Patricia McCarthy, a pediatric nurse practitioner, the book serves as a guide for Inuit children with cancer and their families. The text-heavy picture book follows Jon's journey south from his home in Nunavut to a hospital in a big city for cancer treatments. Jon is frightened and lonely, but kind hospital staff and new friends help him to cope with the "tricky" parts of having cancer. McCarthy gently introduces readers to what young patients will encounter during cancer treatments: doctors, nurses, big beeping machines, child life specialists, oncology pharmacists, bad-tasting medicine, and extended hospital stays away from family. The book is written first in Inuktitut, and then in English, and the story of Jon's journey comprises only its first thirty-four pages. The remaining pages consist of a resource guide for family caregivers, including: a list of children's hospital and cancer treatment facilities; a map of Inuit Nunangat, with flight paths to coordinating treatment sites across Canada; a glossary of oncology team members; a list of suggested questions to ask the oncology team; a Northern pain scale; and a glossary of helpful terms, among other resources. *Jon's Tricky Journey* serves as an immensely useful guide and a conversation starter for young Inuit children and their families who are facing a battle with cancer.

David A. Robertson's *When We Were Alone* similarly deals with a challenging topic. A young girl helps her Kokum (grandmother) tend the garden and notices some interesting things about her. She asks her Kokum about her colourful clothing, about her long braided hair, about speaking in Cree, and about why she spends so much time with family. Words spoken in the story's present appear in black font, while Kokum's reflections on her time in residential school—when all those things her granddaughter asks about were taken away—appear in red. Robertson demonstrates not only the tragedy Kokum experienced being separated from her culture, but also her resistance and resilience. The book has clear, simple illustrations by Julie Flett and larger blocks of text on each page. It handles the topic of residential schools with sensitivity, and is an appropriate introduction for younger audiences.

Monique Gray Smith's *You Hold Me Up* likewise introduces the theme of resilience to young readers and encourages kindness, empathy, and respect for other peoples and cultures. With only a handful of easy-to-read words in large font on each pastel page, and with many word repetitions, this book is ideal for early readers by themselves, for lap-sitting, or as a read-aloud. Bright

watercolour illustrations by Danielle Daniel reflect the lives of contemporary Indigenous peoples and further Smith's goal of healing and reconciliation, which she describes briefly in her author's note.

Telling the Body to the World: Three Recent Elegies

Nora Gould
Selah. Brick $20.00

Cornelia Hoogland
Trailer Park Elegy. Harbour $18.95

Sandra Ridley
Silvija. BookThug $18.00

Reviewed by Jennifer Baker

The elegy is a roadmap; it is the seared memory of a journey through the incommunicable and irreconcilable isolation of grief, and the re-entry of the bereaved into the social world. It is the literary ritual of mourning, and as such functions as both a private and public record of transformation of the body and of the psyche. Nora Gould's *Selah*, Cornelia Hoogland's *Trailer Park Elegy*, and Sandra Ridley's *Silvija* are all attentive to the transformative power of this ritual, and there is much to grieve in each: the losses of safety, love, personality, and agency among complicated histories of abuse and illness, the losses of family members, and the threat of looming ecological disaster. But while *Selah*'s and *Trailer Park Elegy*'s greatest achievements are found in the combination of image and narrative that reconnects the speaker to her landscape and its deeper ecological history, *Silvija* is the book that most directly relates this ritual to sound and language in their material senses, inhering in the raw connection between sound and content.

Of the three collections, *Selah* is most closely linked with narrative. Nora Gould's second collection, it traces the complexities, losses, and unsettling harshness of living with a husband in the grips of the early stages of dementia. In many senses, this collection carefully mourns the loss of the familiar: the "stillborn" grief must develop slowly along with the terminal illness and stifled mortality of the beloved partner whose "face closes" and "folds shut." This linked poetic sequence performs the slow accumulation of meaning, the wreckage of collapse piling in on itself as we move through the text. But Gould also shows how careful attention to—and willingness to rejoin—the broader environment around her, to notice "[a] hank of alfalfa snagged on the carcass" of a coyote, or to allow the moths and snow to settle into the dust of her jacket, can become a healing practice for the speaker. She reminds us, from within this slow collapse and change, to "*Breathe. There is air in the room*." Eventually, this is the practice that allows the speaker the clarity and devotion to see and accept her husband, both as he was and as he is: "I will go home and Charl will be himself. / He is himself. That's the thing. He is."

Similarly, Cornelia Hoogland's *Trailer Park Elegy* roots the speaker's grief over her brother's sudden death in the deep time of the Salish Sea and surrounding landscape. Detailing her brother's recovery from addiction and the years—"pure gravy"—before the winter car accident that caused his death, Hoogland weaves grief into the everyday fact of her presence in the world, from the "*No!*" erupting from her thermos of coffee to the wail that "lifts the rocks from the beach, / bellows the sand, / the bay." Unlike in *Selah*, where such externalization of grief reaches mostly into the speaker's immediate surroundings, in *Trailer Park Elegy*, grief is represented by a sonic void that opens in the darkness around the speaker. In this kinetic silence, "the Deep Bay opening the mouths of the dead," the speaker's grief transforms itself into an electrified transience, a call and

response between the living and the dead through the dark: "*Never know where you are. Where are you?*" Grief and love intertwine, find themselves again and again in the geological history of place.

In Sandra Ridley's *Silvija*, a 2017 Griffin Poetry Prize finalist, the embodiment of grief sublimates narrative detail into sensory experience, opting for the raw sensation of sound to express the suffering of abuse and terminal illness. Poems that "Swallow the sword / swallow the tongue"; they are spiked with the rage and urgency of feeling one's way through traumatic memory. *Silvija* pleads, "*Conspectus tuo viam meam* / direct a way / with your sight." The poetry enacts this missive; each section oscillates dialectically with sections titled "In Praise of the Healer," careful islands of clear imperatives that drive the rest of the elegies toward—not resolution, but integration and transformation, and, finally, a reclamation of agency: "Rest in me. / What I mean is this is where I choose to die."

Each of these books is moving; but the stunning rawness, and simultaneous devotion, of *Silvija* is a rare find.

Poems New and Old

Catherine Graham
The Celery Forest. Buckrider $18.00

Seymour Mayne, trans.
In Your Words: Translations from the Yiddish and the Hebrew. Ronald P. Frye $17.95

Susan McCaslin
Into the Open: Poems New and Selected. Inanna $22.95

Kilby Smith-McGregor
Kids in Triage. Buckrider $18.00

Reviewed by David Johnstone

Catherine Graham takes us into a kind of fantasy world in her most recent poetry collection, *The Celery Forest*. The back cover compares this world to Narnia, Neverland, Oz, and Wonderland, and we should note that all of these worlds are escapes from the real one. This is the case here too: Graham takes us to her imagined world from the very real world of her diagnosis of breast cancer. Here "the pea beneath / your mattress" is not just an impediment to sleep. In reading this string of spare, minimalist imaginings (no poem is longer than a single page), I am reminded of the tragic fantasy of Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia* (a world I was extremely touched by in childhood). All varieties of birds are found in Graham's collection (gulls, pigeons, chickens, owls)—she calls them "human-watchers," establishing a kind of audience—and she tells us "she holds birds in her bones." She speaks to an owl and tells him to "pluck the tumour out of [her] breast / with your sharp, curved talons— // let the only thing that spreads be your wings." It's images like these that are so affective and so carefully and delicately conjured that they stick to the walls of the reader's mind and slowly drip down. Their haunting beauty can feel exactly like "a Zeppelin record playing / backwards." With titles like "The Royal Mole Catcher," Graham shows that she isn't afraid to play. Her ideas are witty yet tragic. In a poem called "Deciduous," she thinks of autumn's falling leaves as she waits "for breasts that never come back." We find a world and a moment that was "there before / and there thereafter."

One should feel the utmost gratitude for translators. Arguably, they have one of the toughest jobs in writing. They are the movers of the literary world, and they do heavy lifting indeed. We should be incredibly thankful for Seymour Mayne's work in bringing us some of the best Yiddish and Hebrew poets otherwise unknown to us anglophones. Rachel Korn, Melech Ravitch, Abraham Sutzkever, Moshe Dor, and Shlomo Vinner are all skilfully and carefully brought over to English. This is no small undertaking, and there is no small reward for the reader. From Korn,

we are given her thoughts on composition: "I fear that first line of a poem, / the sharp slash / that decapitates." From Sutzkever, we are given that painful hope: "Because he wanted to smuggle a flower / through the ghetto's gate / my neighbour paid the price of seven lashes . . . that's how much he wanted it to flourish." This is a book of delicately handled poems. Mayne wants these words, these poems, to flourish. As a Montrealer, he understands the complicated history of languages in that city and in Canada (we should think of him in the great line of Jewish writers in Montreal, such as A. M. Klein, Irving Layton, and Leonard Cohen). This is an insider translation in that it is not of the voyeur, but of the subject. He keeps tradition alive, fresh, and distinct. This is a poetry worth learning the language(s) for, but we can settle in good faith for the intimate intelligence of Mayne's translations.

With poems pulled from her early chapbooks, her 1995 debut *Locutions*, and her most recent work, *Lineage*, poet Susan McCaslin is back with a book for fans new and old. *Into the Open: Poems New and Selected* is a vast collection of beautiful trinkets for readers to adorn their thoughts with. These are poems that one might copy out (or, dare I say, rip out) so that one can carry them on one's journey through life (in wallets, purses, jacket pockets). McCaslin accompanies us just as much as we accompany her on her spiritual and artistic journeys. She writes of Christianity (notably in dialogue with William Blake) in such ways that turn and, at times, disturb our thoughts and notions: "How long / till the Magdalene undoes her / hair and Christ blazes in the sev- / ered amoeba brain?" Of special interest to those already acquainted with McCaslin's writing are her new poems, which are particularly skilful. We find that "the language" still "winks back." The pleasure that comes from her poetry is one of meditation. In this collection, McCaslin's work is alive and well: "Gender explodes, metaphors meld, / as bridegroom receives the bride."

Theatre artist and writer Kilby Smith-McGregor doesn't let genre hold her back in *Kids in Triage*. In her debut poetry collection, she confidently finds her own footing and style. The book begins with a kind of nightmarish nursery rhyme, the speaker chanting and repeating the title, "black matter, black matter," and then "[s]ummer screamed like we all scream. Ice cream; rope burn. / Rope burn; gasoline." The collection is cogent, each poem leading into the next with masterful traces and repetitions. Smith-McGregor's language packs a punch, and it's one of the main draws of her poetry: "Neck hung low, pulse threads distal *in extremis* protanopic / both placental, ectoplasmic." Smith-McGregor's phrasing is never boring, but at times it risks being too busy, too chaotic (something some readers may find appealing in itself). At her best, Smith-McGregor complicates binaries. With references to Descartes (among other scientists and "big names" of literature), the poet interrogates the mind/body division. These physical/psychological interruptions inform the content and the style. Hers is a poetry of contradiction. Her words tear each other apart. It is a distinct pleasure to find a poet at the start of her career, and I look forward to following her work as she develops it.

Blessing [in] Darkness

Heidi Greco
Flightpaths: The Lost Journals of Amelia Earhart. Caitlin $18.00

Pamela Porter
Defending Darkness. Ronsdale $15.95

Jan Zwicky
The Long Walk. U of Regina P $19.95

Reviewed by Crystal Hurdle

From poets in their prime, these collections explore darkness, Heidi Greco's on the micro level through one character, aviator Amelia Earhart, and the other two at the macro level—Pamela Porter in a world infused with personal grief, and Jan Zwicky as an everywoman facing the death of the planet. Archetypes, rising and falling, light and dark, fuse.

Flightpaths often reads like an uninterrupted fever dream. In "Dead Reckoning," the conceit of the double dateline—from "July 2 and 2," the date of the aviator's disappearance, to July 24, the date of her imagined death on her fortieth birthday—allows for sequences of alternate possibilities ("[a]s if I am living an alternate life") set in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp (the verisimilitude heightened by Greco's note: "these may not be in the order in which they were written") and in a mental institution, with "Joan of Arc liv[ing] down the hall." As well, Earhart, near death, writes letters to friends and family. Puns and wordplay abound: "Unlucky Strikes," "4th of July, barely there atoll." Bookended by a skipping rhyme about Earhart, the playful, imaginative book is lightly peopled with friends (the Roosevelts, Katharine Hepburn) and family (Earhart's husband and sister). Amelia's recollections are more about loved ones than her astounding travels. "Cloudlist" notes: "Wrinkly. Aunt Rilla's sheets, fresh from the line, smelling of sunlight." The book's strength (and perhaps limitation) is its focus on a single woman, however inspiring and modern-seeming. Her first plane is described as "some prehistoric bird." As she nears death, fittingly, "the visiting birds have forsaken me."

More than birds forsake Zwicky. "Courage," a frontispiece poem, stuns with its direct address and the dawning horror of the "path unravelling / beneath you." She joins the reader on the precipice of a world growing apocalyptic through climate change: "Come, and step closer to the edge, then. // You must look, heart. You must look." "Into the Gap," with map coordinates, echoes Robert Frost's "Directive" with disquieting commands and movement into a place, pasts and elsewhere: "to set out then / into the walk that keeps on walking." The reader is forced to "Witness" (one title, both verb and noun). "What's coming / won't be human if it has / no ghost"—this is quietly malevolent. This is a world in which nature is becoming defeated, "burnt yellow grass" from "sick heat" in spite of "the benediction of the alders." In "The Ruined Garden," the narrator visits a garden she'd already been dismayed to see the year before; however, sighting brilliantly coloured orioles gives hope.

Gentle use of a collective "we" in "Seeing" and other poems makes the reader a participant and contributor, but Zwicky refrains from accusations. "Consummatum Est" begins with Christ's dying words, "It is finished" (John 19:30), repeated, with a long haunting list of extinct plants and animals, the horror in its length and lyricism, so many dead—"geometric tortoise," "Vesper sparrows," and "silver hair moss." It is to weep. There are excellent line ends here and elsewhere: blank space in which to ponder. The devastation, not restricted to a single place, is all over: New Brunswick, Alberta, islands in BC, Europe, the Berkeley hills. The speaker "couldn't tell my sorrow / from the world's." Interconnectedness is all. The final poem slyly asks, "Is it the dark itself you love?"—complicity?—before answering in the negative, concluding on a soft image

of domesticity, especially lovely as many poems feature a house that represents the world. Homecoming.

Both Zwicky's and Porter's collections consist of four numbered but unnamed sections, like a traditional five-act play (a tragedy?), inviting the reader to add (or not) the final act. Porter's "The Abandoned Farm" invites the reader to journey into the past, a prairie girlhood, acquiring a self of many layers, farm sensibility—reiterations of roses, blooming mustard, horses, and moons, so many horses and moons (too many?), "a stranger light, a brighter dark." The world is apocalyptic in man-made disaster, the Albion mine with "strange snow," and even natural harvest "long past the sun's / slow fire burning out." In "All they could do," the dead "arrive, congregants at the feeder." The many birds—chickadees, peregrines, blackbirds, robins, snow geese, owls, ravens, eagles, ospreys, and even "the finch in hawk's talons"—are excellent images of vulnerability amid destructiveness.

Where Zwicky's hope lies in the music of Brahms, Haydn, and Schumann, Porter concludes "The first musicians were birds" with "Be the bird." Porter alludes to Lear, Penelope, and the Polish poet Zagajewski; Zwicky to Edward Hopper, the Neoplatonist Simplikios, other philosophers, and several poet-friends, widening the scope. While nature is the focus, both poets specify the man-made, Porter with Allis-Chalmers, and Zwicky with John Deere and Dodge Ram. Many of Porter's and Zwicky's lines/themes would be at home in the other's collection. Zwicky, like Porter, bemoans the loss of small-town life, specifically the grain elevators in "Depth." Porter notes "dark and light remained sutured to each other," while Zwicky writes, "It's what / being's made of: light / scoring the dark." Zwicky wonders early on if we can "secur[e] the house": is it already too late? Frightening. Even if one doesn't "want to be a poet any more. // To be marked by God to stand apart, / to bear witness, make account" (Porter), there's little choice. If these are end times, light/dark the patina of an unholy and unchanging season, what better than to read compelling poetry? The three books are themselves balm, benedictions, nay, even wings.

Twenty-First-Century Adolescence and Other Dangerous Things

Darren Groth
Munro vs. the Coyote. Orca $19.95

Leanne Lieberman
The Most Dangerous Thing. Orca $14.95

Danielle Younge-Ullman
Everything Beautiful Is Not Ruined.
Penguin Random House Canada $13.99

Reviewed by Anne L. Kaufman

Life as a post-9/11 adolescent means that your senses are continually under assault: easy access to social media opens up both ethical and emotional minefields, technology is everywhere, and real privacy is a thing of the past. Everyone, it seems, is battling anxiety, depression, or both. For high school junior Sydney, the protagonist of Leanne Lieberman's *The Most Dangerous Thing*, the effect of this onslaught is to render her pathologically afraid, both of being touched and of desiring to be touched. Depression physically weighs her down and makes a Herculean task of getting out of bed each morning. Her closest relationships are long-term connections with people who know her well and offer no surprises, until one of these long-time acquaintances rocks the boat by suddenly changing from being just a friend to a potential love interest. Older sister Abby, relentlessly described as the extroverted sister, further upsets Sydney's equilibrium with her plan to stage *The Vagina Monologues* at their high school; this secondary storyline leads to the frankly unbelievable conclusion of the novel. The rituals of a contemporary Jewish family,

filtered through Sydney's twin desires to belong and to pull away, reassure the reader that Sydney always has a safety net. Pitched at a younger age group (early middle school) than the other two novels in this review, *The Most Dangerous Thing* brings Sydney through authentic crisis to a resolution that feels only slightly contrived.

In *Everything Beautiful Is Not Ruined*, Danielle Younge-Ullman responds to the unending noise of twenty-first-century life by sending her protagonist Ingrid off to an immersive nature camp, armed with what we find out later is one of one hundred empty journals. Ingrid is a familiar female adolescent voice at the start of the novel, missing her First-World luxuries and resenting her mother's insistence that she participate. As is common with journey narratives, the trip is a growth experience for Ingrid, and Younge-Ullman is able to permit her moments of insight without losing the sense of her voice. The semi-epistolary style, with Ingrid addressing her mother in each journal entry, makes perfect sense once Ingrid reveals some details of her history in narrative moments separate from the letters. Ingrid is most effective as a narrator when she addresses her mother, but the backstory could not have worked in that format. The book does contain potential triggers for survivors of sexual assault.

The lack of privacy experienced by sixteen-year-old Munro Maddux in Darren Groth's *Munro vs. the Coyote* is due to the incessant voice in his head, whom he calls Coyote, and who has been present since the death of Munro's younger sister some nine months previously. He is hoping against hope that leaving British Columbia for a six-month exchange program in Australia will allow him to vanquish Coyote and have his thoughts to himself. Evie Maddux's sudden death from a heart condition has left emptiness at the centre of the Maddux family and left Munro himself weighed down by guilt and grief. Munro's parents deal with their grief by establishing a foundation for Down syndrome research in Evie's name, but this only makes Munro feel less able to communicate with them. Details about Evie's death come through Munro's reminiscences and conversations with Coyote; while savvy readers will figure these out well before the narrative gets there, this predictability does not substantially affect the reading experience.

Upon arriving in Brisbane, Munro learns that he is required to complete fifty hours of community service. Again, somewhat predictably, he is placed at Fair Go, an assisted living community for young people. He expects to be reminded of his sister non-stop, and resists the placement. The group who accepts Munro as their Living Partner, however, becomes an integral part of Munro's life. When he is with them, he doesn't hear Coyote's voice. While he does have a small group of friends at school, the Fair Go community becomes a lifeline for Munro, and he begins to spend more and more time there, well beyond his required fifty hours. Realistic characters with mental illness, Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorder, and PTSD are rare enough in YA fiction; Groth has created an authentic cohort who play an active role in Munro's Australian journey toward healing. Despite a hole in the plot you could drive a semi through, Munro's journey is compelling and his voice believable.

In a YA universe dominated by authors with great publicists, it is a pleasure to find three writers with such deep concern for language and story. Each evokes a sense of place: Lieberman describes Sydney's bicycling and outings with her grandfather, Younge-Ullman makes us feel Ingrid's every blister during her protagonist's trek through the wilderness, and Groth chronicles Munro's transition from British Columbia to a different season and unfamiliar landscape in Brisbane. Each has written a central character whose voice will

resonate with YA fans, and each has found a way to position their narrative alongside twenty-first-century concerns without being aggressively trendy.

Growing Up Inuk

Aviaq Johnston; Toma Feizo Gas, illus. *Those Who Run in the Sky.* Inhabit Media $13.95

Rachel Qitsualik-Tinsley and Sean Qitsualik-Tinsley; Toma Feizo Gas, illus. *Why the Monster.* Inhabit Media $13.95

Reviewed by Carla Harrison

Hailing from Canada's Arctic region, authors Rachel and Sean Qitsualik-Tinsley and Aviaq Johnston know their land and their people—a truth that becomes self-evident when reading their respective young adult novels, *Why the Monster* and *Those Who Run in the Sky*. Rachel and Sean Qitsualik-Tinsley, an established writing couple, have published several retellings of traditional Inuit myths and legends. Aviaq Johnston, raised in Nunavut, is an emerging voice in Inuit fiction. Both of these novels feature a young male protagonist who must negotiate between his life as an individual and his responsibilities within his community, all while navigating the transition to adulthood. Although they take different approaches to telling their stories and exhibit two distinct styles, both books invite their readers in, not only to their stories, but to the Inuit communities of their narratives as well. Both weave Inuktitut language into their texts skilfully in order to pay homage but also to teach their readers, and their authors reveal intimate relationships with community in their descriptions of characters, places, and practices. These stories act as manifestations of the Inuit principle of Tunnganarniq—creating a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for strangers and family alike.

Aviaq Johnston's first foray into the world of the young adult novel, *Those Who Run in the Sky* focuses on a young Inuk hunter named Piturniq (Pitu) who learns he is destined to become a shaman, like his uncle and grandmother before him. After being separated from his beloved family and camp, Pitu discovers that he has been transported to an alternate reality—the world of the spirits. In order to get home, he must rely on his shamanic intuition and his uncle's basic teachings. Pitu is an engaging character. And while his situation is unique as an Inuit shaman, his human concerns are globally appealing and relatable. As a young adult, navigating the sometimes confusing shift from boyhood to manhood, Pitu struggles with his obligations to his family and his tribe, and also with his new role as a suitor to the beautiful Saima. How can Pitu negotiate his responsibilities within his community, his unexpected responsibility as a shaman, and his personal hopes and dreams for his own life? This question is central to Johnston's novel. She encourages her young audience to recognize the parallels between their own lives and Pitu's, while at the same time appreciating the specificity of a culture that, for many Canadian readers, is a familiar mystery.

In *Why the Monster*, the Qitsualik-Tinsleys create a quasi-parallel universe called "Sky Time." This alternate reality includes "everything that was. And was not. Being. Non-being. . . . One living imagination, dreaming only of itself." As I read the novel, I began to wonder if the Sky Time universe is actually just the same reality we all participate in, observed from a uniquely Inuit perspective. The story centres around Huuq, a misfit Inhabitant of the Land, who struggles to find his place and identity. Unlike Johnston's Pitu, however, Huuq does not initially feel bound by a strong sense of responsibility to his community. Instead, Huuq takes pride in causing minor havoc amongst his camp as a means of entertaining himself. Huuq's mischievous side eventually leads him to trouble, as he is

transformed into a monster by spirits called Its. Huuq, like Pitu, is exiled from his camp after the shaman, Akiraq, decides it is not safe for him to stay. The young man must stand on his own for the first time in his life. I expect that many young adult readers, boys especially, will relate to Huuq. The Qitsualik-Tinsleys artfully present him as a simultaneously flawed but lovable character, wrestling with his identity and place in his world.

Readers of these books will be reminded that no matter our locations, humanity is linked by a universal struggle to understand who we are and where we fit in. Johnston fittingly employs straightforward, economical language, whereas the Qitsualik-Tinsleys tell their story in descriptive, poetic prose. As a secondary school teacher, I enthusiastically recommend both of these novels for young readers between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. In particular, I encourage teachers working with Indigenous students to incorporate these books into their syllabi, and share the important sentiments expressed by Johnston in her dedication: "[F]or Indigenous youth everywhere, you deserve a story where you can be the main character." Indeed, both Johnston and the Qitsualik-Tinsleys, in the characters, content, and language of their stories, create spaces and necessary opportunities for Indigenous youth to step into the spotlight.

After Globalization

Eddy Kent and Terri Tomsky, eds.
Negative Cosmopolitanism: Cultures and Politics of World Citizenship after Globalization.
McGill-Queen's UP $39.95

Reviewed by Michelle Siobhan O'Brien

The essays in *Negative Cosmopolitanism* focus on critical appraisals of the Enlightenment-based optimism attached to cosmopolitanism as bound to mobility, human rights, and global citizenship. As editors Terri Tomsky and Eddy Kent write, *negative* cosmopolitanism attempts to extend the term while cynically "engag[ing]" with the ways that cosmopolitanism is entangled with world citizenship, globalization, and human rights. The collection's provocative aim is to keep this critical frame in mind while considering the term's productivity for those who desire world citizenship or have cosmopolitanism imposed upon them. The fourteen interdisciplinary essays are written by scholars with backgrounds in literature, history, film, sociology, geography, and political science, but they share in common attempts to address cosmopolitanism's inconsistencies without discarding it as a critical tool, and to harness its usefulness as a method of contending with the experiences of those caught up in economic and cultural globalization.

Part One, "Cosmopolitan Histories," is ambitious in scope, as it engages with human rights, philanthropy, imperialism, and national disasters. Crystal Parikh's salient chapter on the "Bandung Spirit" argues that while the 1955 Asian-African conference in Bandung, Indonesia was influenced by American conceptions of human rights, the cosmopolitan solidarity produced through this anti-colonial community exposes the limits of the American "good life" as universal human rights. Following this chapter are Geordie Miller's critique of the MacArthur Foundation's philanthropic aims as inculcated in global capitalism, Dennis Mischke's

analysis of the nineteenth-century transatlantic insurance industry in relation to the *Zong* massacre and Herman Melville's fiction, and Liam O'Loughlin's reading of Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* as exploring "disaster cosmopolitanism from below" by yoking together the experiences of the survivors of Nagasaki, India's Partition, and 9/11. An especially vital example of negative cosmopolitanism is Sneja Gunew's analysis of vernacular cosmopolitanism, which recognizes "global interdependence" yet remains "rooted in and permeated by" the local concerns of minoritized peoples. Gunew draws on the autobiographical works of Eur/Asian artists that "construct the estrangement from one's own culture" bound to the "new planetarily conceived cosmopolitanism" as the artists struggle to recover their diasporic histories through archival and artistic traces of global trade. Negative cosmopolitanism emerges here and throughout this section not only as exposing failed internationalist efforts, but also through imagined or forgotten historical intersections and moments of solidarity shaped by the emergence of global capitalism.

Part Two, "Cosmopolitan Labour," extends this reading of global capitalism; this section is especially cohesive as all four chapters address individual experiences in relation to labour forms that "transcend national paradigms." Paul Ugor examines those made unwilling subjects of cosmopolitanism in the Niger Delta under the global petroleum industry, and how the region's youths developed an "alternate community" organized around an "underground" oil economy. Pamela McCallum considers how literature and journalism provide situated narratives of unseen labour while exposing the relationship between migrant lives and global markets. Melissa Stephens critiques celebratory approaches to the creolization of migrant workers in the Caribbean that risk "bolster[ing] a neoliberal logic of diversity while concealing racialized forms of economic exploitation." Heather Latimer also examines migrant labour, but by incisively critiquing how heterosexual reproduction and the pregnant bodies of undocumented migrant labourers become caught up in cosmopolitan fantasies of a "better future community."

Latimer's chapter neatly segues into Part Three, "Cosmopolitan Communities," which focuses on communities not readily viewed as cosmopolitan. As Timothy Brennan argues in his chapter on "homiletic realism," emerging cosmopolitan critiques ask that we make connections between global processes that lie "behind the apparent." From Juliane Collard's chapter on illegalized sex workers as foils against which ideal cosmopolitan citizens are defined, to Mike Dillon's analysis of the tension between representations of undocumented immigrants and Japanese homogeneity in yakuza films, to Dina Gusejnova's chapter on the political parties that redeployed the Enlightenment cosmopolitan ideals that shaped world literature, and Mark Simpson's chapter on crime novels that use excessive "cosmopolitical violence" to critique neoliberal orthodoxy, this final part is somewhat diffuse. But the breadth successfully expands the terms of cosmopolitan critiques, and, as Peter Nyers articulates in the afterword, helps expose the paradoxes of "liberal cosmopolitanism."

Taken together, the chapters in *Negative Cosmopolitanism* provide a masterful and timely contribution to cosmopolitan studies. The collection carefully balances critiques of the inequity and exclusionary practices that shape global capital with examinations of competing forms of cosmopolitanism—particularly those that contest or exceed optimistic approaches to cosmopolitanism under globalization.

Intercultural Toronto

Ric Knowles
Performing the Intercultural City.
U of Michigan P US $29.95

Reviewed by Eury Colin Chang

In the preface to *Performing the Intercultural City*, Ric Knowles alludes to the decade-long process of "building relationships, negotiating, and engaging in research that was necessarily more collaborative . . . than had previously been my scholarly habit." His extensive research into intercultural theatre's complexity has resulted in a compelling, accessible book. The playwrights, actors, and creators featured in these pages are represented as highly critical and creative beings pushing against staid forms and narratives.

The book is divided into three main parts: "Contexts," "Dramaturgies," and "Mediations." Each chapter features specific artists, their shows, and various companies with whom the author has collaborated, principally as a dramaturge. Chapter One recalls Knowles' other works, *"Ethnic," Multicultural, and Intercultural Theatre* (co-edited with Ingrid Mundel, 2009), and *theatre & interculturalism* (2010), laying bare the theoretical foundation of his field. Chapter Two explores dramatic works with strong feminine content and perspectives, namely Anita Majumdar's *Fish Eyes*—the solo show integrates the *mudras* and vocabulary from Bharatanatyam, Kathak, and Odissi dances—in addition to Catherine Hernandez's *Singki*, a movement-based ensemble show. The latter, Knowles writes, is concerned "very much about mothers . . . daughters, and the transmission of cultural memory through performance." Also packed into Chapter Two is an analysis of Ahmed Ghazali's *The Sheep and the Whale*; given its representation of endangered refugees (however fictionalized), the play connects intricately to social issues at a time when news of mass migrations across national borders is abundant. Knowles also covers the work of MT Space and Turtle Gals Performance Ensemble, respectively.

Part Two focuses on the dramaturgy of Carlos Bulosan Theatre (CBT), starting with an in-depth unpacking of *Miss Orient(ed)*, by Nina Lee Aquino and Nadine Villasin, credited as CBT's first professional production. Instead of employing an Aristotelian dramatic structure, the show "focused, not on an individual hero or heroine . . . but on the messy identity issues of a conflicted, intergenerational community in diaspora." CBT's other shows are treated: *People Power*, in which "the subject was the Philippines, but the process and form were largely borrowed," is discussed, as is CBT's production of *In the Shadow of Elephants*. Knowles remains hyper-aware of his collaborators' tendency to resist, transform, and at times emulate Western dramatic forms and ideologies. Chapter Four focuses specifically on contemporary Indigenous performance, foregrounding it as a pertinent aspect of Canadian theatre and interculturalism writ large. Chapter Five follows suit, focusing on artistic leaders from the Caribbean and their pioneering companies Black Theatre Canada, Black Theatre Workshop, and b current.

Part Three begins with an overview of Soheil Parsa's Modern Times Stage Company's adaptations of contemporary classics (*Waiting for Godot*) and mythology (*Conference of the Birds*) and other works, leading Knowles to brand the company's aesthetic as "Iranian Canadian theatrical modernism." Additionally, this section draws attention to Aluna Theatre and Cahoots Theatre, the latter of which produced the groundbreaking *Write about Now* conference (1990) and the *Lift Off! Festival* (1993-2006, 2014), signature events which have served minoritized playwrights over the years.

The book concludes by listing companies and shows under the names of artists, each

described by parenthetical descriptions such as "Delaware," "Indo Canadian," or "Filipina." Though I question the necessity of such culturally specific descriptions, I am not offended, confident in Knowles' claim that cultural communities are internally diverse and multifaceted.

A few milestones and welcome changes in Canada's arts scene took place recently and deserve mention here as they reveal historically marginalized artists as players within a shifting policy and funding context. In 2015, David Yee of fu-GEN Asian Canadian Theatre was awarded a Governor General's Literary Award for Drama for *carried away on the crest of a wave*; in 2017, Kevin Loring became the National Arts Centre's first Artistic Director of Indigenous Theatre; and in the same year, the Equity Office at the Canada Council for the Arts expanded its mission to include deaf and/or disabled artists and their practices. Diversity embraced?

Performing the Intercultural City is a dramaturgically sound and insightful book that explores a compelling cross-section of Toronto's artistic scene. Knowles has lent his talents to a project that required patience, perseverance, and trust from artistic allies, resulting in a study of artistic personalities and practices that resists simple definition or easy homogenization.

Asian Occupations

Lynne Kutsukake
The Translation of Love. Knopf Canada $21.00

Christina Park
The Homes We Build on Ashes. Inanna $22.95

Reviewed by Jan Lermitte

Lynne Kutsukake's debut novel, *The Translation of Love*, and Christina Park's novel, *The Homes We Build on Ashes*, share a common feature: a storyline in which female characters are central to the plot. These girls and women endure poverty, suffering, war, trauma, and even sexual slavery. In each story, the diasporic movement of their families as a result of war and military occupation adds to the complexity of the narratives and settings. A brief review of each of the novels offers some insights into times and places not typically reimagined in Canadian literature.

The Translation of Love is set in Japan during the American occupation after World War II, and focuses on two young girls: Aya Shimamura, a Japanese Canadian who is repatriated to Japan with her embittered father, and Fumi Tanaka, her Japanese schoolmate, whose older sister Sumiko is missing, presumably in the back streets and brothels of Ginza. Although Aya is initially confused and shamed by the attitudes of the Japanese students and her unfriendly relatives, she eventually finds ways to cope in her new surroundings, and ultimately Aya's willingness to help Fumi find her sister leads to greater happiness and opportunity in Japan. The compelling plot, with interlocking storylines and dramatic suspense, demonstrates the ways in which both the occupied Japanese and the occupying Americans must learn from each other. Translation as a place of "in between" (not unlike Fred Wah's notion of the hyphen) is a key theme in the novel that raises important questions about human values such as tolerance, courage, duty, and loyalty; the characters' lives are joined together and enriched through acts of kindness. Yet, Kutsukake asks, how do we translate love? What does love mean in relation to friendship, romance, and family? Kutsukake invites us into the story to find answers. Important questions related to culture and ethnicity are also explored as the citizens of Tokyo meet one another and realize that—whether Japanese Canadian, Japanese American, or Japanese—they share the same need for love and kindness. The compassionate depiction of these girls and the various people with whom they interact is engaging and well crafted. One

weakness, perhaps, is that the opening story of General MacArthur's young son, who is the same age as the two girls, does not clearly develop. Although Kutsukake briefly returns to this opening event, the role of the young boy is never explained. Nevertheless, the dynamics between the two central characters, combined with a depiction and examination of the complicated emotions of both the native Japanese and the *Nisei* men and women, soldiers and civilians alike, present a unique perspective that is not often discussed. Moreover, Kutsukake effectively portrays the poverty and damage in Tokyo after the bombing, which highlights the plight of average civilians in the aftermath of war.

Park's novel is darker than Kutsukake's, the motif of ashes suggesting violence, destruction, death, and ultimately rebirth. Park describes the life of a Korean woman, Nara Lee, who raises her two daughters in the tumultuous period of the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945), and who later starts over in Canada. In the context of current world events, historical understanding of Korea's relationship to Japan, and later the US, is helpful. As Park tells us in a CBC interview with Jeanette Kelly, it is important for Canadians to understand more of the suffering of Koreans during this time, and of the racism many Koreans have faced as immigrants in Canada. The resilience of Park's female characters, who face the loss of their traditional values, spiritual beliefs, cultural expressions, and even basic freedoms, is both inspiring and disturbing. When Nara's best friend is kidnapped and forced into sexual slavery for the Japanese military, Nara cannot face the guilt that she feels knowing that her friend was accidently taken in her place. Park acknowledges that Nara's character is modelled after her grandmother, who inspired her to depict the challenges familiar to many Korean women of her generation. In the face of military executions, natural disasters (the Busan fire in 1953 that wiped out the homes of more than 28,000 people), forced labour, and ultimately family turmoil and racism in Canada, Nara struggles to make a meaningful life for her family in the homes that she creates out of the ashes of the past.

The weaknesses of Park's novel at times detract from the power of her story. Typos could have been corrected, and long complex sentences weighed down with extravagant detail and excessive description could have been improved with more editing. In addition, the male characters in the story often appear stereotypical and somewhat undeveloped, while even the female characters can seem unsympathetic. However, those who are interested in understanding more about the reality of life in Korea and Japan before and during World War II, especially for women, will find this novel worthy of discussion. One criticism often mentioned in terms of North American novels and film is the relative dearth of stories of women and girls in war-torn settings. Too often, war stories feature the experiences of the soldiers. In the case of these two novels, however, the heroic actions of young girls and women offer a compelling glimpse into some of the challenges faced by those whose family and friends are missing or dead because of the effects of war.

Histoires de dislocations

Karim Larose et Frédéric Rondeau, dirs.
La contre-culture au Québec. PUM 49,95 $

Laurent Poliquin
De l'impuissance à l'autonomie : évolution culturelle et enjeux identitaires des minorités canadiennes-françaises. Prise de parole 33,95 $

Compte rendu par Patricia Godbout

Un demi-siècle s'est écoulé depuis l'avènement de bon nombre des manifestations contre-culturelles québécoises qui

constituent l'abondante matière première de *La contre-culture au Québec* sous la direction de Karim Larose et Frédéric Rondeau. Ce collectif, qui se présente comme un ouvrage de référence, se donne notamment pour objectif de renouveler la réflexion en croisant des analyses ayant porté sur divers objets artistiques et culturels (musique, arts visuels, théâtre, cinéma, poésie, bande dessinée, etc.).

Bien que la variante québécoise du mouvement contre-culturel ait été bien loin d'être homogène, elle se caractérise par un refus de la société technocratique et, plus généralement, du « système », sorte d'entité polymorphe contre laquelle viendront se dresser une multiciplicité de formes artistiques et culturelles innovantes et diversement militantes. Si, dans la contre-culture québécoise, il y a un art qui sert de modèle en quelque sorte à tous les autres — comme ce fut le cas des arts visuels à la Renaissance —, on pourrait dire que ce serait la musique. Les chapitres qui y sont consacrés dans l'ouvrage sont particulièrement bien documentés et empreints d'une sorte d'élan à l'image de l'effervescence des milieux dépeints. Bien sûr, il fallait également rendre compte de la « grande récupération » à laquelle ce mouvement n'a pas manqué de donner lieu, mais l'accent a été mis, fort justement, sur la richesse des modes d'expression et de contestation qui viennent bousculer bien des codes dans le Québec de la fin des années 1960. Dans plusieurs textes, on met en relief l'outil de création par excellence que fut l'improvisation, qu'on a vu fleurir notamment au théâtre sous la forme de créations collectives remettant en cause le rôle de l'auteur et du metteur en scène.

Dans son étude de l'œuvre de la poète Josée Yvon, Valérie Mailhot retient l'idée de « dislocation révolutionnaire » des corps, mots qu'elle emprunte à un vers de cette auteure qui décrit l'activité d'une danseuse à l'hôtel Tropicana. Disloquer, rappelle Mailhot, veut dire « détourner, défaire, démonter un dispositif qui tient le sujet captif ». Ce terme s'appliquerait, selon moi, encore plus largement à une bonne partie de l'activité contre-culturelle au Québec qui s'est déployée grosso modo jusqu'en 1975, d'autant plus qu'à l'idée de déboîtement est associée ici celle de révolution. Sans oublier que ce dernier mot veut aussi dire « forme de ce qui est enroulé sur soi-même ». Car la contre-culture a aussi été porteuse d'une « révolution de l'intérieur » et de formes altérées de conscience qui n'ont pas toujours fait bon ménage avec les contestations réelles du pouvoir marchand et les rêves de vie communautaire.

La notion de dislocation est également évoquée par Laurent Poliquin dans *De l'impuissance à l'autonomie : évolution culturelle et enjeux identitaires des minorités canadiennes-françaises*. Il est question ici de la « dislocation du Canada français » que d'aucuns ont associée à l'avènement de la Révolution tranquille au Québec. L'auteur en cherche les traces en amont en analysant maints discours journalistiques et écrits pour la jeunesse de la première moitié du 20e siècle, afin de mettre en évidence la transformation idéologique et identitaire d'un peuple. Délaissant graduellement une appartenance à la nation canadienne-française qui subit les assauts de plusieurs décisions étatiques hostiles, chaque communauté francophone (en Ontario, au Manitoba, etc.) serait passée à un stade d'« autonomie », c'est-à-dire à un niveau de conscience disloqué mais plus net de soi et de sa réalité propre. L'auteur passe une grande quantité de documents au crible de la méthode d'analyse du discours proposée par Marc Angenot. Le lecteur prend conscience de la vitalité et de la diversité de ces prises de parole, que ce soit dans les périodiques ou les livres de contes pour enfants. Le titre de l'ouvrage (avec cette idée de passage de l'impuissance à l'autonomie) imprime un mouvement généralement

positif à ce qui s'apparente aussi à un effritement et à la fin d'un rêve pour la francophonie canadienne.

Reading as Living

Bertrand Laverdure; Oana Avasilichioaei, trans.
Readopolis. BookThug $20.00

Reviewed by Sarah Banting

Readopolis is a challenging, dispiriting, intellectual novel about reading and (or *as*) living, and about one reader's fervent—if largely fantasied—efforts to promote the best of Quebec literature while weeding out the worst. Published in 2008 as *Lectodôme* by Bertrand Laverdure, recent poet laureate of Montreal, the novel is now available to anglophone readers thanks to a Governor General's award-winning translation by Oana Avasilichioaei.

A young Montrealer named Ghislain is the central character. He thinks of himself, with a characteristic mixture of depressed futility and imagined grandeur, as Ghislain the reader, for he vets manuscripts for a publishing house. (To make ends meet he also works at a dépanneur, where he reads product packages and interprets his customers' buying habits.)

More than his livelihood, reading is also both Ghislain's incessant pastime and his mission. He is a hyper-literate flâneur, scrounging meaning from paper scraps and civic plaques. And he dreams of establishing a new reading culture, where the greatest Quebec writers would be in wide contemporary circulation. He undertakes this in part by committing himself to reading—it's an interesting question: *can* one contribute to literary culture simply by private reading?—in part by badgering his friends into reading forgotten fiction, and in part by sustaining a fantasy that his own life is interwoven with the works of his favourite writers. When a parrot appears, oddly, at the window of a Montreal apartment, Ghislain feverishly identifies it as the very bird featured in a 1959 French novel and subsequent film. The parrot, a fiction come to life, emblematizes for him a vital, ever-present literature: one he must sustain through devoted care.

The novel's form echoes the texture of Ghislain's omnivorous readerly consciousness by skipping between different genres and texts. Narrative passages are interspliced with dialogue set off as a playscript; lengthy block quotations; lavishly thoughtful emails from Ghislain's intellectual friend, Courrège; a long episode, involving different characters, set in Chicago; and even an embedded short novel. I often enjoyed these interruptions, because Ghislain is irritatingly self-righteous and tiringly abstract in expression. When his lover slights him by being late for a date, he muses, characteristically, that

> controlling time comes under the jurisdiction of an almost political mania, a materialist mania that consists in passing judgment on how days and hours elapse. . . . [T]ime is not a material but a universal pool of emptiness into which we pour everything that passes through our hands: death, illness, money, intelligence, trustworthiness, laziness, virtuosity, calm, relaxation, ease, stress, exercise, rejection, complicity, agony, and gratitude. If it's not a material but a flow of words we try to put in order so as to indicate who we are, then time is a subtle instrument of domination that we brandish when needed in order to establish our power and, consequently, our individualism.

In the playscript dialogues, by contrast, Ghislain's friends speak in their more casual voices, and tease him refreshingly for his morose high-mindedness.

Ghislain bugged me. I struggled, too, with the novel's stylistic trait of non-sequitur; Ghislain often jumps from thought to thought in such a way that I couldn't follow the stream of consciousness or make much

meaning across those jumps. And his fantasies of a jubilant new reading culture jarred against his distaste for the manuscripts he reviews. These seem to be uniformly banal, and he comments,

> A mediocre manuscript is a soulless pastry left behind in a flimsy stall. Makes me think of the Portuguese pastries sold on the Main, arranged in rows on wooden boards, heaps of flour assembled into indistinguishable bells, shouting their soulless flaky misery to onlookers.

But I celebrate two things in particular about *Readopolis*: its abundant and occasionally gorgeous use of metaphor, as in the passage just quoted, and its rapturous interlude—presented literally as a footnote to the storyline—of imagining the real-life Montreal literati all coming together to celebrate the international success of a (fictive) new novel. The footnote, itself thousands of words long, names writer after writer. Bertrand Laverdure and Oana Avasilichioaei themselves are there, partying with perhaps two hundred others, including Erín Moure and Nicole Brossard, and, in a fabulous apparition, "the great ancients": "Ronfard, Aquin, Ferron, Basile, La Rocque, Bessette, and Gabrielle Roy." Oprah, a devotee of the new novel, provides entertainment at the party. It is a festive portrait of a vibrant literary culture, and for me the novel's most effective means of making me realize how very much there is that I haven't yet read.

Mapping Performance Studies

Laura Levin and Marlis Schweitzer, eds.
Performance Studies in Canada.
McGill-Queen's UP $39.95

Reviewed by Kailin Wright

In their introduction to *Performance Studies in Canada*, Laura Levin and Marlis Schweitzer begin by analyzing a 2012 boxing match between Liberal MP Justin Trudeau and Conservative Senator Patrick Brazeau. The scene illustrates one of the book's primary arguments: that performance is essential to local, national, and transnational culture. *Performance Studies in Canada*, however, does more than assert the diverse uses of performance on national and international stages; it also traces the development of performance studies in Canada and contributes an essential mapping of this burgeoning field. The eloquent introduction offers a genealogy of performance studies in Canadian institutions and publications, distinguishes between "theatre" and "performance," and charts the influence of interdisciplinary fields in Canadian contexts. Careful to avoid arguments of national exceptionalism, Levin and Schweitzer present a survey of performance studies that takes into account the Canadian contexts of the field while at the same time acknowledging transnational influences. This complication of Canadian nationalism also serves another major thread in the book—namely, decolonization and Indigenous perspectives.

The book is divided into four parts: "Performative Geographies," "Spectacles of Nation," "Reframing Political Resistance," and "Practising Research." The first section moves from Susan Bennett's reading of Calgary streets as performance to Heather Davis-Fisch's consideration of the renaming of Xeyxelómós and Lady Franklin Rock in BC's Fraser River. Peter Dickinson's discussion of dance in Vancouver illustrates another site-based approach. He analyzes transcriptions of three walks he took in April 2014—a methodology derived from Andrew Irving's "ethnography of interiority." Julie Nagam's powerful piece on missing and murdered Indigenous women considers a community art exhibition, *Walking with Our Sisters*, as a "living archive" in order to explore how performance studies can act as a decolonizing tool by remapping space, confronting colonial legacies, and rearticulating Indigenous stories.

"Spectacles of Nation" moves from site-based performances to examinations of the nation through performance, covering a range of topics including the American Girl store in Canada (Schweitzer), military training simulations (Natalie Alvarez), and spectacles of nationalism at the Sochi Olympics in 2014 (Helene Vosters). How, Schweitzer asks, is the "identity of Canadian girls . . . performed with and through the consumption of US brands?" Shifting from uniformly dressed American Girl dolls to the uniformed Canadian military, Alvarez engages an emerging body of research on military training simulation as both a performance and a pedagogical act that stages "experiences of the other." Vosters examines the mutually constitutive relationship of statecraft and stagecraft at Sochi in juxtaposition with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and Jeff Barnaby's Mi'gMaq film *Rhymes for Young Ghouls* (2013).

"Reframing Political Resistance" begins with Dylan Robinson's provocative question: "to what degree does performance studies efface a colonial enterprise in its desire to understand, and perhaps in the process normalize, Indigenous cultural practice as 'performance first'?" In his analysis of affect and activism in Idle No More, Robinson explains that Indigenous traditions "have always held functional significance for what they 'do' as politics, acts of history, and law-making." Levin's welcome analysis of Rob Ford as performance artist and Erin Hurley's examination of material objects as political performance round out this section.

Performance Studies in Canada culminates with a self-reflective section on "Practising Research" and the methodologies that "translate sensuous and lived experience into writing." Brian Rusted uses "emplaced writing" to re-enact site-specific elements of Maritime artist Don Wright, while MJ Thompson presents an "emplaced reading" of Montreal dancer Louise Lecavalier. Naila Keleta-Mae's chapter shares an "auto-ethnographic account of the development, teaching, and production" of spoken-word poems on Black slavery in Canada. Further demonstrating the possibilities of "art as a practice of research," Pam Hall discusses the Newfoundland art project *Towards an Encyclopedia of Local Knowledge*. Each of the essays engages with and refers to at least one other chapter in the collection, magnifying the book's rich dialogue. Ric Knowles' afterword further contributes to the cohesion of the collection by gesturing to the introduction and considering how Indigenous performance grounds the volume with "a genuinely unsettling, decolonizing body of work."

Performance Studies in Canada is an ambitious collection of essays that maps the methodologies, histories, and futures of performance studies in Canada. It is essential for scholars and students of theatre and performance in Canada and beyond.

Magnificently Grotesque

Wendy MacIntyre
Hunting Piero. Thistledown $19.95

Jim Nason
Spirit of a Hundred Thousand Dead Animals. Signature $19.95

Reviewed by Alicia Fahey

Can the grotesque also be beautiful? The answer to this question, according to Wendy MacIntyre and Jim Nason, is a resounding "yes." In their respective novels *Hunting Piero* and *Spirit of a Hundred Thousand Dead Animals*, MacIntyre and Nason expose readers to the darkest sides of humanity: envy, lust, addiction, and murder. Following the tradition of animal allegory, as in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*, animal symbolism plays a central role in both novels; most notable among these animals are the "magnificently grotesque" hybrid creatures

that, in various ways, represent the human condition as an existential struggle.

The protagonist of *Hunting Piero* is Agnes Vane, a simian-looking woman whose identity quest is complicated by the cruel reactions that her unconventional facial features evoke from others. When Agnes discovers the artwork of Renaissance painter Piero di Cosimo, she connects deeply with his depictions of animal and human-animal hybrids like the "magnificently grotesque" monster ("part crocodile, part rhinoceros, part duck-billed platypus") in the painter's rendering of Perseus rescuing Andromeda.

Agnes enrols in university to further her study of di Cosimo's universe. At first, she performs her scholarly duties with efficiency and ease, until she discovers an animal rights activist group that leads her down a rabbit hole of drama, scandal, and murder. Agnes is traumatized by the dark turn that her life has taken, and the novel follows her struggle to reclaim her self-control. In the end, she finds peace and begins to heal, a process that is facilitated by the empathy of another animal lover, Peter "Pinto" Devraig, whose variegated skin pigmentation wins him both his nickname and Agnes' affection. The result is an uplifting ending, though perhaps it could have been reached in less than five hundred pages. While the chapters written from di Cosimo's perspective provide some historical context for his art, one wonders if this information could have been incorporated into the main plot, thereby keeping the narrative focus on Agnes' and Peter's character development.

Hybrid creatures and provocative art also figure prominently in *Spirit of a Hundred Thousand Dead Animals*, in part through the eccentric Skye Rayburn, a veterinarian who excels at her profession but struggles to express love and affection in her human relationships. When her daughter Moira dies tragically in a car accident, Skye is left to raise her two-year-old grandson, Duncan. Duncan's father, unable to cope with the grief of losing Moira, succumbs to a life of alcoholism that leaves him homeless on the streets of Toronto.

Like Agnes, Duncan experiences social isolation during his childhood. He finds companionship from his grandmother, animals, and his imaginary friends (whose existence he maintains throughout the novel). One of these "imaginary" creatures is the spirit of a hundred thousand dead animals, which "looks like a prehistoric elephant and smells like lavender and formaldehyde. Black as a crow, her tusks are long as a horse's ribs, and she sways from side to side like a snake." The spirit of a hundred thousand dead animals (an expression Nason first encountered as a colleague's description of the dissection room at Edinburgh's Royal Dick Veterinary College) performs various metaphorical functions throughout the novel. It is "every dead animal [Skye had] ever cured or euthanized"; it is Duncan's subconscious effort to manifest his absent father; it is the embodiment of Skye herself; it is a metaphor for interconnection. Distinct from Skye's taxonomy of animals in her journal, "Life Lessons for Duncan" (in which she describes animals by scientific classifications and human attributes), the spirit of a hundred thousand dead animals is malleable and fluid, with a trace of the supernatural. This creature/concept provides comfort and companionship for Duncan and, significantly, inspires his art. While at first readers might be challenged by Skye's abrasive personality and the non-linear timeline that travels between Kincardine, Ontario and Edinburgh, Scotland, this novel is an understated saga of complex characters and subtle, yet poignant imagery right to the very end.

Both *Hunting Piero* and *Spirit of a Hundred Thousand Dead Animals* are replete with animal metaphors that blur the boundaries separating humans from animals. Though very different in writing style,

both novels promote lessons in empathy and challenge readers to see the world from a different perspective by viewing it as a magnificently grotesque amalgamation of seemingly incongruous parts. The teachers of this lesson, in both cases, are the artists and the animals that inspire them.

Love and Shakespeare

Irena R. Makaryk and Kathryn Prince, eds. *Shakespeare and Canada: Remembrance of Ourselves.* U of Ottawa P $39.95

Jane Silcott and Fiona Tinwei Lam, eds. *Love Me True: Writers Reflect on the Ins, Outs, Ups and Downs of Marriage.* Caitlin $24.95

Reviewed by Graham Nicol Forst

Love Me True, an anthology of essays and poems by Canadian writers on love and marriage, provides ample evidence of what extraordinary writers Canada has produced. Here are forty-seven voices writing sensitively about human relationships, free of cant, cliché, or false sentimentality—often with humour and irony, but also (in a few cases) with understandable spite and rancour.

The range of the voices is limited: most of the writers are not young; forty of the forty-seven are women (and only two of the twenty-four prose pieces are by men); and "L" is well represented, but not "G," "B," or "T." (The predominance of women's voices in such an anthology is perhaps understandable: how many men write well about marriage? Compare Charles Dickens to George Eliot.) But even given the narrow range of voices in *Love Me True*, the themes are quite varied—here is sexuality, polyamory, ethnic tension, and William Godwin-like anti-marriage sentiments; writers explore the problems of single parenthood, of living with physically and mentally ill partners, and, most pointedly, of living bravely with loss, abuse, and infidelity; they grapple with spirit-draining, constant fighting, with aging, with suicide, and (often) with social ostracism.

The most poignant of the pieces feature Emma Bovary-types trapped in bad marriages (usually born of custom, parental authority, bad judgment), such as Samra Zafar's searing "The Good Wife," or the bitter, sad account of a failed arranged marriage by Ayelet Tsabari, or the brilliant rhapsody on a theme by Tolstoy that is Susan Olding's "In *Anna Karenina* Furs." The unmuffled howl of Michelle Kaeser's "This Is a Love Story" won't be forgotten by anyone who reads it, nor will the extraordinary, provocative, and hilarious "Beach of Love and Death," a vertiginous tango of drugs, madness, and true love served in dizzying prose by Yasuko Thanh.

There are no valentine cards here: one soon detects the irony of the collection's title. But what there is—courage, candour, and strong writing with eloquent resonance—makes this an anthology to treasure.

Irena R. Makaryk and Kathryn Prince's *Shakespeare and Canada: Remembrance of Ourselves* is an anthology of fourteen essays created to mark, here in Canada, the four-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death. It follows from one of its editor's earlier and more ambitious *Shakespeare in Canada: "a world elsewhere?"* (edited by Makaryk and Diana Brydon, U of Toronto P, 2002—oddly not referenced here), a larger collection which tried to answer more pointedly and in greater depth the twin questions of whether there is a "distinctly Canadian" Shakespeare, and to what extent the Canadian identity has affected national Shakespeare criticism.

The Stratford Festival and its "special place in the national imaginary" is the focus of most of the essays in this new anthology: the myths of its origins are investigated and exposed, as is its "rebranding" (it used to be called the "Stratford Shakespeare Festival" of course), its impact on Quebec theatre, and its relation to Indigenous contexts.

Ecocriticism receives attention, as does education, with in-depth studies of the presence of Shakespeare in Canadian high school (particularly Ontario) curricula.

The best of these essays provide interesting overviews of how Shakespeare is performed in this country, particularly at Stratford. C. E. McGee's opening chapter on Stratford's nine productions of *The Merchant of Venice* is particularly rewarding for its investigation of how *Merchant*'s characters have been made to evolve. Robert Ormsby offers a detailed analysis of Stratford's "multinationalist" productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Twelfth Night*, cleverly tying director Leon Rubin's imaginative concepts to Stratford's role in creating cross-border tourism. Among the other thoughtful contributions are intriguing explorations by Kailin Wright and Don Moore of the CBC's *Slings & Arrows*, the TV series inspired by the Stratford Festival; a tough, uncompromising, but gracefully written overview by Sarah Mackenzie of Stratford's various attempts at acknowledging Indigenous traditions in Canada; and Annie Brisset's fascinating take on the history of Shakespeare translations and productions in Quebec. In his chapter, Richard Cavell offers a subtle reading of Marshall McLuhan's contributions to Shakespeare studies. Less successful is Troni Y. Grande's attempt to spread the thin ironic skin of Alice Munro's fiction over the epic face of Shakespeare.

The anthology's title, *Shakespeare and Canada*, is—valuable as the book's scholastic contribution may be—a misnomer in that it ignores Vancouver's hugely successful Shakespeare festival, Bard on the Beach, as did the aforementioned *Shakespeare in Canada*. With an annual budget of seven million dollars, "Bard" has in its thirty years presented five thousand performances of Shakespeare and related plays, hired more than two thousand actors and Canadian technicians, and played to two million patrons: its omission in a book called "*Shakespeare and Canada*" is inexcusable.

Language after Words

Donato Mancini
Same Diff. Talonbooks $16.95

Tara-Michelle Ziniuk
Whatever, Iceberg. Mansfield $17.00

Reviewed by Sunny Chan

Donato Mancini's *Same Diff* welcomes you in, quite literally, with the words for "welcome" in languages that "represent populations currently at war or under siege." Then it slams into you with a series of unexplained poems that seem to be themed lists of compiled text: go-to lines for delivering bad news, synonyms for "etc.," neoliberal positions on civil liberties and social justice, experiences of extreme hunger, language about what language is, and more. These poems are presented with no titles, and they are differentiated from each other only through contextual clues, without the usual paratextual signs. The table of contents, a conventional signpost for readers at the beginning of a book, does not appear until near the end. I urge you to experience *Same Diff* at least once in the order it is given, resisting the urge to skip ahead to the back of the math textbook to see all the answers. It is an immersive experience of trying to make your own sense out of an ocean of language about centuries of pain and cruelty, just as Mancini himself must have done to make this book.

One key way to read what we might broadly call procedural poetry is to think of the procedure itself as part of the work as a whole. This reading involves considering the text as not only the words on the page but also the process of how they were chosen. It is not until almost the end of *Same Diff* that the reader finds out that a long poem documenting the abject torments

of forced hunger is called "Bottom of the Pot," and is constructed from sixty-nine source texts about life in prison, famines, POW camps, concentration camps, the Holocaust, and soup kitchens for the destitute. The explanations of where the found, compiled, and redirected language comes from are like poems themselves, as are the acknowledgements, from which we get this important takeaway: "Books are written by communities." Here, Mancini means the communities of friends, colleagues, family, and scholars who helped him personally, but in the broader context, it also means the communities whose words form the book. For example, "Where do you feel?" is an assemblage of answers—collected by Mancini from social media, print, and personal conversations—to the question of "where in your body do you feel grief, anxiety, and/or depression?" The answers are arranged by increasing length, from "in my eyes" to paragraph-long descriptions of physical grief. A community of sensation.

As with *Same Diff*, the poems in Tara-Michelle Ziniuk's *Whatever, Iceberg* could not have been written without community, without extensive interaction with the language of others, nor without the digital age that allows us instant access to expansive quantities of documented personal history. The poems in *Whatever, Iceberg* are mostly about romantic and sexual love in the Internet age, where time is not singular or linear but rather echoes in spirals through tagged photos, Facebook notifications, Twitter suggestions, chat logs, and, of course, good old-fashioned analogue memory. There are a lot of mentions of using things besides words for verbal expression: emojis ("I am thankful for emoji. How else could I quite communicate what I do"), hashtags ("#queerfail"), Snapchats, speech-to-text, Google Maps, and on and on. It is tempting to diagnose the anxiety in these poems as a crisis of language. However, at the heart of them all is an anxiety that actually comes from the fact that communication happens between people, and the thing about people sometimes is that "even if the only thing in the world I want is you, I am never going to get that from you."

Whatever, Iceberg is a collection of irreverent, candid, sometimes blunt, and sometimes also surprisingly soft poems about being in love. Their tone can oscillate wildly, from playful lists to melancholic longing to the simple anger of "When I say I miss you, I could disclaim by remembering that you were an asshole." The speaker is often frustrating, even unlikeable, as she navigates the world of queer dating and polyamorous relationships, and steers hard into icebergs of jealousy and bad timing. But the willingness to present oneself openly, not to be too precious, and to be disliked occasionally, is exactly the kind of vulnerability that these poems advocate.

Channelling Spiritualism

Claudie Massicotte
Trance Speakers: Femininity and Authorship in Spiritual Séances, 1850-1930.
McGill-Queen's UP $110.00

Beth A. Robertson
Science of the Seance: Transnational Networks and Gendered Bodies in the Study of Psychic Phenomena, 1918-40.
U of British Columbia P $32.95

Reviewed by Thomas Hodd

Given the general dearth of studies on Canadian spiritualism, the advent of two book-length publications about the subject is cause for celebration. Although there exists a small body of scholarly articles within the field, prior to Massicotte's and Robertson's, the only major studies to have emerged over the past forty years are parts of Ramsay Cook's *The Regenerators* (1985) and Stan McMullin's more recent *Anatomy of a Seance: A History of Spirit Communication in Central Canada* (2004).

Anchored by a rich assortment of archival materials, including print, photographs, and diagrams, these new publications offer readers textured and engaging scholarship. And scholars cannot buy just one or the other, too, since *Science of the Seance* functions as a critical corollary to *Trance Speakers*: whereas Massicotte argues that being mediums during the nineteenth and early twentieth century afforded women a form of female empowerment and inspiration, particularly for those who were authors, Robertson contends that the interwar period marked a shift towards more rigid, scientific methods inside the séance room, and that such a shift constituted a physical and symbolic male attempt to control the female body.

Having said that, neither study is strictly historical in treatment. Instead, grounding their respective works in feminist and gender theory, Massicotte and Robertson approach their subjects from an interdisciplinary perspective that affords them ample opportunity to read the séance room and its spirit communications not just at the level of historical record, but equally at the level of gendered symbol. The authors also attempt to frame their studies as transnational in scope, although this framing at times feels oversold. With the exception of Scottish medium Margaret Marshall and, in the case of Massicotte, a brief discussion of British medium Emma Hardinge Britten, the thrust of both arguments and the bulk of archival evidence are Canadian in scope.

Indeed, the true strength of both books lies in their demonstration that Canada has been more heavily involved in the spiritualist movement than the dominant historical narrative would have readers believe. Massicotte's study is particularly helpful in its revealing of some of the public press reporting on spiritualist activities in Canada during the nineteenth century, as well as her discussion of the Montreal medium and author Annie Florence Smith. Likewise, Robertson's meticulous recounting of the adaptation of controls in the séance room in Canada after 1918 as a result of changes to technology is especially illuminating. The authors should also be commended for focusing on an aspect of spiritualism in Canada that has received little attention from scholars—namely, the role and function of women as it pertains to the séance.

One area eluded by these studies, however, is the complicating issue of fraud among mediums. Both authors acknowledge it, but the subject is never fully explored in either book, even though Robertson and Massicotte both engage with issues of power as it pertains to the medium. Of more serious concern is Massicotte's section on Flora MacDonald Denison, which is predicated on the idea that Denison was a medium. Was she an active psychic researcher and participant in séances? Yes. Did she claim to have communicated with spirits? Absolutely. But there is no historical evidence, to my knowledge, that proves she ever acted as a vessel for said spirit communication. In fact, in the same article from *Sunset of Bon Echo* that Massicotte quotes from, Denison explicitly declares that "I am neither a professional healer, adviser, nor medium." Such a potential misreading of Denison thus renders this section of the book problematic for scholars. In Robertson's book, the one area that might have been better addressed is male mediumship: William Cartheuser is her only real discussion point, and he is largely dismissed for attempting "to present a mediumship that encapsulated more modern ideals of rigorous masculinity." Surely other prominent Canadian male mediums warranted at least some limited examination, such as Louis Benjamin, who channelled the voices in Albert Durrant Watson's *The Twentieth Plane*, or prominent 1930s Kitchener-Waterloo medium Thomas Lacey. Including them would have allowed Robertson to offer a more nuanced reading

of male-female tensions as it pertained to mediumship. But this is more of a comment than a criticism.

Shortcomings aside, *Trance Speakers* and *Science of the Seance* warrant our attention for their rich archival findings and provocative interdisciplinary approaches. Moreover, given the pace of scholarship in this neglected area of Canadian studies, it is hoped their results can be channelled into additional publications sooner rather than later.

Charmed

Julia McCarthy
All the Names Between. Brick $20.00

Christine McNair
Charm. BookThug $18.00

Rebecca Păpucaru
The Panic Room. Nightwood $18.95

Reviewed by Andrea MacPherson

In Julia McCarthy's third poetry collection, *All the Names Between*, moments are captured, both fleeting and profound, to reveal the contrasts and connections around us. The poems feel meditative, often languid, as they explore death, silence, the natural world, and everything in between. McCarthy's images are precise and often startling, from "mallows / the colour of gossip" appearing and then putting "their heads together like young girls," to an evening opening "like the suitcase you think you've unpacked." In this way, McCarthy upends the reader's expectations of the natural world and how we witness it. Her poetic lens captures such experiences and their quiet dailiness in a prismatic manner.

Place becomes the core of many of the poems in *All the Names Between*, cataloguing a forest and its inhabitants—flora and fauna, specifically birds and bats—and the changes observed there. McCarthy approaches these subjects with clarity and reverence, as documented in "Last Rites," where the speaker watches a hawk in the air as "he opens like a switchblade." And while McCarthy's language and imagery are lovely and engaging, the poems retain some kind of ambiguity, which very well may be the author's intent, allowing for a contemplative in-between space. This elusive space might be announced in McCarthy's lines, "every elegy has an ode at its centre / every ode has an elegy around the edges."

Charm, the second collection from Ottawa poet Christine McNair, tackles subjects of conception, from literal pregnancy to the more figurative conception of art. The poems hover around an overarching theme of making and unmaking, but their expansiveness allows for each to remain distinct and precise. The collection is broken into five sections, each exploring in detail the various abstractions of conception, moving from orchid pollination through to handwork. McNair seamlessly moves between these varied subjects, offering tight images to surprise the reader. In "m," McNair writes, "When she met him she was linen starched and white," then quickly juxtaposes with the following line, "When she met him she was in a pale blue nightdress," deftly showing the multitudes within the woman in the poem. This kind of ease and nuance with metaphor is apparent throughout the collection.

In the final section, "Shudder of Days," McNair details pregnancy and motherhood in poems that challenge with their density and their interconnected images and language. In "Rose is extant," the speaker, when talking about her baby daughter, says that "love bent back in fingerfuls," and that a thimble "wretches the scent of milk." Such unexpected images push the reader to consider the intricacies and challenges of maternal love. The collection asserts that a charm can "protect, inflict, or influence," and McNair's unwavering eye and clarity of vision do just that.

Rebecca Păpucaru's first poetry collection, *The Panic Room,* explores identity and

memory, family, and the chaos of the contemporary world. Păpucaru covers an impressive variety of subjects with both humour and empathy. She carefully balances her Eastern European Jewish ancestry and culture with her current Canadian experience, ultimately reflecting on the diaspora as containing multitudes. Yet Păpucaru keeps her poems specific, never drifting into easy generalizations. In "On Watching an Eastern Bloc Comedy," she contrasts the academic excavation of film with her own complicated feelings about her family, highlighting both the intimacy and distance implied in artistic rendering: "Mud road. Sudden appearance of a goat. I'm one / generation apart from all this, and ashamed." The speaker's conflicted emotional response is rendered clearly in these spare, undecorated lines. Throughout the collection, Păpucaru's language remains accessible, light, and airy, but there is a depth to the images that creates memorable poems.

The Panic Room often tackles memory, or the inability for memory to remain truthful. In "Retouched," the speaker says, "My skin / has been retouched . . . How many years since // I was wed?" and then continues to interrogate the fact of a photograph against the wilfulness of memory, how it shifts and reshapes over time. Păpucaru connects the present and the past, the experience with the memory, for a layered and evocative look at these snapshots in time.

Păpucaru is also successful in employing humour to add levity throughout the collection. She uses a list poem to offer fantastical renderings of Greek gods in "Roll Call," and she opens "If I Had Your Cock" with the lines: "I would use it as a mail opener, paperweight / Tetris partner." And while these moments of humour are effective in and of themselves, Păpucaru utilizes them to further highlight the emotional core of the poems, see-sawing between light and dark. This is an assured debut, showcasing stylistic experimentation and a strong poetic voice.

Silver Fish

Andrew McEwan
If Pressed. BookThug $18.00

Fenn Stewart
Better Nature. BookThug $18.00

Reviewed by Dani Spinosa

Years ago, after my ex-boyfriend had moved out of our shared apartment, I found silverfish eating away at the binding of my books. A hardcover *Tom Sawyer* fell apart in my hands. It was distressing then, but now serves as a potent metaphor for the poetics of these two collections of poetry. Stewart's first collection and McEwan's second, both released by BookThug in 2017, eat away at existing texts, revealing in extant narratives cracks and fissures that were, the collections argue, always there. So, imagine my surprise to find that the first poem in *Better Nature* describes "some silver fish / inside my ribs." The space between "silver" and "fish" notwithstanding, *Better Nature* positions its writing as parasitic insect, eating away at settler narratives of Canada's natural landscape as uninhabited, undeveloped, and unoccupied.

Both *Better Nature* and *If Pressed* use found phrases, lexicons, and quotations from a variety of source texts to construct new narratives, new framing techniques, to talk about their respective subjects. *Better Nature* repurposes Walt Whitman's diaries from his tours through Ontario and Quebec, as well as other books, letters, and documents describing the Canadian landscape. *If Pressed* mines Goodreads reviews (and a Twitter bot that used to retweet book reviews), ads for crystals, environmental reports, early studies of depression, and the title of this reviewer's favourite Bauhaus song. Read together, the collections signal a distinct trend in conceptual methods of remix, cut-up, and found poetries. Such projects are no longer viewed or marketed as apolitical or purely experimental; these methods are ways of eroding dominant

narratives and making space for new ways of viewing issues like mental health, environmental concerns, settler-Indigenous relations, and global capital.

Stewart's collection shines most brightly in "if Walt Whitman got a job writing spam . . .," where Whitman's Canadian diaries are irrevocably enmeshed with spam emails Stewart received from fashion retailers and environmental NGOs, resulting in a humorous interplay of tone and content. "Now here's the best good news—," the poem reads: "it's humpback whale month! / Have you got yours?" And later:

> I'm hard.
> I don't *need* to be hard.
> The truth behind my strappy sandals is:
> I just don't *need* to.
> But I am.

Here, *Better Nature* most strongly interrogates the Whitman diaries' masculine, settler approach to nature not as an archaic view from the past, but as a colonial mindset that permeates our contemporary digital context.

McEwan's collection reaches peak parasitism in "Depression Inventory," borrowing from and echoing the vocabulary of Beck's Depression Inventory, a standardized diagnostic survey that this reviewer will admit to having filled out more than once. In "Depression Inventory," the BDI language is merged with larger socio-economic issues, putting the responsibility of mental health on the reader, but also on the capitalism that breeds alienation and crisis. "I do not feel like a failure," the poem "Past Failure" begins, only to be followed with "welcome to the crisis economy." The onus for our depression, it seems to say, is (or must be) shared globally, at least in part.

It's worth noting that a discussion of eating away at problematic source texts tells only half the story of each of the collections. *Better Nature*, for example, boasts a startling and joyful ear for aurality, with tongue-in-cheek wordplay that begs to be read aloud. The first section, "if Walt Whitman were a youngish woman walking to work . . .," contains some of the collection's most gorgeous lines. They recall Whitman with an almost Dadaist charm:

> I know the flukes will feed on me
> (they always threaten to consume the seas)
> But who but me could sympathize, could
> writhe
> With all this colour, all this zeal?

If we are too wrapped up in the cut-up poetics and found-poem politics of the collection, we risk losing sight of the poems' clever sonority.

If Pressed, on the other hand, suggests an almost ergodic turn, as is hinted by the wordplay of the title. Beyond the potential responses to Beck's Depression Inventory in "Depression Inventory," "Uncertainty Measures" encourages further engagement with the poems therein. This section instructs readers to "Speculate on current climate," "Cry for help," or "Choose symptom(s)," assuring them that the poem values "Your choices." Eating away at earlier texts, it seems, makes space not only for the authors, but for readers, too.

Cascading to the Present

Barbara Mitchell
Mapmaker: Philip Turnor in Rupert's Land in the Age of Enlightenment. U of Regina P $39.95

Reviewed by Beverley Haun

Barbara Mitchell's biography of Philip Turnor cascades down to the present at the same time as it reaches back into the past. *Mapmaker* opens with the author discovering at a family reunion that she is the descendant of Turnor, who was born in Middlesex, England, and voyaged in 1778 to Rupert's Land, the watershed that drains into Hudson Bay and James Bay. He arrived as the first inland surveyor for the Hudson's Bay Company. Mitchell's ancestral connection is not through Turnor's English

lineage; he had no children with his English spouse. It is instead through his son Joseph Turnor, born in 1782 to his Cree country wife, that Mitchell discovers her own Cree roots. What follows from these revelations is a highly readable, carefully researched account of Philip Turnor's surveying and map-making life, interspersed with Mitchell's journals of her own experience as she discovers her ancestor's past in England and, most importantly, in Rupert's Land. Mitchell practises a postmodern ease in the organization and narrative voices of her dual texts, a confident participation in the scholarly and family biography to be told to us and to be absorbed by her. In the process, she adds a fascinating perspective to the Canadian historical record.

Mitchell draws together a compelling narrative of Turnor's surveying and survival experiences through her close reading of primary sources in the archives of the HBC. She establishes a sense of urgency to see his calculations completed and the subsequent maps created as she telegraphs Turnor's frustration at the lack of appropriate supplies and men to carry out his surveying missions. English leather shoes are useless in the bush. Fine-gauge fishnets are essential. Surveying instruments are costly, in short supply, and several times lost in rapids. Turnor also emerges as generous in teaching and developing new talent. David Thompson and Peter Fidler were his protégés. When Turnor returns to England after his surveying, there are no longer journals for Mitchell to draw upon to recreate his experiences. However, his maps are still extant, preserved in the HBC archives. Mitchell describes those maps in great physical detail, creating the vicarious experience of each step in their preparation. The ten maps made by Turnor are celebrated to this day as models of accuracy. One forms the book's exquisite endpapers.

Since the research material informing this biography was framed through the sensibilities of an eighteenth-century Englishman, there is very little reference to Turnor's Cree wife. Mitchell, having only recently discovered her own Cree roots, is also unable to supply that Indigenous perspective in her journals. Her narrative ends with the appreciation that her lifelong self-identification as a British Canadian performs over her newer realization that she is also Cree. In her epilogue and her acknowledgements, she reaches out to her Cree heritage, stating simply, "I am listening."

Creation Myths

Nick Mount

Arrival: The Story of CanLit. Anansi $29.95

Reviewed by Tracy Ware

Nick Mount's previous book, *When Canadian Literature Moved to New York* (2005), is a lively account of the Canadian "literary expatriates of the 1880s and 1890s." The book is full of rich anecdotes, but the main argument is occasionally "too good to be true," to echo Mount's later description of Farley Mowat's non-fiction. As this reviewer noted, if Canadian literature "began" in late-nineteenth-century New York, it cannot also be true that Charles G. D. Roberts' arrival in that city in 1897 was "the most important symbolic loss for Canadian literature of his day." If the former statement were true, there would have been nothing to lose. In *Arrival: The Story of CanLit*, the anecdotes are even better, but the dubious claims persist. The subject is the "arrival" of Canadian literature in the fifteen years after 1959, when more good Canadian literature was produced than in any previous period of that duration; by 1974, "Canadian literature hadn't just survived; it had arrived." Mount admits that "[t]hey mythologized themselves and each other, these people who created a Canadian literature," but he is comfortable with creation myths. He knows very well that Canadian literature

existed long before 1959, but his previous book has to be relegated to the notes for him to argue that

> [i]n quality as well as quantity, the CanLit boom deserves its title. But it wasn't a renaissance. It was what novelist Katherine Govier calls a *naissance*, "the cultural *naissance* of Canadian literary identity." A birth, not a rebirth.

So much for earlier Canadian writers. They never had a chance, for their audience was either sleeping or otherwise engaged: "Canada awoke in the 1960s," Mount writes, when "a society that after several centuries of cutting trees and swatting bugs suddenly found itself with time and money on its hands," and was "finally comfortable enough to think about something besides trees and wheat." Mordecai Richler said that "[i]n most parts of Canada, only Mazo de la Roche and snow have been there before you." Wise literary historians cite such remarks, but they do not usually endorse them.

I will focus on three problems: the provocative title, the relation of Mount's book to Margaret Atwood's *Survival*, and the implications of these issues for Canadian literary history. First, and least important, is the term "CanLit." Recognizing that it was first used by Earle Birney in "a poem about its absence (what America did in poetry, says Birney, Canada did in railways)," Mount points instead to the conclusion of the second edition of the *Literary History of Canada* (1976), in which Northrop Frye refers to the "colossal verbal explosion that has taken place in Canada since 1960." That may be "the main source" for the term "CanLit boom," but Frye did not say "CanLit," perhaps because of the reason given by the narrator of John Irving's *A Prayer for Owen Meany*: noting that "[w]e do not call American Literature 'Am Lit,'" he finds "no reason to *shrivel* this country's most interesting literature to a derogatory abbreviation."

Mount's title is a sign of his pervasive irony, which distinguishes *Arrival* from *Survival* (1972), "the most influential book about Canadian literature ever published." With *Surfacing* and *Power Politics*, it "defined Canadian literature," says Mount in an unusually bold passage. "Atwood wasn't wrong about CanLit's obsessions," he argues; "she just made the human mistake of projecting the worries of her time into her past, and the equally human mistake of assuming that these worries were unique to her place." Unlike Atwood, who includes in *Survival* an appendix on how to get Canadian books and journals, see Canadian films and plays, hear Canadian writers and musicians, and contact Canadian publishers, Mount is systematically ironic toward his subject, arguing that both Atwood and Dave Godfrey seem "to have been made [Canadian nationalists] by an American education," and that "in both English and French Canada, nationalism was a panacea for continentalism, a smokescreen and a comfort, while below the surface, as [George] Grant said, integration continued." No doubt some were transformed by Atwood's early works, but Mount knows that the very need for national definition was questioned by Frye himself, who argued in *The Modern Century* (1967) that "the country had skipped nationhood for a post-national society—and good thing too" (Mount's words). Mount also notes that *The Tamarack Review*, a key journal for this period, mocked an interest in "the Canadianness of Canadian literature," convinced that such nationalism "is always and everywhere absurd." Morley Callaghan would have agreed. Since he feels beyond such things, Mount is not bothered by conflicting senses of nationalism, but a quotation from David Helwig explains that "[n]ationalism has its limits . . . as a source of artistic values, but writing is easier if you no longer believe that all the action is somewhere else."

My third problem is that Mount's distance from Atwood becomes a distance from her concerns:

> Just as international free trade agreements like NAFTA have made the main economic and cultural debate of the 1960s in Canada—foreign ownership of domestic industry—not just irrelevant but actionable, the very idea of a national literature is now an artifact of history. Atwood is still writing elegies, but now they're for the species.

That's progress, I guess. Unlike Atwood, Mount is happy with the post-national world: "Quite simply, there has never been a better time to be a Canadian reader." It is an astonishing account of a culture that often accuses itself of "cultural genocide." The ratings that appear in sidebars are also astonishing. Mount gives one out of five stars to *The Temptations of Big Bear* ("plodding style") and *Kamouraska* (attempts at pathos "land too often in bathos"), and two stars to *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* ("too much life and too little art") and *The Diviners* (much of which "reads like lazy commercial fiction"). You don't need to be a nationalist to disagree.

Sonic Emotion

Shane Neilson
Complete Physical. Porcupine's Quill $14.95

Shane Neilson
Dysphoria. Porcupine's Quill $16.95

Shane Neilson
On Shaving Off His Face. Porcupine's Quill $16.95

Reviewed by Laura Cameron

The first section of Shane Neilson's *Dysphoria* follows the energetic ruminations of a patient receiving an injection in a hospital isolation room. The sixteen sections of this epic meditation proceed through couplets jerkily animated by enjambment and assonance as the speaker's thoughts wander confusedly, fighting, perhaps, for lucidity under the influence of the inoculation. In this densely allusive, often bewildering poem, Neilson opens for us the mind of a person in pain struggling to make sense of a world that cannot make sense of him.

Pain, mental illness, grief, love, and the failure of traditional medical discourse to understand these conditions compassionately are the subjects of a trilogy by Neilson, himself a physician and patient as well as a poet: *Complete Physical* (2010), *On Shaving Off His Face* (2015), and finally *Dysphoria* (2017). Although they all contain poignant and innovative pieces, the last of these volumes is the most moving and coherent of the three. After the opening long poem, the second section of *Dysphoria* reimagines the 1812 textbook *Medical Inquiries and Observations upon Diseases of the Mind*, by the pioneering psychiatrist and American Founding Father Dr. Benjamin Rush. Some of the best poems here, such as "Gyrater," evoke the mind-numbing violence of misguided early treatments of mental illness; others, such as "Note from a bachelor with tristimania," express the fragility of sadness with a confident lyricism reminiscent of Leonard Cohen. Neilson takes a more personal turn in the third and final section of the book, which explores the relationships between parents and children as they negotiate illness and loss. Above all, *Dysphoria* and the trilogy as a whole ask that we adopt new ways of seeing, hearing, and feeling, and open ourselves to the abilities of the dis/abled: "do not break / the line" of "delusion," Neilson urges:

> Instead,
> redraw it by first
> marvelling at the
> line's elegance.

In *Complete Physical*, Neilson uses precise, nimble language and relatively traditional poetic forms to present a kaleidoscopic view of illness. The voice of the doctor, "a fairygodmother with a licence" who often wryly deplores his powerlessness to help, speaks in counterpoint with the voice of the patient, whose sickness is, among other

things, "a cold chest of drawers, / [his] rags inside." These poems are often as witty as they are tragic, and they tend to be more easily digestible than the ambitious experiments in the volume's later counterparts.

On Shaving Off His Face is, like *Dysphoria*, divided into three parts, and it too develops toward a deeply personal expression of family trauma—a father dealing with the illness of his young son—in the final section. Also as in *Dysphoria*, historical, scientific, Biblical, literary, and pop-cultural allusions abound; these references, along with thoughtful formal experiments—a poem made up primarily of footnotes, for example, or the incorporation of visual images into the text—illustrate the trilogy's developing insistence on finding new ways to voice and comprehend human suffering. The first section of the book explores the relationship between facial expressions and the emotions they convey, which Charles Darwin (whom Neilson quotes at length) theorized as "expressionism." Building on that foundation, the second section imagines presenters at an academic conference discussing Darwin's theory; these presenters range from medical figures to serial killers to artists—from Jacques Lacan to Adam Lanza to Lead Belly. Where does true knowledge of human feeling lie, and how might we articulate it? What emotions simmer inside our bodies, behind the masks of our faces? In raising and re-raising these questions, *On Shaving Off His Face* defies any doctor or scientist who claims to have the answers.

These are not easy books. The poetry is dark and difficult; its reading requires the close attentiveness, the perseverance through confusion and disorientation, that Neilson demands we devote also to those who suffer. And yet potential—hope—glimmers at the heart of the trilogy. In "i sing the body electrocuted," Neilson recalls the tasering of Robert Dziekański by the RCMP and condemns authority figures—police and medical professionals alike—who wilfully ignore, "[t]ry not to understand," their subjects, for understanding would lay bare the violence of their (mis)treatment. But if compassion and justice do not reside in legal or medical discourse, they do exist in poetry—in the "song" of the "charged" body. "Medicine cannot make rhyme / ring through the chains on your legs," Neilson proclaims—but poetry can: "Emotion is sonic. / Poetry expends shrill / blasts. Better lives!"

Calling Out Intolerance

Karen Nesbitt
Subject to Change. Orca $14.95

Allan Stratton
The Way Back Home. Scholastic Canada $19.99

Reviewed by Suzanne James

Exploiting the coming-of-age trope, these two YA novels provide sensitive explorations of heteronormative biases and intolerance in the context of family relationships, and both protagonists develop meaningful relationships with non-normative "others."

Zoe, the first-person narrator of Allan Stratton's *The Way Back Home*, exudes frustration as she struggles to protect her beloved grandmother from what she considers to be the evil machinations of her parents, who want to ship Granny off to a seniors' home, and the truly evil machinations of her cousin, a classic bully obsessed with appearing cool by humiliating Zoe at every opportunity. The novel is fast-paced, and by the halfway point, Zoe has been hung by her feet off the side of a bridge by her cousin's friends (narrowly escaping falling onto broken glass and barbed wire in the creek bed below), and falsely accused of lying, using drugs, and behaving promiscuously by her naive parents; and she is now on the run with Granny, whom she has rescued from Greenview Haven. But things

become more complicated as Granny's Alzheimer's worsens, and Zoe gradually discovers that her long-lost Uncle Teddy, whom they have tracked down in Toronto, is now her Aunt Teddi, and—even more significantly—that her grandmother caused the family rift years before by rejecting her trans daughter. Of course, reunions occur, forgiveness is granted, and justice is restored as the lying and sadistic behaviour of Zoe's cousin is exposed. Yet Stratton closes the novel on a more reflective, less action-packed note as the narrative circles back to the narrator, her grandmother's death, and its aftermath.

Karen Nesbitt's *Subject to Change*, another first-person narrative, has a much less dramatic pace, but the authenticity of the voice, the setting, and the situations are quietly compelling. Declan, a sixteen-year-old boy in small-town Quebec, struggles to survive in a society which seems determined to misunderstand and thwart him. His delinquent older brother is both an irritant and a threat, his well-meaning teachers fail to recognize the motives behind his minor rule-breaking and mediocre academic performance, and he feels responsible for his mother, a single parent since a divorce five years earlier. But herein lies the more significant conflict, as readers gradually discover. The disappearance of Declan's father was not simply a result of the divorce, or of the affair which instigated it; it occurred because his father is now living as a gay man, a situation which both embarrasses and enrages the narrator. Interestingly, Declan's close friends prove far less concerned about his father's sexual orientation, and the novel picks up speed as Declan comes to see beyond his heteronormative anxieties, learning to forgive the loving father who was also governed by fear.

Both novels explore forgiveness and understanding, and both adopt a similar strategy in order to challenge homophobic and transphobic attitudes: the author (and, by extension, readers) "call out" the intolerant characters, either implicitly or explicitly. Yet the Granny who rejects her trans daughter in *The Way Back Home* and the son who rejects his gay father in *Subject to Change* are presented empathetically; we are drawn into their struggles and we applaud their growth. And although they remain peripheral, the voices of the non-normative characters can also be heard in the final chapters of each of these works.

Ruining a Good Mystery

Ed O'Loughlin
Minds of Winter. Anansi $22.95

Reviewed by Neta Gordon

Late in the novel *Minds of Winter*, the character Hugh Morgan—a somewhat shadowy figure whose work as a navigator for the Canadian Air Force is only barely understood—reflects that, owing to improvements in flight technology following World War II, the work of the old-fashioned seafaring cartographers is finished. That is, the ability to view the globe from ever-increasing altitudes has changed the very meanings of maps. Maps, thinks Morgan, were "built on hacks and heuristics and mistakes and lies"; maps, as Irish Canadian writer Ed O'Loughlin's novel explores, were the kinds of deceptively objective narratives that made legends out of great men—their explorations, their failures, and their secrets.

O'Loughlin's novel about polar exploration and cartography is an almost textbook example of historiographic metafiction: taking up the role of archival "detectives" are Nelson Nilsson and Fay Morgan, whose chance encounter at the tiny airport in Inuvik in the Northwest Territories is one of the many meaningful coincidences the text tracks. The "archive" is made up of a set of inconclusive documents about nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century polar adventures,

which have been left in the Inuvik apartment of Nelson's brother Bert, and which appear to obliquely pursue the movements of a recently discovered chronometer linked to the doomed Franklin expedition. Thus, O'Loughlin weaves together a number of mysteries: Who salvaged the chronometer? How did it end up in England and come to sit on the mantelpiece in the home of Fay's grandparents? Why was Bert so consumed with the movements of the chronometer and of polar explorers? And, by the way, where is Bert? Why did he invite his estranged brother to Inuvik only to disappear? The "documents"—which make up most of the text—are generically diverse: there are personal letters, confidential memoranda, first-person witness accounts, a fake Jack London tale, and a number of narratives that cannot possibly be part of Bert's archive but which add to O'Loughlin's expansive consideration of the way writing—like cartography—is often about leaving (or hiding) traces. For example, Ensign Bellot, part of the crew of the *Prince Albert*, one of Lady Franklin's search vessels, hopes that his own daily journal will become a successful book, owing to the "great shortage of French polar explorers on the literary market." This same man, however, is horrified at the marking of Bellot Strait on a map tracking the Northwest Passage, claiming that the waterway he is credited with discovering does not exist, but was rather "seen" by an Irish child who has visions sent to her by her dead sister. Likewise, the various stories about "The Mad Trapper" of the Northwest Territories are significant both because they persist in circulating and because they are all totally unverifiable.

What links all the various documents and narratives contained in *Minds of Winter* is that they are about what have historically been thought of as the most inaccessible places on the planet: as Fay muses, "Maybe stories converge at the poles." Lurking among O'Loughlin's crisp prose and evocative scenes is the idea that attempts to navigate these regions were especially difficult because they are always in flux, and more often than not such attempts resulted in failure, disappearance, and death. Paradoxically, though, for this reason these are precisely the sites of all manner of white colonial hunger for acts of story and legend-making. For all its emphasis on recovering unofficial histories, *Minds of Winter* rests, to a large extent, on a kind of uncritical nostalgia for the myth of the "mysterious" Arctic and Antarctic. Operating in tension with the themes of the novel, then, is a sense of unsettlement, relating both to the way that, currently, these regions are undergoing radical transformations owing to climate change, and—more importantly—that the very notions of exploration, cartography, and quests to name the land depend as much on erasures as they do on documentation.

Unearthing Fresh Voices

Ruth Panofsky, ed.
The New Spice Box: Canadian Jewish Writing, Volume 1. New Jewish P $22.00

Reviewed by Shana Rosenblatt Mauer

The Spice Box: An Anthology of Jewish Canadian Writing was released in 1981. Edited by Gerri Sinclair and Morris Wolfe, it was one of the earliest anthologies of its kind. Now, in *The New Spice Box*, designed as both a tribute and a companion publication, editor Ruth Panofsky has amassed an array of writings, many resonant and engaging, that includes voices and works seldom included in framing the scope of Canadian Jewish literature. Among the standout texts is the opening short story—"My Mother's Luck," by Helen Weinzweig—with its vivacious first-person narration, animated conjuring of a Jewish woman's life in early-twentieth-century Europe, and evocation of how serendipity, courage, and spontaneity led her to a new

life in little-known Toronto. "Who Knows You Here," a poignant essay by Kenneth Sherman, similarly sketches the loss and gains that the author's grandfather experienced leaving the penury of the shtetl for Canada's mix of opportunity and anomie. Other notable texts include J. J. Steinfeld's "The Idea of Assassination, Toronto, 1973," a memoir of his fellow student's plan to murder a neo-Nazi, and Goldie Morgentaler's "My Mother's Very Special Relationship," about her mother's lifelong friendship with a British soldier who participated in her liberation from Bergen-Belsen. The collection also boasts ample poetry. "The Liberation" by Sharon Nelson, "Provincial Olive" by Malca Litovitz, "Yom Kippur 1998" by Ronna Bloom, and "Vidui" by Robyn Sarah are among the most compelling poems.

A worry could arise that anthologizing lesser-known writers might signal a tendentious agenda to promote works more for their Jewish Canadian hue than for their artistic achievement. Echoes of this type of concern were raised in a 2002-2003 exchange (published in *Parchment* magazine and later in *Books in Canada*) between Glen Rotchin and Harold Heft, who debated the calibre of Jewish Canadian literature since the heyday of the Montreal titans: A. M. Klein, Irving Layton, Leonard Cohen, and Mordecai Richler. Heft griped that too much recent literature was humbug about "Old Country" nostalgia and Bubbe's chicken soup. Yet this collection offers prose that is largely "fresh and relevant, profound and lasting," as Panofsky intended. Some of the collection's poetry, however, is strained in this way, its Jewish timbre not limited to chicken soup specifically, but still inadequately convincing.

Uniting the works in this first volume of *The New Spice Box* is a connection, in some way, to the Holocaust. Nearly three decades ago, historian Franklin Bialystok argued that Holocaust identification is a predominant constituent of the Canadian Jewish identity. Because of the historical enormity of the Holocaust and the relatively high proportion of survivors who immigrated to Canada, the prevalence of Holocaust-related works in Jewish Canadian literature is expected. But that all of these writings have this particular cohesive element, possibly signifying a somewhat attenuated communal identity, is disquieting. However, this is only the first volume, and Panofsky's introduction notes that the second volume will showcase Jewish Canadian writers from even more geographically diverse origins, and, presumably, texts that reflect different loci of experience and a varied, evolving Jewish Canadian literary consciousness.

Writing Their Way Home

Julie Paul
The Rules of the Kingdom.
McGill-Queen's UP $16.95

Bänoo Zan
Songs of Exile. Guernica $20.00

Reviewed by Emily McGiffin

Julie Paul's *The Rules of the Kingdom* tackles the human search for a sense of belonging to a community, to a place. The book begins with two sections in which Paul explores the history of the village of Lanark, Ontario, and her own upbringing in the community. It's a small-town landscape of Sunday Mass, big rigs, and lilacs, stretching backwards and forwards through the generations. The second half of the book explores the world of an adolescent daughter and the speaker's own adolescence, meditating on desire and sexual coming of age, before Paul brings us full circle in the final section, "Next Time the World Will Burn," which binds present and past. In the poem "Revision," Paul writes,

> I went back to research the past,
> to betray my blood or exalt it,
> to look with an eye I do not possess—
> that of the stranger, that of the fly.
> . . . . . .

Now, back on the coast, the desire to dig
up the past
has just up and left me—a weariness in
its place
. . . . . .
I've returned with what I took the first
time—myself,
a severely watered-down pioneer, a
notion of home
to keep revising as I go along.

As Paul states, the Lanark history she explores does not start at the beginning; rather, she is "opening the book to the middle // where the pop-up village springs to life." Yet the section title ("Settlers' Descendant Reclaims the Past"), which is also the title of the opening poem, points toward questions of ownership, colonialism, and dispossession that the poems themselves steer clear of. At this moment in history, "settler" is a word laden with the baggage of Canada's racist and violent past. Paul deploys the word boldly, but shies from discussing whose woods her ancestors built their log cabins in. This omission aside, the collection is rich with the evocative details of place and family life. The poems are skilfully crafted and attentively honed, making *The Rules of the Kingdom* a pleasure to read.

Like Paul, Bänoo Zan is displaced from the world of her childhood, and her collection, *Songs of Exile* is similarly concerned with questions of place, belonging, and the effects of history on the present. Zan, an Iranian exile driven out of her homeland and its language, writes with the weight of these experiences behind her, meditating on hefty states and sentiments—love, loneliness, exile, torture—that she isn't afraid to call by name. Her poetry breaks free of contemporary literary conventions that favour lyric or narrative approaches anchored in concrete representations of emotions and concepts. Instead, Zan's poems are steeped in symbolism and aggregate metaphors that hang in the air like constellations. In "Freedom Fighter," she writes:

Love,
you are the eternal dictator—
colonizing the land of
spoken dreams,
suppressing the voice of
nightmares.
Celebrate your liberation from me.

There is an alienating effect to some of the abstract language in the collection, which seems an effective way to speak about the depth of displacement and loss these poems grapple with. For example, in "Phoenix (II)" Zan writes,

Fire-feathered phoenix—
the torch of fate—
denied death
the chaos of harmony—
. . . . . .
Unbind her
Love,
unbind me

from the rock of immortal injustice[.]

Zan's form seems apt for her subjects, often leaving the reader adrift on a raft of metaphors or exiled in mythologies or subject matter that may be foreign to some Canadian readers. She writes of freedom fighters, acid attacks, and Nowruz, the Iranian New Year, in pensive lines at times jewelled with Persian.

While the subject matter and approach are fearless and compelling, and the stylistic approach freeing, I found these effects were difficult to sustain over such a lengthy collection (120 pages). A selection of the best of these poems in a book half or two-thirds the length may ultimately have been stronger. Instead, Zan has erred on the side of generosity, offering a weighty collection of courageous poetry and a unique voice in Canadian literature. *Songs of Exile* is a book to return to again and again.

History and Invention

Emma Richler
Be My Wolff. Knopf Canada $34.00

Emily Schultz
Men Walking on Water. Knopf Canada $25.00

Reviewed by Jon Flieger

Historical fiction, oxymoronic concept that it is, invites authors to examine the constructed, coincidental, and dubious claims to verisimilitude any narrative of history makes. The freedom afforded to the author by embracing the *fiction* of the work—the self-aware rejection of any claim to verisimilitude in exchange for a good story—is what makes good literary historical fiction so rewarding to read. Knopf has turned out two new tales of the old by established and powerful mid-career writers Emily Schultz and Emma Richler.

Schultz's *Men Walking on Water* takes place in and around Prohibition-era Detroit. It is a tale of rum-runners and gangsters that is mercifully fresh in that it actually has very little to do with rum-runners and gangsters. The book is far less about gunfights and defiant binges than it is about the day-to-day realities of living in troubled times. Schultz's Detroit is not a more refined romantic age where the good people just want a drink. People are terrible. Other people are less terrible. There is money to be made in between and there are consequences for actions.

Such is the thoughtful bent to this novel, with its attention to marginalized and already-suffering people further punished by the politics of the era, and its host of strong female characters. The rum-soaked noir and Tommy-gunnery of most Prohibition-era novels is largely absent here, and it's a welcome change. An ambitious novel, *Men Walking on Water* doesn't focus on any one story, and is, perhaps, most concerned with the character of "Detroit." This might be a mistake, though, as it causes the book to feel cluttered. What could potentially be a beautiful, small, almost quiet story in what is typically loud territory instead becomes a large, swirling group of events that happen around one another with pages and pages of historical factoids wedged in between them. While the argument could be made that semi-connected and parallel but not necessarily intertwining happenings are what history *actually is*, the book defeats this line of thought by making too-frequent use of coincidence. The storylines intersect at odd times and just enough so that everything is tied together, but not enough so that it feels completely cohesive. A powerful and thoughtful consideration of a place and era that has been represented often but rarely well in fiction, Schultz's novel contains moments of contemplative brilliance but is hampered by its own structure.

Be My Wolff by Emma Richler is a novel about Rachel and Zach, two (kind of) siblings who also happen to be perfect for one another. Zach, a boxing prodigy, is adopted by Rachel's family and the two are raised together as siblings. Trouble looms as inevitably they fall in love, or perhaps into something deeper and more connected than mere love. They become something very strange and connected and perfect—and deeply unsettling to those around them.

There is fallout from their relationship, of course, and the book dives deep into considerations of social taboos. Very deep, actually—the book gets stuck on pondering incest for rather a long time—but when Richler lets her characters walk around their world and (invented) histories a bit more instead of always gazing inward at the Zach/Rachel dynamic, there is quite a lot to see. *Be My Wolff* is a beautiful book, where myths and the self-referentially invented identities and histories the characters give themselves have as much impact on the world as do the real historical figures and events that Richler weaves into the tale.

While a book about history and incest sounds potentially troubling, the novel is actually very fun—amid the considerations of personal and public histories, interconnections, social scrutiny, and so on, there are moments of pure myth. This is a novel where the Baba Yaga exists and can enter the conversation at any moment. A being of myth fits easily into conversations for Richler, and she handles both the surreal and the banal equally well. While the figures of myth typically choose to chime in and chat about social perceptions of incest and taboos (of course) and don't open up any particularly new considerations for the book, their presence is nonetheless a very funny and fun application of material that makes no claim to historical veracity, simply in the name of good storytelling. It's a small capturing of magic in a not-strictly magical world, and Richler is to be commended for her mastery of the space between the invented and the real.

Candour, Comics, CanLit

Candida Rifkind and Linda Warley, eds.
Canadian Graphic: Picturing Life Narratives.
Wilfrid Laurier UP $29.99

Reviewed by Brenna Clarke Gray

Autographics and biographics represent a substantial share of the successful comics published in Canada today, especially in the realm of alternative comics. Many of our most significant comics artists, from Julie Doucet and Chester Brown to Kate Beaton and Scott B. Henderson, draw at least partially on traditions of life writing. That *Canadian Graphic* exists is a celebration of the progress of comics studies in Canada, and that it is a thoughtful contribution to the field is even better. Candida Rifkind and Linda Warley indicate in their introduction that the larger goals of the collection are to highlight the range and breadth of comics memoir and biography in Canada today, and to encourage future scholarship in this area, and it achieves both. *Canadian Graphic* offers a good first survey of Canadian life-writing comics, and though the absences are sometimes striking, such as the choice of a relatively obscure Quebec text rather than a discussion of titans like Guy Delisle or Michel Rabagliati, the discussion, especially of English Canadian comics creators, is particularly well rounded and robust. The chapters offer interesting insights and new contributions to the discipline, and that they often had this reader shouting out competing readings is surely only good news for future collections and the health of comics studies in Canada as a whole.

Many chapters draw on the same comics theorists, particularly Scott McCloud and Charles Hatfield, which has the pleasing effect of ensuring that the chapters are almost always in conversation with one another. Indeed, for the most part, the collection takes a robust look at existing scholarship on alternative comics and comix; while some readings could be complicated with more reflection on mainstream comics history, especially those engaging with hegemonic ideas of culture, the collection as a whole is a useful primer on the most current thinking about alternative comics and, of course, particularly autographics and biographics.

It is a joy to see a scholarly collection make such extensive use of excerpts from the comics themselves; too often, visuals are sacrificed because of publishing costs, which often only amplifies the tendency of literary scholars to privilege the verbal over the visual in comics. The chapters in *Canadian Graphic* engage meaningfully with the art in the comics they encounter, and the reprinted selections help to clarify the arguments and encourage further reading. This is a real strength.

There is much anxiety throughout the volume about the need to take comics seriously. Most chapters begin with or include

some gesturing as to why it is worthwhile to think and write about comics, and many fall into the trap of trying to find serious-sounding literary language to try to describe them (in one notable example, the creator-artist is referred to as a "graphic author"). This is a problem not with this book alone; indeed, it is endemic to comics studies and perhaps a particularly easy trap for the first book in a sub-genre of the discipline to fall into. I look forward to a time when comics scholars trust their own work enough to stop apologizing for it and announcing its worthiness; let that be a challenge to the contributors to the next book that comes along.

The editors of *Canadian Graphic* are mindful of one of the biggest issues plaguing both comics publishing and scholarship, and that is the lack of diversity in voices; they foreground their attempts to address it and recognize that this collection contains a majority of white voices. It is encouraging, however, to see work discussed in this collection from Black and Indigenous creators. I commend the editors for acknowledging the need for collections in comics studies to be more inclusive of BIPOC, disabled, and LGBTQ creators and scholars, and I look forward to the day when this is a natural outcome of the discipline's inherent diversity.

Canadian Graphic is an excellent and necessary collection of thoughtful, engaged scholarship in a growing discipline. It simultaneously offers a useful review of relevant existing scholarship and important creators to know, and gestures toward work that still needs to be done. Rifkind and Warley have done a great service to Canadian literature, life writing, and comics studies with this important collection.

Transnational Nationalism

Melissa Tanti, Jeremy Haynes, Daniel Coleman, and Lorraine York, eds.
Beyond "Understanding Canada": Transnational Perspectives on Canadian Literature.
U of Alberta P $49.95

Reviewed by Robert Zacharias

Beyond "Understanding Canada" takes its name and impetus from the Canadian government's 2012 cancellation of the "Understanding Canada" program, which ended nearly forty years of financial support for interdisciplinary studies of Canada around the world. As the title suggests, the collection quickly moves beyond the Understanding Canada program to examine a broader range of questions regarding the transnational circulation of Canadian literature. The collection is clearly intended to showcase the type of work put at risk by the government's decision: eleven of the fourteen essays are written by scholars of Canadian literature based at universities outside Canada—in Spain, Serbia, Australia, the Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Jamaica, Slovakia, and the UK.

The collection is separated into five themed sections, plus a critical introduction co-authored by the editorial committee (Melissa Tanti, Jeremy Haynes, Daniel Coleman, and Lorraine York) that briefly recounts the Canadian government's efforts to foster Canadian studies abroad, or what they call "transnational nationalism." Emphasizing the program's relative low cost and wide reach, the introduction notes that the government supported the study of Canada in some fifty countries over the past forty years. Importantly, they also call attention to the politics underpinning the unequal distribution of that support, noting that the policy's "priority areas" aimed to shape the focus of the funded research, just as its geopolitical aspirations determined the countries eligible

to receive funding. The programming is further interrogated in the collection's first section, "Contexts, Provocations, and Knowledge Territories." Christl Verduyn's essay offers a useful primer on how the Understanding Canada program fostered the work of the International Council for Canadian Studies (ICCS), along with specific examples of how the ICCS managed to flourish within—or, just as often, *between*—the program's expressed "priority areas." Smaro Kamboureli's essay acknowledges the program's successes but questions the "simplistic nature of the collective outcry" against its cancellation, reminding readers of its ideological strictures and suggesting that its termination provides an opportunity for a productive repositioning of international research in the field. Elizabeth Yeoman's essay is the first of several to thematize translation, noting that the program's designation of English and French as "official languages" of study limited the range of partners abroad much as it has restricted the scope of material engaged in Canada—a point she makes via her own work with writing in Indigenous languages.

Some of the most notable work in *Beyond "Understanding Canada"* explores Black Canadian literature (in the second section, "Roots and Routes"). Pilar Cuder-Domínguez begins her essay by surveying the "staggering amount of work" that has been undertaken to address the now standard critique of Canada's absence from studies of the Black Atlantic, turning to Esi Edugyan's *The Second Life of Samuel Tyne* to suggest that the novel "balances out the opposing drives of diasporic and essentialized black consciousness described in black Canadian studies." Anne Collett's essay reads the absence of Canada in Olive Senior's poetry to suggest that the racialized text "works to create a 'condition of resonance'" for the country, while Michael A. Bucknor suggests that the "emphasis on an oppositional politics of disruption in black Canadian studies" has made it difficult to trace "diasporic intimacies and intricacies of black global networks." Bucknor examines personal letters from Austin Clarke's archive to follow the international lines of Clarke's "literary friendships and affective alliances." Bucknor's emphasis on Clarke's strategic use of the CBC and his work with "white establishment collaborators" leads him to provocatively suggest that it may be "worthwhile to begin thinking through what the political stakes are for widening and whitening the black Atlantic in Canada."

The rest of the collection is somewhat less cohesive than these early sections, and in my reading the essays in the fourth section ("Border Zones") may be better read through sections three ("Mapping Bodies, Place, and Time") and five ("Reading Publics"). In the third section, Katalin Kürtösi and Claire Omhovère move away from the collection's focus on literature: Kürtösi contends that Emily Carr's West Coast home positioned her on the productive margins of Canada's already marginal modernist movement, while Omhovère offers a theory-heavy meditation on Canadian landscape photography. Belén Martín Lucas' strong essay explores the liberatory possibilities of a range of queer and racialized speculative Canadian fiction, and can be productively read alongside Ana María Fraile-Marcos' examination of Michael Helm's underappreciated *Cities of Refuge*: both offer theoretically informed readings of texts that interrogate the narrative of Canada as a peaceable kingdom.

The most compelling evidence of the unique readings enabled by the transnational perspective, however, arrives as the collection closes. Vesna Lopičić and Milena Kaličanin's exploration of Yugoslavian history in David Albahari's work is exemplary of a transnational approach that sheds new light on Canadian literature specifically by engaging its international referents. Lucia Otrísalová, Cristina Ivanovici, and Don

Sparling each offer compelling insights into the signification of "Canada" in Cold War Eastern Europe, with Otrísalová cataloguing the Canadian texts selected for translation in Slovakia between 1948 and 1989, Ivanovici considering the translation of Canadian literature in Eastern Europe to explore what she calls the "different valuations of capitalist capital versus cultural capital," and Sparling accounting for the role of Canadian diplomats and passionate professors in the Czech Republic. The analyses offer reminders of the often ad hoc manner in which Canadian literature has circulated around the world.

Like similar recent collections showcasing transnational perspectives on Canadian literature, *Beyond "Understanding Canada"* also reveals the international conversation's own set of interests and priorities. Although the collection's focus is informed by the original workshop and the time lag of academic publishing, reading *Beyond "Understanding Canada"* during the current tumult of the field *within* Canada makes it occasionally hard to recognize the relatively placid field as it is presented here. Still, the distinctiveness of the transnational perspective is a key part of the argument the collection makes, and in this regard, it succeeds admirably, overcoming the "material challenges" of international scholarship not only to argue for but also to demonstrate convincingly the transnational nature of Canadian literary studies.

With-ness and Witness

Dale Tracy
With the Witnesses: Poetry, Compassion, and Claimed Experience. McGill-Queen's UP $34.95

Reviewed by Emily Robins Sharpe

What are the ethics of reading literature about trauma? Influenced by trauma theory's application in the humanities, many students and scholars of literature might suggest reading about others' experiences with empathy or sympathy. Dale Tracy's *With the Witnesses* instead proposes compassion. *With the Witnesses* is a wide-ranging exploration of how to read witness poetry—"poetry responding to social suffering and atrocity"—without the over-identification that empathy and sympathy can provoke, an over-identification that, Tracy argues, supplants deeper analysis. As she contends, "[l]iterature does not help one to know what it is to be another. Rather, literature helps one to know what it is to encounter another." This encounter requires that readers recognize their own distance from the suffering a poetic speaker describes. A witness poem does not place the reader in the position of the sufferer (what Tracy terms "feeling as"), but in a position to feel compassionately toward the sufferer ("feeling with"). Tracy terms this compassionate response to witness poetry "with-ness"—an approach to reading that locates readers in an explicit relationship to the poem, allowing them to recognize their response to it as contiguous to that of the poem's speaker. A compassionate reading leaves room for readers to recognize their own feelings and reactions, rather than assuming—with implications of taking on, feigning, and appropriating—the speaker's feelings or experiences.

With the Witnesses explores how compassion can be both "a mode of life" and a particular response to poetic representations of trauma, anguish, and violence

through testimony, confession, and secondary witnessing. To demonstrate different approaches to compassionate reading, *With the Witnesses* looks to an extensive array of witness poetry depicting personal, national, and international traumas, authored by a diverse group of anglophone poets: Frank Chipasula, Peter Balakian, Joy Harjo, Seamus Heaney, Adrienne Rich, Walt Whitman, Hart Crane, Elizabeth Bishop, Lee Maracle, Rachel Tzvia Back, Les Murray, Dionne Brand, Antjie Krog, Derek Walcott, and Jack Mapanje. One of the book's strengths is Tracy's thoughtful demonstration of the many ways of looking at a poem or a poet's oeuvre—the poets and their poetry reappear across the book's sections and chapters. For instance, Brand's long poem *Inventory* is analyzed at length, alongside Murray's "Letters to the Winner," in a chapter on metonymy and the poetic positioning of the reader. Brand's poetry—*Ossuaries* this time—then reappears in the following chapter's discussion of poetic structure and metonymic representations of bones, ossuaries, and signatures. Similarly, Balakian's poem "The Oriental Rug" appears in the first chapter in a consideration of secondary witnessing and distance, and then in subsequent discussions of ekphrasis and of witness poetry's use of dedications.

Tracy's approach provides exciting frameworks for considering witness poetry, particularly in terms of its use of metonymy, from her extensive discussion of how representations of maps, land, and the bodies that exist within that land draw connections between poetry and community, to her analysis of the many ways poets "sign" their poems—through dedications as well as inserted names (for example, "branded" and "back" in the poetry of Brand and Back, respectively). Tracy's analyses also extend to other witness texts, including Ariel Dorfman's *Death and the Maiden*, Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, and Jan Švankmajer's *Kostnice* (*The Ossuary*). These examples imply the wider applications of her approach and left me curious about further examples of witness poetry and witness literature. (By way of first-hand investigation, I introduced Tracy's approach to my undergraduate students to frame what turned out to be a deeply thoughtful class discussion of Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric*.)

The resolutely comparative poetic study of *With the Witnesses* attends to far-flung contexts and themes. The constellation of poets and witness texts is complemented by Tracy's attentive analysis of existing scholarship on trauma theory and witness poetry. She both critiques and extends the work of scholars such as Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, Martha Nussbaum, Carolyn Forché, and Dominick LaCapra. This detailed analysis of existing scholarship is both a boon and, at times, an interruption: Tracy's readings of individual poems are so compelling, and her analyses of trauma theory's (mis)applications so thorough, that it can be distracting to see each poem's analysis first prefaced with an extensive summary of the existing criticism. In its new directions for the application of trauma theory and the analysis of witness poetry, *With the Witnesses* opens up useful new strategies for the study of trauma and suffering in literature.

Toxic Colonialism

Sarah Marie Wiebe

Everyday Exposure: Indigenous Mobilization and Environmental Justice in Canada's Chemical Valley. U of British Columbia P $32.95

Reviewed by Warren Cariou

It is no accident that some of the most devastated and toxic environments in North America are located near Indigenous communities. The Fort McKay First Nation is a well-known example, situated in the midst

of vast bitumen mining operations that affect the community members in myriad ways, compromising their health and interfering with their traditional harvesting practices. In Fort McKay, the proximity of environmental threat is shockingly visible since the surrounding bitumen mines have literally torn the earth apart. But in other locations, the environmental damage to Indigenous communities is more insidious. One example can be found by tracing the flow of bitumen from Fort McKay through pipelines stretching more than halfway across the continent to the Aamjiwnaang Anishinabek Nation. This community is located beside Sarnia's "Chemical Valley," which contains the highest concentration of chemical manufacturing plants in Canada. The people of Aamjiwnaang live with the constant threat of catastrophic spills and with many unanswered questions about long-term effects of lower-level exposures to petroleum-based chemicals. Sarah Marie Wiebe's well-researched and penetrating analysis provides a long-overdue look at this neglected story of colonial violence and embodied Indigenous resistance. Based on extensive time spent in the community learning directly from Aamjiwnaang's citizens and experiencing the community's pollution crisis in an embodied and empathetic way, this book is a must-read for anyone who wants to understand the legacies of environmental racism in Canada today.

Wiebe examines Aamjiwnaang's particular history of what Rob Nixon calls "slow violence" through several different approaches, and the result is part academic study of colonial biopolitics, part intervention in Canadian public health policy, and part witnessing of embodied environmental damage. The different strands of argumentation do not always sit easily together, with the more abstract discussions of political theory in the opening chapters likely to turn off non-specialist readers. However, those who do persist will be rewarded with the nuanced and harrowing accounts of life in Aamjiwnaang presented in later chapters. The core of the study is Chapter 4, which presents many first-person narratives told by community members, reflecting on the people's close proximity to the toxic petrochemicals that are processed and contained in their locale. To read these stories is to be brought face to face with the unequal distribution of environmental risk in Canada, and with the colonial underpinnings of that inequality. The stories often emphasize the sensory experience of toxic colonialism, giving us embodied perspectives on environmental threat. Community member Elle describes the airborne pollution by saying, "you can see it. You can smell it. It affects the breathing, your sense of smell . . . We're always going to be sick people." Another Aamjiwnaang citizen, Steve, describes the warning siren that sounds whenever a potentially dangerous leak has occurred: "[T]he sound wave hits you, hits me; I could feel it vibrating my entire body from the inside out." Indeed, after toxic exposure, the body can be affected without any outward signs. A controversial 2005 study of Aamjiwnaang's birth statistics showed a "rapid decline in the percentage of live male births" between 1993 and 2003, signalling what is potentially a major threat to the community's long-term survival. The latter sections of *Everyday Exposure* examine the public health policy issues raised by this study and the Canadian government's lack of response. Wiebe argues for "an experiential, affective, place-based approach to public policy," and she provides the research in this book as a basis for such policy.

With the possibility of such insidious effects on reproduction and other long-term health problems, in addition to the threat of catastrophic industrial accidents nearby, it is no surprise that the Anishinabek of Aamjiwnaang carry a sense of alarm within

themselves, becoming hypervigilant of what is happening in their own bodies, and wondering what dangerous symptoms might eventually become visible. The sense of intimate menace in the book is augmented by the inclusion of extraordinary photographs by Laurence Butet-Roch, which present uncanny juxtapositions of Chemical Valley smokestacks and Aamjiwnaang backyards. Despite the forbidding atmosphere, Butet-Roch's photographs and Wiebe's narrative also show that the people of Aamjiwnaang are far from being passive recipients of slow violence. Their efforts in citizen monitoring projects and political actions are presented here as empowered and even inspiring responses to their situation. In defending their land and their own bodies against petrocolonial incursion, these Anishinabek are following their traditional teachings, acting in the best interest of the coming generations.

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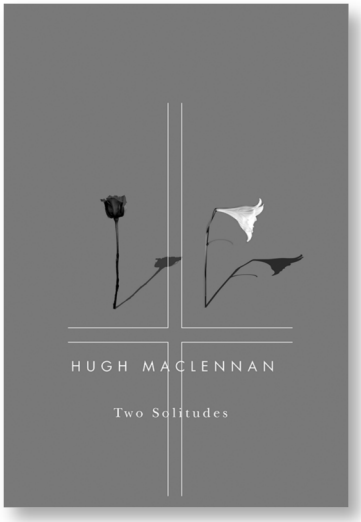

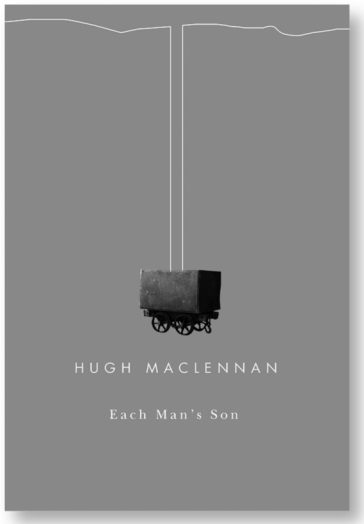

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