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We acknowledge that we are on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓-speaking Musqueam people.

Editorial

An Editor's Advice: How to Increase Your Chances of Publication in an Academic Journal

Laura Moss

As the editor of a journal, I'm often asked how people can increase their article's chances of publication. Having served as editor (and acting editor) for five years now, I've read over a thousand readers' reports and written many hundred decision letters. Over the course of adjudication of submissions, I've noticed patterns of omission and problem areas that are consistently noted across reports. I have learned what peers read for and where critical emphasis often lies in peer review. I also know that most academics occupy the double role of being both writers and evaluators. So, when I conceived of the idea for this editorial, I thought it would be useful to reach beyond my own observations and to consult my academic community. On Facebook, I asked my colleagues across fields for "useful tips/editorial feedback that you've been given or that you have given to others." They, in turn, offered their advice (thus all the people quoted below shared their comments in that social media venue. I am grateful to all). Interestingly, almost all the comments were ones I have seen before in peer review readers' reports. Such crowdsourcing loosely illustrates that while sub-fields may vary, what readers seem to value as publishable scholarship often shares certain features.

This editorial advice column is aimed at scholars of all levels and not just emerging ones, where advice is often directed. We all need to work on finding optimal ways to communicate our research. I want to emphasize that this is not meant as a gatekeeping exercise, either. I am not saying that there is any one formula for a successful article. In fact, I would argue that articles that creatively break with expectation are often the most engaging (especially if they tell us why). There are, however, certain elements that successful articles share and that make them a pleasure to read: a strong argument, a clear logic of organization, and an audible authorial voice, for a start. My comments are ordered in three categories: before submission, the article itself, and after you receive a report. Every point (save for a couple) begins with a comment, in bold, that I have made in a decision letter. None of my points will be particularly earth shattering and yet every single one comes from having had dozens of submissions that do not follow it.

Before Submission

1. **"Follow submission guidelines."** Seriously. Every journal has citation guidelines and word limits. If it says MLA 8, follow MLA 8 (no matter how egregious MLA 8 is). Submitting with another style and a note saying "I'll change it later if accepted" signals that you don't actually see the paper as a good fit in the journal. Similarly, the solution to a paper that is well over the word limit is not to submit it with a note "allowing" the editor to trim it, or saying that you'll work with the readers' reports and cut it if it is accepted. That's just being explicit about how you expect others to do your work for you. The solution is revision. Further, editors, as a rule, generally don't appreciate being guilt-tripped over not giving you "enough" extra words to make your point. A haiku can be brilliant. Longer is not necessarily better. Here's the reason for word limits at our journal: every issue has 190 pages of 450 words. Every 450 words over the 7,000-word article limit is like asking for one extra page. Note that one page is the space of one review or one poem. An extra 450 words takes away space from other people and perspectives.
2. **"Know the audience of the journal."** A good rule of thumb is to submit to the journals you read and cite most often. You are already engaging in their ongoing conversations. You will also know approximately what level of expertise and knowledge your readers might have. Judith Paltin says this: "I'm working on a review right now in which confusion about audience is really evident. The article would neither satisfy specialists in the (single) author, who would be irritated by the extensive foregrounding of seminal scholarship (in postcoloniality, in this case), nor a more heterogeneous audience who still has to wade through a lot of other voices to hear the author's argument. In short—stop putting other people's voices ahead of your own as an author." I absolutely love the final point here so I've underlined it for you.

3. **"Who are you writing for?"** No audience for any one publication is fixed. As Mary Bryson says, "Interdisciplinary work by definition needs to imagine and build its own audience." If you are imagining an audience, imagine out loud. Make it clear who you are talking to and what you bring to the table. This is part of opening up the scholarly conversation.
4. **"Peer review is not problem solving."** Do not submit your article because you are stuck and you are really looking for feedback. This is where you should share drafts with trusted friends or colleagues rather than journals. It is not the job of the editor or your peer reviewers to break your impasse. Pilar Cuder-Domínguez explains a key component of peer review: "a well-balanced structure going from introduction through analysis to fully-developed conclusion is essential, and as a peer-reviewer very often my job is helping authors reach that balance."
5. **"There are too many typos and grammatical errors in this paper to go forward to peer review."** Submit polished, professional work. As Anna Guttman notes, "careful proofreading is a must. It may seem obvious, but it certainly doesn't always happen." Do not just assume that copyeditors will fix it for you. While finding typos is oddly satisfying, I don't really relish fixing comma splices.
6. **"Sharpen your abstract."** Spend time polishing the abstract that you submit with the article. It should not be the first five sentences of the paper itself. It should summarize the article's intervention, spell out the core research questions, and note the central objects under consideration. The abstract is the article's first impression. Make it a good one. Make it snappy. If you can't articulate your argument and your contribution to the field clearly in the abstract, you might not have been clear enough in the article either.

The Article Itself

7. **"How would you assess this article?"** When a reader agrees to assess an article for peer review, we send the following instructions: "Would you please read the enclosed paper, and recommend whether or not *Canadian Literature* should accept it? In formulating your comments, which are meant to aid the author in preparing the article for publication, please keep your criticism constructive, using professional and courteous language. Please comment considering the following criteria: Soundness of Scholarship, Quality of Style, Coherence of Argument." Not surprisingly, then, most of the comments in the readers' reports follow these three categories. You should ask yourself about these categories before submitting your paper. Be honest.

8. **"Who cares?"** According to Patsy Badir, you should "let your readers really see how this text or issue interests you: what's paradoxical? What's puzzling? What's surprising?" She continues, "I am less interested in being told why I, the reader, should care. I am, on the other hand, delighted to know why the writer cares." Jennifer Andrews expands upon this: "as a reader, not only show me why I should care but what is at stake in caring." In the same vein, I can't stress the significance of **"So what?"** enough. Life is short. Why should I spend an hour of mine reading this article? I want to know the answer in the opening paragraphs. Don't leave me in suspense until the conclusion. We all teach students these two fundamental questions. We should keep asking them ourselves.
9. **"You need to hook the reader."** I write this statement in decision letters almost weekly as I send back articles with a request to make the introduction more immediately engaging and to show why it is urgent at the outset. Why now? Is it imperative that people read your work? It should be. Epigraphs are your good friends. Ask core questions up front. Write with a fire (but not purple prose) that explains how these are important questions you are asking or issues you are addressing. Note that the knowledge gap ("no one has done this, so I am") is never enough. People haven't combined pickles, cherries, and siracha before but that doesn't mean that someone should now. If you do, you need to explain that this combination would make a sweet, spicy, and sour sauce that could transform a baked chicken.
10. **"Who are you in conversation with?"** While your original article is not a place for an extensive literature review, it is a good place to demonstrate what ongoing conversations you are jumping into. This should be a page or three, not half the article. Lorraine York points out that she's looking for "a confident sense of intervention in an ongoing conversation. In the most successful articles I read, I feel the excitement at joining that conversation and potentially steering it in a fresh direction. At the same time, that previous conversation shouldn't overshadow the author's voice." Self-confidence doesn't mean that you have to be dismissive of other voices and it doesn't mean posturing or arrogance. It does mean that you believe that you have something significant to add.
11. **"Clarify your citational practices."** I return to my three favourite questions: Who speaks for whom? Who listens? Who benefits? Be generous. Sandra Tomc tells us that "the willingness to cite scholarship is probably most important" in her assessment of articles. If research articles are incursions into ongoing conversations in the field, whose voices are being heard? Cite

minority voices. Look around at a variety of perspectives and engage them, not only contrapuntally. Don't just cite the usual suspects.

12. **"Reader A is concerned that there is not enough real critical engagement with existing scholarship on X."** I have written this statement dozens of times. Critical engagement is key: not just citation and quoting those who support your point but actual engagement and contextualization of scholarship is necessary. This includes how well the author has engaged with existing scholarship, how up-to-date (all from twenty years ago?) and historically deep (all from last year?) their references are, how extensive their research is (all online? all from one collection?), and how they have entertained a range of views (counterarguments, existing criticism).
13. **"Stop putting other people's voices ahead of your own as an author,"** as Judith Paltin says. Avoid name-dropping, particularly theorists. If the work of Jacques Rancière is central to your argument, by all means bring it in. However, don't just cherry pick a term ("what Rancière calls 'X'") without a discussion of where Rancière coined the term, how he uses it, and to what end. Is it really worth the necessary space to use the term? The cherry-picked word/name-drop is pervasive in articles and it is a form of showing off erudition that often backfires. One peer reviewer recently counted the number of theorists referenced in an article and concluded that it was impossible to truly engage in a sustained fashion with all fifteen of them in 7,000 words. He recommended rejection because there was no room for the author's own voice in the cacophony of theorists. A theory soup is always muddy.
14. **"What is your contribution to the field?"** I often paraphrase readers' reports by saying, "on the whole, many suggestions sit under the headings of self-positioning and argumentation. Take a bit of time in the opening pages to emphasize your contribution to the topic/field." Alyssa MacLean comments, "in the case of some papers that are recovering material or assembling some sort of innovative archive, it can be very easy to see a contribution to the field—in fact the shape of the field can literally be changing thanks to that work. But many papers (especially ones in contemporary literature) follow a let's-apply-this-theory-to-this-text pattern that can be underwhelming when the essay basically confirms that the theory applies to the text and doesn't explain the stakes of the intervention." It is necessary at some point early on to explain what field(s) you believe you are contributing to. This is part of announcing yourself in the scholarly conversation you are joining.
15. **"Avoid theme-spotting."** Enough said.

16. **“This paper is overly ambitious.”** Your article is not your dissertation in synopsis or a preview of your upcoming book. Significant contributions to scholarship can be minute and still have impact. Robert Rouse notes that for him, “a great article is one that changes how I read/ understand/ teach a text, or a moment in the text. Basically it is something that moves my understanding along.” Really, that’s what we are trying to do: move understanding along. It can be incremental. That’s how knowledge is mobilized in the long run.
17. **“The logic of organization in this paper is unclear.”** Katja Thieme points to the value of what in writing studies is called “forecasting.” It is “so crucial in establishing a sense of trust in the project that there isn’t just the big bold argument or claim or question that the article asserts, but also and right away, at the beginning, a clear roadmap. These are the materials I’m using to make this argument and here’s the way in which I will analyze this evidence in the following sections.” If written in a way that is not simply a cataloguing of what is to come, the roadmap can lead to the wonderful sense of “ah ha! I see where we are going. Let’s go!”
18. **“Pick up the pace.”** Jeffrey Severs comments on pace and the need for an article to have “sustained energy all the way through, in terms of argument, demonstration, and rhetorical effort and purpose. You tend to see a lot of things that do a good job at announcing the intervention and situating in the field, because that’s important, but there’s not a matching/proportionate strength in, well, whatever the enactment or meat of the article consists of (often readings or particularized explorations/extensions) and the article’s end.” Yes. Don’t forget the protein.
19. **“Make room for sustained intellectual and analytical engagement with quoted primary texts.”** Some authors rely too heavily on quotations (from primary or secondary works) to make their points for them. It is the author’s job to walk the reader through the implications of the passage at hand and to relate it to the developing argument. Don’t be afraid to slow down and dig in. While paraphrase is unnecessary, specific detailed engagement of the passage is vital. I expect roughly as much space dedicated to commentary on the passage as the passage takes up itself.
20. **“Write directly in the active voice.”** Quality of style is about delivery and accessibility. Julie Rak simply asks us to “write clearly about complex things.” Let the ideas give weight, not the sentence structure. On one hand, you should avoid multiple multi-claused sentences piled onto each other. While a thirty-six-line sentence may be grammatically correct, its content is likely to be virtually impenetrable (and realistically, its grammar is likely to be

off too). On the other hand, you should also avoid sentence fragments for "effect." Further, one of my pet peeves is the phrase "this paper argues" when it is really the author who is arguing. Paper is inanimate and metonyms don't speak directly. Another writing peeve is the (unfathomable) popularity of the (weak) verb "suggests" at the moment. Avoid it unless you have an actual suggestion. It is emphatically not a synonym for "states."

21. **"What do you want your reader to remember the most?"** (Hint: this is likely your contribution to the field and this should be signalled in the abstract). Conclusions are not just summaries. At the end of an article, you need to make sure that your reader leaves with a take-away message/point/question. What brief notes would you make if reading your own article? Be honest, again.

After the Report

22. **"Don't panic."** You should read "Revise and Resubmit" neither as a pre-acceptance, nor as a pre-rejection. It is most common to receive a RR decision letter. Last year at our journal only one article received two recommendations of acceptance on the first round. All the other submissions were either rejected after the first round or asked to revise and resubmit. To put it another way, 23 of 24 published articles went through RR.
23. **"Take the readers' reports as advice."** Reports are advice to the author, not non-negotiable instructions. Peer readers are well-qualified experts, to be sure, but they have spent hours with the work that you have spent months/years on. They are generously offering their opinions and making suggestions for improvement. Mainly, they are signalling places of confusion, contradiction, omission, or points that need clarification or elaboration. Do not completely rewrite according to the recommendations of a single report and in the process lose your own voice. This is heartbreaking to see upon resubmission. I always say, "Please read the readers' comments and address the ones that make the most sense to you. When you return the paper to the journal, please include a letter to me noting the changes you have made, the suggestions you have taken up, and explain the ones you have chosen not to engage." (Even if the editor doesn't invite this specifically, I recommend including such a letter upon resubmission anyway.) Your name is on the article, not the name of the anonymous reviewer. You have to stand by it.
24. **"Why didn't you read the peer reviewers' recommendations?"** If a reviewer suggests reading something, you must read it. This signals that they think that you are missing a key part of the conversation. You have

to listen. If it doesn’t fit, then let the editor know in the letter you return with the revisions. The letter will likely be shared with the original reader if, upon submission of the first report, that reader has agreed to review the revised article again. They often do not, especially if they are highly critical. (Don’t forget that you are welcome to ask that the revised article not be sent back to Reader B.) More articles get rejected on the second round by the original reader with the comment that “they didn’t even bother to follow up on my recommendations and the holes are still there” than with any other comment.

25. **“Onwards!”** Everything we do is a work in progress. If your article is accepted, you still have to work with the editor to polish and tighten it. If it is RR, then breathe deeply and dig in. Early in my career, I put an article in a drawer after a stinging RR decision and time passed. It is still not published and I regret that. If your paper is rejected, take it as a sign that the article is not ready yet, and don’t give up. See above.

Gillian Wallace

Snow/White

This is
your address. You live
here. Your face
the colour of a migraine looks
at you in the mirror, scattering
white crows to the palm
of the wind. You watch
as ice enters
you, finds where
the broken places are, where
your eyes travel as clouds
blow smoke against
a yellowed sky, taking
a guided tour of
your soul, a hundred lights burning
in a hundred rooms at
dinnertime on a winter's
night, a single
leftover leaf seeking
refuge from the snow sliding
its cold hands under
a tree's bark. The tracks made
by a truck spreading
salt on a midnight road are
your history. You hear
it each time you wake
to change position.

Jennifer Harris

Peter Susand, Lost Texts, and Black Canadian Literary Culture of the 1850s

In 1856 a Black resident of Berlin, Ontario—now Kitchener—published an eponymous work, *The Prose and Poetical Works of Peter Edward Susand*. The fact of a Black man publishing in Canada in the era is not highly unusual, given the prevalence of Black Canadian activist newspapers such as *The Voice of the Fugitive* (1851-1853) and *The Provincial Freeman* (1853-c. 1859). Publishing a volume of poetry or fiction, as Susand did, is less common. With the exception of Martin Delany's novel *Blake; or, the Huts of America*, partially composed in Canada between 1856 and 1859, nothing comparable has been uncovered in the period. Unfortunately, no copy of Susand's work appears to have survived, and for that reason Susand has been absent from discussions of nineteenth-century Black Canadian literature, despite extensive recuperation work undertaken by Linda Brown-Kubisch on Susand as a historical figure. In light of this situation—and to a certain degree because of it—Susand invites a series of questions crucial to the study of early-nineteenth-century Black Canadian literature: how do we write about authors whose work hasn't survived? Can we recuperate their literary practices in the absence of their writings? Is it possible to marshal other evidence to reconstruct their literary networks and affiliations? What might we gain by undertaking such scholarly excavations? And, as Lois Brown asks in a related context, "how do we grapple with the seeming silences—these rhetorical ruptures and biographical caesuras—that all too often define the early African American canon and history?" (131). Brown in particular identifies her struggle to locate what she names "death-defying testimony—evidence that defied the notion of social death advanced by historian Orlando Patterson" (132). What might such "death-defying testimony" look like? Considering Susand and his career provides an opportunity to work through these problems in a Canadian context; drawing upon him as a case study, as I do in this paper, invites us to consider a broader Black literary culture operating in Canada in the 1850s, beyond the abolitionist texts which currently define the era. In the process, I attend to what Brown names "transformative reorientations" whereby "the devalued became cherished; the undone lives became reconstituted entities; physical work became a tool of, rather than replacement for, intellectual enterprise; and profound silences became unmistakable articulations" (132).

Given the ephemeral nature of print culture and the material conditions of early-nineteenth-century Black North American life, questions about how to approach the field are not insignificant. In the US context so much has been lost, from private letters to widely circulated newspapers, that it is estimated as little as ten per cent of nineteenth-century African American literary production has been located (Lockhard 417-18). Recent excavations by scholars such as Lois Brown, Hazel Carby, Frances Smith Foster, and others have increased the materials to which scholars have access.[1] In Canada, the scholarly and bibliographic work of George Elliott Clarke has invited further explorations, and reprints of texts with Canadian affiliations have periodically emerged. A few literary scholars—notably David Chariandy, Jade Ferguson, and Karina Vernon—have proposed new orientations, archaeologies, and methods, though in relation to later materials. Yet this work is by no means complete, and Black Canadian literature of the early nineteenth century continues to be treated by many as a prelude to that of the twentieth, a way to assert national belongings, or a curiosity. Repeatedly, the same authors are cited, circulated, and reinscribed in a narrative that seems too comfortably fixed, a narrative that forwards Canada as a relatively safe space from which to mount a critique of slavery and the US.

While it may seem counterintuitive, I want to argue that scholars of early-nineteenth-century Canadian literature might productively attend to lost material such as Susand's volume as a means of troubling that narrative. That this has not yet happened might be attributed in part to the way in which Black Canada—or really, Black Ontario—has come to function as an overdetermined space of early-nineteenth-century Black Canadian literature. Names like Henry Bibb, Josiah Henson, Mary Ann Shadd, and others are recognized for their important contributions to nineteenth-century Black Canadian writing.[2] It is on the basis of their contributions that Winfried Siemerling has provocatively claimed the 1850s "can rightly be called a Black Canadian Renaissance," a term he uses to signal "a nineteenth-century effervescence of black writing and testimony that was transnational but written and rooted in Canada" (98). In addition to works by those cited above, Siemerling cites Martin Delany's *Blake*, as well as "narratives by Thomas Smallwood, the ministers Samuel Ringgold Ward and Jermaine Wesley Logan, Austin Steward, Mahommah Gardo Baquaqua . . . , and over one hundred former slaves whose testimony was transcribed [by] Benjamin Drew" (98). Many of these authors are familiar to us: so large do they loom in the mythos of Ontario that they overshadow the landscape in a way that has the potential to make us read over those with less-documented experiences, or imagine them beyond our reach. Siemerling does not ignore the existence of these lesser-known authors or other genres; in advancing his case for a Black Canadian Renaissance he also cites the production of "a large assortment of reports, pamphlets, letters, speeches, sermons, editorials, and other documents related to black experience and organization in Canada" (98). Yet, rather than forming the basis of new investigations, these materials are often treated as ancillary. Ultimately, the understanding of nineteenth-century Black Canadian literature has not kept pace with the study of Canadian literature more broadly.[3] A thorough investigation of the institutional and disciplinary reasons for this are beyond the scope of this paper, though still insistently circling and informing it. My desire here is to forward thinking about Black Canadian writing of the era by introducing previously unstudied individuals. There is no doubt Susand deserves to be recuperated for his own merit and literary ambitions, even in the absence of his volume. Assembling the materials associated with him provides the basis for considering other unknown literary production, for locating its traces and illuminating Black Ontario literary culture of the 1850s. While this culture is undoubtedly influenced by Bibb, Henson, and Shadd, highlighting Susand draws attention to the additional voices who may have been involved in abolition and community organization, but were not generally leaders or figureheads located within abolitionist or religious print networks, and whose relation to print culture was therefore inflected differently. Attending to such differences has the potential to deepen our appreciation of literary production by Black Canadians of the 1850s.

Who was Peter Edward Susand?

Born in Louisiana *circa* 1804, enslaved in New Orleans, Peter Edward Susand first appears in the Canadian record in Cobourg, Northumberland, Ontario in the early 1830s.[4] Situated on Lake Ontario, Cobourg was a vibrant hub at the time, with a new harbour completed in 1832 that could accommodate large steamships traversing the Great Lakes, some no doubt carrying freedom seekers like Susand. While Robin Winks cites Cobourg as a port of arrival following the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850, it is obvious that some of Cobourg's thirteen hundred residents in the 1830s were Black men and women who had fled slavery (244-45).[5] These included Benjamin Harris, a Kentucky-born gunsmith who, in 1832, would witness Susand's marriage to the British-born Elizabeth Liddicoat.[6]

Black life in 1830s Northumberland, Ontario, has not been adequately researched, though it is worth noting that slavery was within living memory—the last known sale of an enslaved individual in Ontario occurred in Northumberland only six years before the Susands' marriage (Walker 94-96).[7] It should not be surprising then that, following general practices in Canada, Black residents of Northumberland were accorded less respect. For instance, while reports of house fires in the Cobourg press name white individuals who have been displaced, in 1837 it was reported that a fire has destroyed the house of "one or two coloured families," naming only the building's owner ("Fire"). Anxiety about interracial marriages like the Susands' erupted in 1841, when the wedding night of Moses and Ellen Carter was disrupted by a charivari-turned-mob who gang-raped Ellen while her husband was restrained (Grazeley 241-44).[8]

Admittedly, the Susands departed Cobourg before the assault on the Carters. While there is no evidence they faced similar violence, "the great offense" interracial marriage gave to the "prejudices and feelings of a portion of the community" must have been evident (Grazeley 242). With the arrival of son Nathaniel in 1833 and daughter Lavinia Daphney in 1836, the family became more vulnerable. In 1837 they departed Cobourg for Oakville, where they would welcome three more children, before relocating again *circa* 1843 to the Queen's Bush Settlement in Wellesley Township, where their final five children were born (Brown-Kubisch 226).[9] With approximately 1,500 Black settlers, the settlement provided a close-knit community for those willing to homestead on uncleared land without the security of deeds of ownership. But agriculture was not ideal, and by 1853 the family had settled in Berlin, where Susand returned to barbering. It was there Susand published his *Prose and Poetical Works*, of which we have only a single couplet, included in a later newspaper account: "Yo ho! Here comes a schooner! / Eh ho! I wish she'd come a little sooner!" ("A Bit of History").[10] Some would no doubt be tempted to dismiss Susand as an author on the basis of these lines, which might initially read as doggerel. Yet, I argue that taken out of context as this couplet is, Susand's merit as a writer is impossible to judge. That context is important, and includes a consideration of Susand's speeches, his involvement in local politics, and even his advertisements—what Brown calls the "purposeful reclamation of the ordinary" (132). Eric Gardner argues that "our near obsession with certain kinds of narratives has drawn sharp and narrow boundaries around 'what counts' as and in black literature" (9), often in a way that might foreclose conversations. In the absence of all but two lines, the need to cast our net more widely in order to recover not just Susand's oeuvre but its context becomes all the more crucial in our search for the death-defying testimony which will bring him back into view.

By his own admission, Susand attended school for only a week ("A Bit of History"). This lack of schooling did not translate into a lack of literary engagement, however. While it is possible his daughter Lavinia Daphney did not take her name from characters in Shakespeare, we cannot say the same about his son, Othello. Susand's love of words and wordplay is evident; in an advertisement for his barbershop, Susand claims "his lather is unrivalled and his razors (like true wit) cut deep both up and down, leave no wounds and shave clean" (Snyder 234). Despite—or perhaps because of—his lack of formal education, Susand advocated strongly for the necessity of educating the youth of his community. At an 1847 meeting he was named president of a committee dedicated to the welfare of the community and the education of Black children. In his speech, printed in *True Wesleyan*, Susand argued:

> In the early part of our lives we have been oppressed and denied the rights common to man universally. A few years since when I was a slave in the city of N. Orleans, I had little hope of enjoying the freedom which I have this day, and those who are before me have feelings similar to mine. Joseph was sold by his brethren, but God was with him. We have been sold by our brethren, but God has watched over us. He sent Moses to deliver his people anciently, and he has also provided for our deliverance. And after we had reached the promised land, Moses is still with us in the form of teachers, who are instructing our children and preparing them for the duties of life. In former times, we had not these advantages, and to-day we have met to express our feelings in view of the happy position we occupy.—Let us cherish the means of education, and thus show our friends that we are not unthankful for the benefits received. There is no lion in our midst to claim his own rights and then usurp ours, but our rights are secured by law, and when we meet our fellows, we meet them as men. Again I say let us sustain the schools until we can build seminaries and establish schools of our own. If we were in the South we should not be permitted to meet as we do now. We could not even hold in our hands the papers now before me. We love our children. We love those who are striving to elevate them to the condition of sentient beings, and fit them for stations of usefulness. (Susann [*sic*] et al.)

Susand's speech exhibits a sophisticated use of language, introducing metaphors with personal and spiritual resonance, deploying parallelism and anaphora to strengthen his point, moving between the specific and the universal. Delivering his speech to a predominantly Black audience, he did not need to persuade them—but persuade them he did.

This verbal mastery continues in a second speech delivered almost a decade later, though in a different context: namely, in January 1856, when Susand was nominated for election to the Berlin Town Council. It was a long shot: Linda Brown-Kubisch suggests "there was little doubt that incumbent, Dr. James Scott, would be re-elected to office" (227). Still, Susand delivered a rousing speech, which acknowledged his commitment to the nation and his awareness of the realities of race, to what we can presume was a predominantly white audience. As the *Berlin News* reported:

> He said the present occasion gave him much pleasure and delight and in rising to address such a large body of his honorable and well-disposed fellow citizens, he did not do so with any desire to exonerate himself, but in order to express the enthusiasm he felt toward the free, uncorrupted and glorious institutions of Great Britain—the land of the brave and the home of the free, upon whose territory the greater light in the firmament never went down, not in shining lit up with its effulgent radiance, the face of a solitary slave. He confessed there was one thing which worked against him in the present highly delightful contest, which scarcely required a name, as it stared them all in the face. He hoped, however, that as men living in an enlightened age, when the blessings of education and Civil and Religious Liberty were scattered broadcast over the land, as chaff is scattered by the winds of heaven, that all distinctions of country and color would be forgotten. And that the electors would rally under the banners which marshalled the forces of the good and true temporal warriors. There was a dark night, a black night, a tempestuous night of peril to British supremacy in this Province, when its most sanguine supporters trembled as they beheld the tide of war which set in, as the billows of the ocean tossed to and fro in the arms of Boreas, from the shores of that land the stripes on whose flag was emblematical of the cruelty of its people towards the down-trodden humanity of the South. Where, in this peril, was the black man! Where he was most wanted,—at his post—offering himself up as a willing sacrifice upon the alter of freedom. Yes! He was one of the glorious band who fought in defense of British connection and their own firesides—who hurled back the body and soul-murdering legion of the slaveholder, and cut off at the elbow the arm stretched out to grasp the heart-strings of this young land. If he then shared the dangers of the white man, he now claimed the privileges of the white man. Would they deny them to him? They might scorn to give the black man these privileges in the hour of national prosperity, but they would ask him at less fortunate times to take their balls. ("A Bit of History")

With a rousing act of rhetorical prowess, Susand engaged his audience, incited their nationalism, invoked their fears, and appealed to their humour. The *Berlin News* indicates in parenthesis where cheers greeted his words.

As anticipated, Susand was not elected. A resident later claimed he was nominated "as a joke" (Stroh 195), though it is not evident Susand understood it as such. However, if this was the case—a burlesque at Susand's expense—it would enrich our appreciation of Susand's scathing letter to the editor, received by the *Berlin News* post-election. In it he adopts a minstrel dialect presumably to condemn the hypocrisy of white voters. Writes Susand:

> My dear friend—Niggah is niggah in de eye of the world, but he may hab as white a soul as his white brudder. I thanks you much for de publication of Peter Edward Susand's speech. He ain't a great man for he ain't a white man like the Doctor, but he ain't perniciously envious, and he says to himself that a clar conscience is worth more than all the public offices in de Kintry. ("A Bit of History")

Minstrel dialect would have been familiar to residents of nineteenth-century Ontario, as minstrel shows frequently toured through the province. Their deployment of the racial grotesque was an affront to many Black people of the era.[11] For Susand, proficient at producing rhetorically sophisticated speeches in Standard English, to adopt the language of minstrelsy is telling, serving as an acknowledgement of the entertainment he had unwittingly been forced to provide, and meeting it with his own linguistic violence. In his letter, Susand both reminds readers of his competency in citing his earlier speech and satirizes the inability of whites to read him as more than the colour of his skin by invoking broad stereotypes and demeaning language. His adoption of the minstrel dialect is ironic, clearly at odds with his own speech patterns as well as those of his children, some of whom spoke French and—as befitting citizens of Berlin, Ontario—German.[12] At the same time, this missive demonstrates his mastery of multiple registers, and his ability to deploy them when desired, even as others do not recognize this move. The tendency of white audiences to misread him is borne out in the assertion of a later author that this letter was a genuine expression of gratitude ("A Bit of History"). These two productions in relation to the election reveal Susand's dilemma: while he uses his initial speech to offer a particular iteration of Black citizenship which repudiates limiting definitions of Blackness, the "joke" of his nomination suggests that at least some audiences were incapable of receiving anything he might say. Hence Susand's caustic conclusion, "Niggah is niggah in de eye of the world," condemning those who cannot read him as anything but a static trope.

Susand would not give up, however. Within a few months of this election, *The Prose and Poetical Works of Peter Edward Susand* appeared. It is likely that Susand self-published the work and distributed it through his multiple businesses, including a barbershop, which was stocked with newspapers from multiple cities, as well as a reading room and coffee house.[13] Many of Berlin's male residents would have benefited from the reading materials Susand provided, whether waiting for a haircut or conducting business over a beverage.[14] Susand himself was known for providing "poetical entertainment" to his customers as he catered to their other needs ("A Bit of History"). Selling his own volume was characteristic of his entrepreneurial spirit.

The 108-word review of Susand's volume published in the *Berlin Chronicle* in April of 1856 was generally positive, claiming "Mr. Susand speaks eloquently of the sufferings of his people, and whatever he lacks in genius it is but fair to say he makes up in fire" (3). While Susand's poems are not quoted, the reviewer's choice of words—eloquence and fire—to characterize the collection suggests "Yo ho! Here comes a schooner!" is not entirely representative of Susand's poetry. Indeed, the language Susand deployed in his speeches, as well as his razor wit, would seem to promise a broader range than this couplet. This makes the presentation of "Yo ho!" curious and worthy of investigation.

Perhaps most telling is that the surviving couplet is recorded in a newspaper account recalling the election of 1856, which introduces Susand's nomination as the work of "insatiable jokers of the village," ridicules his skill as a barber, and presents his minstrel letter as an authentic expression of gratitude ("A Bit of History"). The commentary and episodes are clearly intended to diminish him. We thus must question why this couplet was chosen, if not to suggest his work was inferior and mock him for, once again, aspiring higher than he should. Thus Susand's ambitions and achievements are dismissed, and he is reduced to an example of local-colour humour from days of yore. But Susand, whose death appears to have occurred at some point in the 1870s, was still well within living memory.[15]

If the "Yo ho!" couplet was the only surviving writing by Susand, I might have presumed his work inferior, as the *Berlin Chronicle* writer appears to have intended. In this way, it would have been easy to collude with what, within a broader context, appears to be at best a belittling and at worst a wilful repression of Black voices and agency. Such historical practices, I would argue, invite a defiant scholarship, one that demands we persevere in the recuperation of those whose voices have been wilfully misread, downplayed, or refused circulation. In this I am informed by not only Brown's idea of "death-defying testimony," but also by the work of Elizabeth McHenry. Contemplating the pieces Mary Church Terrell penned but could not find publishers for, McHenry argues this work "is important because it insists we move away from the most obvious forms and sites of literary accomplishment; it pushes us to think more carefully about literary acts—not only those that were successful in the conventional senses, but also those that failed or were only partially achieved" (382). Following McHenry's lead, I began by searching for Susand's partially achieved literary acts in the usual places: catalogues, newspapers, advertisements, and archives. He is notably absent from both *The Voice of the Fugitive* and *The Provincial Freeman*, suggesting he operated outside of the networks of print usually forwarded as the centre of Black Canadian literary production in the era. No additional writings have been located in regional newspapers or archives.

The search found me in an unlikely place—Kitchener's Mount Hope Cemetery and the graves of Peter Susand's children who predeceased him: Angeline, Lavinia, and Theodore. Broken, overgrown, and eroded, the tombstones required significant cleaning and greater scrutiny to make legible even a fraction of their text. However, there, on the tombstones, Peter Susand's poetic sensibility is evident. Each of the tombstones bears an amended stanza from the hymn "Christian's Rest," penned by Comfort Lavius Fillmore, a member of a prominent Ohio musical family. It is impossible to know how or where Susand encountered the hymn, though at least one volume by Fillmore was endorsed by *The Herald of Freedom*, an abolitionist paper from Cincinnati, Ohio ("Literary Notes" 3).[16]

The stones themselves are small, reflecting both the era they were created (1854-1862) and the Susands' limited resources, and therefore do not have space for multiple stanzas. As Lavinia Daphney's reads:

> There is a land of seraphs bright
> where pleasures unceasingly roll
> there Christ is the day and the light
> and God is the joy of the soul.

Angeline's tombstone features the verse:

> Arisen to the Christian land of
> heaven forever to reign
> holy and gloried spirits blest
> conquered through him that was slain.

At a time when makers of tombstones might charge by the letter, even short stanzas could be beyond the reach of some individuals. The Susands' choice to include lengthy inscriptions speaks volumes about their faith in the power of words to convey meaning, to comfort, and to memorialize.

We can imagine them sharing the verses with friends and family before their inscription, discussing them, weeping over them. We can envision other Black residents reading them on the tombstones. The unusual choice to use a different excerpt from a single hymn on each child's tombstone is fascinating. The effect is to unite the family in death within a single poetic composition, further asserting their bond and interrelation beyond the commonality of patronyms or relations often preserved on tombstones. Even in a family where literacy and poetry were fundamental, the decision to deploy tombstones as intertextual artifacts is notable, and serves as a powerful demonstration of the family's belief in the power of words to convey meaning beyond the ordinary.

Beyond Biography

It is undeniable that in the 1850s, specific conditions were present in Black Canadian communities that we might see as preconditions for an explosion of creative energy, including increased access to literacy, the freedom to write, and more control over one's time. However, other conditions that would facilitate a fully realized literary culture are crucially absent, including access to publishing, control of the means of circulation, a white public with an interest in Black writing and opinions, a Black readership with an income that would allow them to support Black creative productions, and a climate that would create opportunities for Black professional authors.[17] The former conditions made Susand's volume possible; the latter would seem to be responsible for its lack of preservation in private and public collections.

That *The Prose and Poetical Works of Peter Edward Susand* did not survive is not surprising. In considering early Black North American writing, Joanna Brooks has argued that the lifespan of Black books correlates with the race of the author. Citing the exacerbated disruption of Black lives and livelihoods, she notes that "existential conditions of chronic discontinuity and disruption endemic to communities of color by reason of political and economic exploitation affect books and book culture as well" (41). The instability of Black households had material consequences for the preservation of Black books. Brooks concludes that the books most likely to survive were those best adapted to mobility, including those closely aligned with social movements (51). Texts by Bibb, Shadd, Henson, and others profited by the authors' names and abolitionist associations, as well as their genres—anti-slavery, slave narrative, and guidebook—ensuring distribution. While Susand's text was informed by Black life, and no doubt participated in the call for freedom, it does not appear to have been framed primarily as an abolitionist text and thus would have had less utility for white readers and activists, impeding its circulation. The perceived lesser utility would also translate to a diminished sense of its importance as a historical document, making it less likely to be preserved by historians, libraries, and archives.

The lack of cultural or historical value accorded a text, not surprisingly, can hinder its preservation. As Jacques Derrida opined, "There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation" (11). Much of the archive of Black Canadian literature of the 1850s exists because of the place of the materials in the abolitionist movement, not a desire to document and preserve the humanity and creative expression of Black individuals. Complicating this is the reality that the tendency to see blackness as not Canadian, and Black Ontario residents as American sojourners rather than Canadians, has meant that Canadian archives did not actively seek materials related to Black communities until recently.[18] Instead, the preservation of materials related to nineteenth-century Black writing in Canada has historically been undertaken by US institutions, which have their own agendas and flawed histories. In the end, as much as we may hope that there might be an overlooked copy of Susand's book in an attic somewhere, the factors Brooks identifies, in combination with the reality of Canadian collecting, make it highly unlikely it will ever be located.

In the absence of his volume, it is still worth considering that Susand published a book at all. While entrepreneurial authorship such as Susand's "rarely succeeded," as Brooks tells us (51), that does not mean we should discount the desire to succeed, or the initiative taken. Susand's belief that he could leverage personal and professional networks to distribute his volume, as opposed to literary and political ones, is not naive. Without knowing how many volumes he printed, we also have no idea how many volumes he sold—it is entirely possible he sold all of them. In this vein, returning to Brooks' comment about success, it is worth considering what success might have looked like for Susand, who was arguably less concerned with the preservation of his volume 160 years after its publication, and more attentive to its immediate reception. Did success look like a material artifact he could hold in his hands? Did he measure success by the conversations about his poetry that might have resulted in his barbershop? Did his family read aloud the glowing review in the *Berlin Chronicle* and celebrate it as a success?

In thinking about these questions, I want to return to McHenry's comments about literary accomplishment and posit that what may look like "failed" or "only partially achieved" literary acts to us may in fact have looked or felt like fully achieved literary acts to the nineteenth-century Black Canadians engaging in them, particularly given that for many people, participating in literary culture at all was a success. In short, the answer to all of the questions above is yes. Importantly, where contemporary scholars might look and see an absence of surviving publications as an obstacle, I want to use Susand's example to argue for reading literary success through the *evidence* of literary activity we already have, rather than waiting—perhaps futilely—for the discovery of previously unidentified manuscripts. The very fact of evidence itself provides the death-defying testimony necessary to undertake such a project. In this way we can expand from Susand's example to look for other examples of literary activity that may not fit within our current understanding of what nineteenth-century Black Canadian writing is.

These examples would include those Black Canadians who participated in non-publishing literary production, engaging in other forms of circulation. That there were Black Canadians of the 1850s who desired a space for such activities is evident. Toronto's Provincial Union, founded in 1854, was ostensibly established to ensure civil rights for Black Canadians, and to raise funds for and provide services to refugees from slavery (Cary 4-7). Providing services might include instruction in reading and writing, but the Provincial Union did not limit itself to remedial offerings. Notably, when Mary Ann Shadd drafted the constitution of the Provincial Union, she explicitly accounted for Black Canadians interested and actively engaged in literary production.[19] As Article IX reads:

> A monthly meeting of members, both male and female, shall be assembled for the purpose of promoting the literary objects specified by the recitation of original pieces, readings, debates, &c. Twice in the year at the semi-annual and annual meetings parties shall be solicited to address the society. (Cary 6)

It is not merely a matter of who read their original compositions at these meetings—whether that audience was limited to the executive, though that seems unlikely—but it is a matter of Black creative expression being actively fostered and encouraged among the masses. As Heather Murray has argued, "the 1850s represent a remarkable growth in the literary-society ideal throughout African-Canadian communities" (73). No doubt other Black societies founded to promote literacy in the 1850s—including the Windsor Ladies Club, the Ladies Literary Society of Chatham, the Dumas Society

(Chatham), the Young Men's Excelsior Association (Toronto), the Mental and Moral Improvement Society (Toronto), and more—also provided opportunities to circulate original compositions (72-73). In all likelihood, many more authors wrote without the support of an association, and sought literary communion when convenient. It is unknown how many engaged in these forms of circulation among family and friends. In sharing their work they were participating in a nineteenth-century culture of literacy where one wrote poems, signed autograph books with original stanzas, and composed original verses for friends, family, and occasions. Letters might be dashed off, but they might also be carefully plotted, informed by the reading of epistolary novels. At the same time, we can't forget that Black residents of Canada were engaging in a literary culture in the context of a wider society that may not have prohibited literacy, but did devalue their literary contributions.

What these compositions looked like is uncertain, but to not account for romantic verse, or humour, or domestic writing, is to underestimate the complexity and scope of Black lives.[20] As an example of such productions, I want to introduce Simcoe County resident Z. H. Martin. A representative of the *Provincial Freeman* newspaper from 1854-1855, Martin also contributed several letters about the region in which he resided. Ostensibly, Martin was expected to report on the suitability of settlement and community activities. It is clear, though, that for Martin such reports were business; the Romantic literary tradition was his passion. His account of Lefroy, Ontario, celebrates the "wild and luxuriant foliage, at this period of the year, which is the common resort of birds; these birds we find to be cheerful companions: if one awakens here at the breaking of day, his ear is caught by the unbroken chant of hundreds of these wild songsters, and held thus in sweet suspension until the sun arisen" ("For the" 2). Only after addressing the flora and fauna does he mention there is a schoolhouse. In a later letter, Martin recounts a ramble through nature, noting

> the echoing forests and deep tangled thickets, on either side of my road, dripping with the pearly rain-drops of the past night, wore an aspect of brilliant green, the richness of which was truly a feast for the eye; and the morning air, which ever now and then bore along the delicious fragrance of the various gums, peculiar to the trees of which the wood consist, relieved me of my drowsiness, and restored me to the perception of the opening splendor of the morning. ("To the Editor" 2)

In demonstrating his ability to value the scene of nature in all of its richness, as well as his self-awareness of its beauty and restorative properties, Martin asserts that Black subjects are not incapable of appreciating the sublime, thus claiming a space within a Romantic discourse that more often represented

Black people as subjects within a landscape than as interpreters of it. Martin's writings on nature were not his only productions: as one individual recorded of him in 1854, he is "quite an enterprising gentleman, one in who poetry and business tact are combined—by-the-way, he is a poet, of that fact I have had an ocular demonstration."[21] Martin was obviously recording his compositions, and allowing other Black Canadians to read them, facilitating literary conversations.

This casual literary exchange between Martin and his acquaintance is of interest to me: Z. H. Martin has proven elusive; I can find no record of his involvement in any literary society, and the *Provincial Freeman* letters are the only publications I have uncovered to date. But he wrote carefully crafted and evocative descriptions of nature; he shared his poetry with other Black Canadians he encountered; and he took pleasure in composing outside of publication. To what degree is Martin representative of literate Black Canadians of the 1850s? How much of this writing did not survive because its topic was not valued as abolitionist writings were?

In introducing Susand, Martin, and the anonymous participants in Toronto and Chatham societies, I want to ponder: can we rethink nineteenth-century Black Canadian literature in a way that is not fundamentally defined by those already familiar names and the narratives into which they have been formed? Is it possible to expand our understanding of nineteenth-century Black Canadian literature beyond publishing, or—as in the case of Susand and others—even texts? To do as McHenry asks and "think more carefully about literary acts" such as Martin's sharing of poetry? To do so invites a consideration of the unpublished, the unrecorded, and the misrecorded; an engagement of exchanges absent the actual texts; and an investigation of materials dismissed, unconsidered, or unexcavated. Including Susand expands our understanding of the various ways Black people used literature in 1850s Canada beyond abolitionist enterprises, and is an invitation to consider different orientations and networks; it asks us to look in different places.

It is my belief in the necessity of this effort that decided my actions in regards to the Susand tombstones, lying flat and overgrown. Experts agree: removing the grass and cleaning tombstones can further damage them. The very act of exposure invites erosion from the elements. Almost any act which assists in deciphering degraded letters, words, and dates—from rubbing stones with tinfoil or paper to dusting them with substances which settle in the grooves—risks further damage. Already, Theodore Susand's tombstone is damaged beyond hope, with only some words still legible:

> . . . above
> Join with the bright angelic bands
> and eternal love.

Yet allowing them to become overgrown also comes with consequences, and the stones may likewise be damaged by organic elements, or runoff from nearby roads. But to not clean and decipher the stones is to let that history—and the people it represents—erode just beneath the surface. In a nation which has both neglected and deliberately erased markers of Black history, not excavating is not all that dissimilar from erasure.[22] Thus there is an academic imperative to not be passive, to not wait for the materials to emerge from the archives in uncomplicated and familiar forms, or else we risk continuing to facilitate, and be complicit in, the same practices. A scholarly practice that insists upon transformative reorientations has the power to bring more of the nineteenth-century Black Canadian literary landscape into view. In this instance, I take hope from the tombstones of Peter Susand's children; the identification of a single hymn, "Christian's Rest," enables us to predict—if not exactly pinpoint—the illegible words memorializing Theodore, while giving new meaning to the stones themselves, and forwarding a greater understanding of how a single family interacted with literary culture. Similarly, inserting what we do know of Peter Susand's literary output into the discussion of nineteenth-century Black Canadian literature has the potential to perform a similar function—not necessarily revealing all, but nonetheless furthering our understanding in profoundly meaningful ways, while simultaneously inviting scholars to all reach for a trowel, and continue the necessary work before us.

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I am indebted to Brendan McCormack, editorial assistant at *Canadian Literature*, for locating this hymn.

NOTES

1 See Arno Press, the Schomburg Library, and the Regenerations series.

2 See Afua Cooper's arguments about how the Underground Railroad has come to stand for all nineteenth-century Black Canadian history (193).

3 Despite work by Vernon, Clarke, and others, the study of nineteenth-century Black Canadian writing has not kept pace with Black Canadian Studies. Essays which merge both include Rinaldo Walcott's "'Who Is She and What Is She to You?'" and Andrea Medovarski's "Roughing It in Bermuda."

4 *Township of Hamilton – Index of Census and Assessment Rolls 1830 – 1837*. My thanks to Beth Kolisnyk of the Cobourg Public Library for locating these references.

5 Population: cobourghistory.ca/harbour/waterfront-history.

6 Wilson, Bond 3751.

7 In March 1824, a fifteen-year-old named Tom was sold by Eli Keeler of Colborne to William Bell of Grafton, Northumberland, Ontario.

8 Moodie fictionalized this in *Roughing It in the Bush* (208-11). Jamaican-born barber Turner Boyd testified Ellen previously had a relationship with another Black man (Grazely 245). Susand would have been aware of the event, as it was covered in newspapers across Canada and into the US (see "Reward"; "Lynching in Canada").

9 The timing suggests it may have been their home destroyed in the fire—the landlord, Thomas James, was also a hairdresser ("Fire"). Benjamin Harris left at the same time (Shadd 99-100, 131). Turner Boyd's Cobourg home also burned down in 1847, shortly before he married a white woman. Annette Victoria Susand's marriage certificate gives her birthplace as Oakville (*Ontario, Canada, County Marriage Registers, 1858-1869*). At the time of writing I have amassed over four hundred primary sources tracking the Susand family across borders and through several generations, from vital and census records to patent applications, city directories, and newspaper clippings. Reproducing that material here would be unwieldy.

10 "A Bit of History" is a section within an unpaginated local history volume that reproduces these newspaper clippings; the original issues have since been lost. I am indebted to Brown-Kubisch for her uncovering of this source.

11 Not all residents were unsympathetic. See W. V. Uttley's account of local residents chasing a clown from a circus who taunted a Black audience member with "I smell a n—r!" (85).

12 Othello L. Susand was fluent in French and German ("Dictation"); Annette's second marriage (perhaps not legally recognized) was to a very recent German immigrant.

13 It is likely the reading room also contained a variety of scientific publications, given the patents later filed by the Susand sons. The family also operated a clothes-cleaning business (Brown-Kubisch 121-22).

14 The coffee shop was near Heller's Hotel; the barbershop was adjacent to the Red Lion Hotel. Susand's career can be traced through various issues of *The Grand Trunk Railway Business Directory and Gazetteer*, *The Canada Directory*, and *The Great Western Railway Directory and Gazetteer*, as well as the 1851 and 1861 Census.

15 No record of Susand's death has been located. He appears in an 1862 directory as a barber, and an 1863 city directory as proprietor of a confectionary shop (*Great Western Railway Directory and Gazetteer, 1861-1862* and *1862-1863*). In 1865 and 1881 Elizabeth is described as a widow; in the 1871 Census, she is recorded as married. A local historian claims Susand is in New York in the 1870s, but that is Peter E. Surand, a shoemaker (Rickert-Hall).

16 I am indebted to the editors for locating this hymn.

17 Conditions in Canada were not ideal for white writers, either.

18 The notable exception is the Alvin McCurdy Collection, at the Archives of Ontario.

19 For Cary's authorship, see Rhodes (94).

20 It is obvious that Black readership was seen as varied: an 1855 *Provincial Freeman* advertisement of Mrs. Higgins promoted a lending library featuring "over 2000 volumes of Standard Works in History, Biography, Belle Lettres and Novels" ("The Toronto Circulating Library").

21 He is a subscriber to *Frederick Douglass' Paper* in 1855.

22 See Rinaldo Walcott's argument about the renaming of Negro Creek Road, and the possibility that "many 'negro creek roads' exist; they are yet to be found and documented" (*Black* 44).

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Lydia Kwa

from Notes on Grieving

—Lao Gong 勞宮 Palace of Toil

how hard my loyal sentinel has been working
to shield that tender place

the Heart who palpitates
so . . . so . . . so . . . so

stuttering agitated scarred
by the slightest signs
of betrayal

the needle enters Pericardium 8 on my left palm

the earth of knowing
disappears
explodes in a rush of pain and tears

she keeps me company while I weep
I'm sorry to cause you pain, she says

she would have removed that needle
had I found it intolerable
but I ask for the second needle
in my right palm

these weapons of liberation
shock the palace guard
with a relief from duty

now I can be exhausted
enter a sleep of countless lifetimes
pinned down at the palms

Emma Cleary

Ghosts in the Phonograph

Tracking Black Canadian Postbody Poetics

Sound technologies enact cultural interventions and enable radical experiments of identity through the practice of stripping away, spinning, and splicing sounds—especially the sound of the human voice. Phonographic revolutions disrupt temporal and spatial topographies by untethering sound from an original site of emergence to interrupt the here and now—ghostlike voices are severed from the body and travel through time and across space, rising from the grooves to offer sonic interference and intervention. This capacity for acoustic delay, repetition, rupture, and mutation—as when the voice is cut with other (human and non-human) sounds on the turntable—has implications for identity, and can even shape national identities, which are partially constructed from auditory culture.[1] Because Black Canadian writers often characterize their experience as one of a battle against erasure and elision in the Canadian cultural imaginary, sound technologies can be particularly powerful here; Vancouver writer Wayde Compton negotiates the experiences of erasure and elision at the specific site of the dub plate, using these very functions to cut up and reassemble sounds with "The Reinventing Wheel" of his sonic schema. The poem of that name, published in *Performance Bond* (2004) and performed in various articulations and collaborations, will be the central focus of this paper, alongside Compton's essay "Turntable Poetry, Mixed-Race, and Schizophonophilia" from his critical work *After Canaan* (2010). I will position Compton's dub revolutions alongside Antiguan Québécoise performer Tanya Evanson's poem "The African All of It." A consideration of the embodied auralities and antiphonal logic of Evanson's poem allows for a comparative engagement with the role of the sonorous body in Compton and Evanson's temporally, spatially, and culturally transboundary transmissions.

As well as shaping his creative, critical, and anthologizing work, the practices of reinscription, recuperation, and recovery form an essential part of Compton's cultural activism. Informed by posthumanism and musicology, this paper argues that Compton uses sonic schemas to challenge metanarratives of race and landscape in Canada, and that the turntable forges a portal through shifting and ultimately porous borderlines of nation and identity. In this way, Compton's sound-texts intervene in the social world, resignifying spatial and temporal meanings and establishing alternative interpellations through cultural innovation. "The Reinventing Wheel" demonstrates Compton's interest in sonic possibilities for enacting such cultural interventions: invested with allusions to works from multiple canons and genres, from modernists like Ezra Pound, to Gil Scott-Heron's "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" (1971), and Yoruban figures like Shango, the poem attempts to "take apart hip hop and rebuild something," collecting "shards of culture" to assemble a usable history for those of mixed-race and Black identity on the West Coast of Canada—an outpost of diasporic experience ("Reinventing" 00:33:46-53, 00:17:05-08).[2]

This work is vital because Canada's enduring reputation as a refuge from racial tyranny obscures its anti-Black racism, while limited conceptions of Canadian identity work to other Black Canadians from the nation's histories and cartographies. In *After Canaan*, Compton argues that the experience of diaspora in Canada has "long been defined by and against a bigger, continental historical saga," and cites African American spirituals as an example, in which "the psalmic land of longing and the home of the captured Israelites was Canaan—the north, the land of salvation" (15).[3] Through his mapping of Black BC's archive of literature and orature, Compton responds to what Heather Smyth describes as a "cultural need to . . . fill in a diasporic gap—to 'extend' a 'sounding line . . . backwards into history,' as he says in *Bluesprint* (14)—and measure the translations of African, Caribbean, and African American diasporic cultures as they migrate, drift, and echo across the sound waves on their journey to Vancouver, Canada" (Smyth 390). The "sounding line" Compton describes in the anthology *Bluesprint* (2001) is capable of movement beyond the linear into unexpected territories (14): it can act as time machine, invoke the dead, break down spatial and temporal walls and barriers, and constitute interconnection between the (post) body and landscape. In *After Canaan*, Compton directs a revolutionary multimodality in his description of the interaction between body and art-object as he manipulates his recorded (disembodied) voice with his hands, spinning, scratching, and cutting it with samples in a poetic practice he defines as sonic enjambment (198) and a process he likens to the situationist practice of *détournement* (192).[4]

Posthumanism is significant to this discussion because its proponents regard human subjectivity as embedded and embodied in an extended technological reality, enlarging the dimensions and possibilities of human experience. More specifically, Rosi Braidotti positions critical posthuman thought as a "genealogical and a navigational tool" for supporting new forms of subjectivity, in which the "human organism is an in-between that is plugged into and connected to a variety of possible sources and forces" (5, 139). As with Braidotti's figuring of the human organism as "an in-between," posthumanism typically questions the notion of the discrete human body, and recent scholarship continues to develop this position, influenced by feminism, anti-racism, and environmentalism. In her *Posthuman Blackness*, Kristen Lillvis stresses that "[m]ore than simply linked to the surrounding world," the body and mind of the posthuman subject "travels 'across and among' the borders of self and other, the 'other' including people, communities, regimes, and technologies" (3). Astrida Neimanis emphatically figures embodiment as rebelliously fluid: "[R]egimes of human rights, citizenship, and property for the most part all depend upon individualized, stable, and sovereign bodies," but "as bodies of water we leak and seethe, our borders always vulnerable to rupture and renegotiation" (2). Further blurring the stability of these body boundaries, posthuman life forms can be cyborgs, ghosts, or non-human entities such as monsters or zombies. Such figures manifest throughout Compton's work.[5] Indeed, both the spectral figure and sound technologies act as what I call postbody projections, a term I will continue to work with here: they exist beyond, but can be an extension of, the body and its capacities. Like Cary Wolfe's theorization of posthumanism, which urges that it "isn't posthuman at all—in the sense of being 'after' our embodiment has been transcended—but is only posthuman*ist*, in the sense that it opposes the fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy" (xv), my sense of the postbody does not necessitate disembodiment or loss of materiality: as we will see later in the paper, even the ghosts that haunt Compton's work are seemingly quasi-material.

Lillvis notes that the *post* prefix speaks to posthumanism's emergence from critiques of liberal humanism's hegemonic conception of subjectivity—which excludes women, people of colour, and people experiencing poverty or any kind of disability, raising issues of power and discrimination (Lillvis 5; see also Braidotti 15). Importantly, the *post* in Lillvis' term "posthuman blackness" denotes a "temporal and subjective liminality that acknowledges the importance of history . . . without positing a purely historical origin for black identity" (4); it allows not only for reinvention of subjectivity but also for an imagining/activation of potential futures, and this temporal liminality is compatible with what Phanuel Antwi recognizes in dub poetry as "an unfinished phenomenological history of moments of embodied blackness" highlighting "the work of freedom as ongoing" (71). For example, Compton rejects the notion of a purely historical origin for Black identity when he recombines and reinvents a history of moments on the turntable, mixing samples with a vocal recording of his poem to create something new. These diverse sources—a podcast addressing the phenomenon of pareidolia, *Alex Haley Tells the Story of His Search for Roots* (1977), a recording from 1971 entitled "Vancouver and Racial Violence (1886-1907)"—resist chronology in favour of simultaneity and multiplicity (*After* 183-187). Similarly, Evanson—a whirling dervish and student of Sufism—embodies her spoken-word poetry with a phenomenology of presence, stressing the kinetic and the sensory, the physical manipulation of muscles and rhythmic movement of limbs. As Antwi reminds us, the body, "lacking foundational given, does not, after all, allow for completion" (71). Accordingly, Evanson's work also gestures towards the porousness of the boundary between the body and the world beyond it, forging an interstitial threshold, a vortex for radical experiments of identity.

Gesturing towards postcolonialism and postmodernism, Lillvis observes that "[t]he complexity of 'post,' as outlined by Kwame Anthony Appiah and Stuart Hall, applies to the 'post' of posthuman-ism as well: posthuman bodies—and bodies of work—cross boundaries of time, place, and culture" (5). This paper articulates the post*body* in two crucial, sometimes overlapping, ways. Firstly, I am interested in fusions of the physical and the ghostly, a synthesis that can be better understood alongside Kwasi Wiredu's concept of quasi-materialism. Wiredu explains how in West African ontologies—such as in Dogon and Akan systems of thought—the ancestor is a "quasi-material" presence unconstrained by "the laws that govern human motion and physical interaction" (125). The ancestor lives beyond the river (separate from, but sharing the same earthly realm as, the living), can cross great distances in space and time, and is able to inhabit the body of the descendant. Wiredu's work is significant to my discussion of diasporic identity because these spectral projections can be invocations of ancestral memory, invocations that echo in the call and response of Evanson's "The African All of It" and Compton's use of liminal states such as "Zombification. / Dancing in the low-ceilinged cargo hold," a reference to the Middle Passage (*Performance* 106). Secondly, sound technologies serve as a kind of material postbody that transmits across and acoustically challenges spatial, temporal, and body boundaries. My reading is influenced by the work of N. Katherine Hayles, who in "Voices Out of Bodies, Bodies Out of Voices" compares the technological manipulation of sounds to the aleatory Burroughs/Gysin cut-up technique. Indeed, an overlapping of these incarnations of the postbody can be traced in Compton's work as he overtly connects the supernatural with the open "body of a phonograph" that produces "visceral" sound, and these sounds are able to seep through fissures in time and space (*After* 199).

In his 1969 work, *The New Soundscape*, R. Murray Schafer invents the term "schizophonia" to explain the anxiety of the severance of sound from its place of issue. This severance is inherent to sound recording technologies through their capture and preservation of "the tissue of living sound" (44). Of this dissociation, Schafer writes: "[v]ocal sound . . . is no longer tied to a hole in the head but it is free to issue from anywhere in the landscape" (44). Schafer considers the disjunctive effect on identity of hearing one's own recorded voice, noting "[y]ou can get outside yourself and critically inspect your voiceprint. Is that stammering and quirky sound really me, you say?" (46). The notion that you can "get outside yourself" bespeaks the liminal coordinates of the disembodied human voice, and Schafer conceives the implications for a sonic construction of identity in the question that immediately follows—is that sound really me? In *After Canaan*, Compton adapts and challenges Schafer's concept of "schizophonia," which focuses on the negative consequences of such a dislocation,[6] to reflect the more positive attributes of the experiment: the definition he offers for his "schizophonophilia" is "the love of audio interplay, the pleasure of critical disruptions to natural audition, the counter-hegemonic affirmation that can be achieved through acoustic intervention" (199). While Schafer reinforces the value of sound's emergence from the body, and worries about the psychological impact of dissociating voiceprint from voice box, Compton details the potential for liberation from the dominant discourse in such an exercise.

Indeed, a number of critics have responded to Schafer's negative casting of the splitting of sound from its original site of emergence. Steven Feld reminds us that the splitting of sound from its source implicates "music, money, geography, time, race, and social class" (262), and criticizes Schafer for "the many social complexities [he] ignores, such as the occasional hijacking of musical technology to empower traditionally powerless people" (259). The emerging concern in the work of Schafer and Hayles is the question of what happens to the body when the voice is severed from a phenomenology of presence. But the more significant nodes of inquiry for this paper involve a consideration of what is at stake in this severance for racialized and diasporized bodies. From his Black humanist position, Alexander G. Weheliye directs us to the "vexed interstices of race, sound, and technology," reminding us that within Enlightenment discourses of the human, "blackness is the body and nothing else" (22, 28). He urges us to consider "what happens once the black voice becomes disembodied, severed from its source, recontextualized and appropriated?" (28). Compton's work allows for an engagement with this very question in the context of Black identity in Vancouver; his experiments with posthuman sound and practice of hip hop turntablism enable both a deconstruction and a reconstruction of Black Canadian identity, producing a new kind of subjectivity by interrupting culturally constructed boundaries.

For Compton, the phonograph is a tool for celebrating the denaturalization of sound, "a Brechtian machine in its very making" (*After* 199). He elaborates:

> Radios, CD players, and laptops are boxes—devices of enclosure—whereas the phonograph always seemed to me to be a machine turned inside-out; a machine whose workings are always visible, whose interface is literally tangible, and whose production of sound is visceral. The body of a phonograph, like the body of a racialized object, can never close. (*After* 199)

Compton's interest in the open body of the phonograph is evident in his poetry, as when the speaker in "The Reinventing Wheel" asks: "Is the hole in the machine ghostly, / the lapse in the record?" (*Performance* 102). This haunting develops his use of the liminal figure of Osiris; supernatural imagery and references to the afterlife are found throughout the poem and are connected to a kinetic configuration of sound. Compton's ghosts are quasi-material, zombies dancing in cargo holds, a sonic impulse capable of "moving the text": "The drum / has gotten ghost. But where was the death?" (103). Such mobility is temporal, too: Compton maximizes the capacity of the turntable to uproot and unfix the sonic, reinscribing an archive of sounds that originate from multiple temporal moments by manipulating the dub plates with his hands. This unfixing and remixing is important for his project of reinvention, because the human voice has long "signaled presence, fullness, and the *coherence* of the subject" (Weheliye 31; emphasis mine). Lisa Mansell notes that "mergers of the ghost and the physical not only demolish culturally constructed binaries but create a blended conceptual space in between these positions—a post-body, a hyphen, a both." I want to emphasize Mansell's figuring of the "post-body" as a blended conceptual space between the physical and the ghostly, especially her rendering of that postbody space as a hyphen, a "both." This spatial blending—this bothness—is at the heart of my understanding of how the postbody in all its networked spectrality operates. While the trope of the ghost, the spectre, or the apparition is often read as a "sinister manifestation of a destabilized identity"—much like the uncanny sound of a human voice untethered from the body—it can also have positive ramifications, celebrating "our plural, fragmented and interconnected position as subjects" (Mansell). In Compton's description, the paradoxical juxtaposition of the tangible and visceral phonograph to the ghostliness of postbody sounds moving through the grooves of the record further demolishes culturally constructed binaries and forges a blended space for the expression and celebration of plural, hybrid, and mobile sounds/identity formations, in an episode of schizophonophilia.

Compton's essay describes his performances as part of the Contact Zone Crew, a ten-year project in hip hop turntablism with musical collaborator Jason de Couto.[7] The name of the collaboration emerges from an engagement with Mary Louise Pratt's influential work on pedagogy and culture under colonialism, "Arts of the Contact Zone" (1991). Pratt writes of the contact zone as a crossroads, a site of learning, and uses the term "safe houses" to refer to socio-cultural spaces affording "temporary protection from legacies of oppression" (40). We can interpret this homage to Pratt as indicative of Compton's vision for the function of dub poetry in Canada. More specifically, the recuperative function of the contact zone is exemplified by Compton's cultural activism, especially his project to restore and remember Hogan's Alley. Historically an ethnically diverse neighbourhood and the hub of Vancouver's Black community in the city's East End, Hogan's Alley was subject to demolition and erasure from the late 1960s onwards, initially to make space for a planned interurban freeway. The Hogan's Alley Memorial Project forges a space for engagement, a safe house where Black history is not just memorialized but recovered and reinvested in the contemporary Black Canadian poetry scene and community: counter-hegemonic affirmation through acoustic and narrative intervention. Compton explains Hogan's Alley—its "chicken houses and church and dormitory"—as "what we have to look to for a foundational narrative of presence . . . as something that grounds us in Canada" (*After* 109). Furthermore, Hogan's Alley is positioned as an intermediate site of interpretation and exchange between African American cultural touchstones and a need for a distinctly Canadian identity: "We need Hogan's Alley because Motown songs and Martin Luther King are from another, different place. They come through the TV. They come through books. Hogan's Alley, however, ran between this and that side of *right here*" (109-10). By attempting to restore what is lost through the razing of Hogan's Alley, Compton seeks to ground Black presence in Vancouver, a project that spatializes his ethos of "[e]mbracing . . . unusual black experiences, rather than trying to return to the imagined essence of a past blackness" (14-15). Compton's "assertive Afroperipheralism" (15) not only battles erasure and elision, asserting the right for Black Canadians to exist, but encourages vitality, growth, and diversity through "radical experiments of identity" (13). We can trace this Afroperipheral drive in Compton's conception of "The Reinventing Wheel"—the name suggesting the transformative power of the turntable. His three initial aims were to "make the voiced poem an art-object, outside of my body"; "to let the body perform *upon* the work," "rather than performing *from* the body"; and to view his own poem as "an object of *détournement*" (*After* 191-92). Here, Compton explicitly experiments with the posthumanist "possibility that the voice can be taken out of the body and placed into a machine" (Hayles 75). His situationist ambitions for the poem underscore a concern with cultural reinvestment and suggest a synthesizing interface between creative materials, the human body, and movement through contested city space.

Whilst one of Compton's goals is to dislocate the poem from his body, Evanson's description of performing without referring to a written text suggests the opposite: "There's something to be said about taking your own work into your body, and then offering it, fully, with your body and your voice."[8] Her embodied practice blends the written and the oral (absorbing the work from the page into the body), a practice that kinetically responds to, relates, and transposes the poem. In her performance of "The African All of It," Evanson first commands the audience to close their eyes, then take a deep breath.[9] She audibly exhales before she recites:

I polish myself to be bright and blinding
Some can see me, from others I take sight
When I speak in tongues, none work better than silence
I am listening. I am listening.

> The voice can lock but instruments unlock
> With the swing of an arm, a pendulum hips
> To manipulate breath, control internal chords takes faith
> I am listening. I am listening. (147)

With the opening lines of the poem, Evanson appeals to light and visibility—she is "bright and blinding." Her insistence that she "takes sight" indicates her agency and power as the audience close their eyes on Evanson's command. Yet she also imbricates the bodily, the visual, and the aural. The poem is formally suggestive of the spirituals, following a hymnal structure. Its tetrameter of four lines, found in the spirituals and influencing the sixteen-bar blues, emulates the patterns of Black music. Additionally, Evanson's repetition of "I am listening, I am listening," followed by a silent space, is redolent of antiphony, a call and response that is silenced as the orator performs both parts of the refrain. In *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy contends that antiphony "symbolises and anticipates (but does not guarantee) new, non-dominating social relationships. Lines between self and other are blurred and special forms of pleasure are created as a result of the meetings and conversations that are established between one fractured, incomplete, and unfinished racial self and others" (79). Although Evanson enacts both the call and response of the poem, silencing the antiphonal impulse, the performer is not necessarily dominant, signified by the phrase "I am listening" and the inclusion of a gap in which the audience may "speak" or even "think" a response. Despite the tension between the refrain "I am listening" and a lack of audible response, it can be argued that the interior responses of the audience debinarize the relationship (Evanson can speak in the silent tongue that her audience responds with), closing the gap between audience and speaker.

Similarly, the lines that conclude the first stanza are followed by a silence lasting seventeen seconds.[10] In the middle of the following line, Evanson turns the poetic verse into song on the word "but," suggesting the rhythm of the body's movements and highlighting the voice as instrument. The acoustic power of her interaction with the audience brings them into the physical expression of the poem, further shattering any idea of a binary between the two, as we close our eyes and listen—in faith; Evanson both takes the audience's sight and manipulates their breath, implicating their bodies in the poem's visceral quality. Furthermore, Evanson shifts roles with the audience—not only can they no longer watch the performance, but they must share their role as listener with the poet, whose refrain "I am listening" is followed by silence in which the audience may also be listened to and scrutinized without their knowledge in a panoptic revolution of the performer-audience dynamic. Evanson's structured silence creates a space of apparent sonic absence buttressed on each side by aural (I am listening) and oral (the voice) references, making it a blended dialogic space, filled with the aural activity of listening. The oral here can also be carceral, the voices locked within the body and requiring free movement in order to be expressed. In the second stanza, Evanson highlights the physicality of language and the sonority of the temporal: the kinesis of the body, arms and hips moving rhythmically like a pendulum measuring time, manipulating breath and controlling the vocal chords, positioning the body as an instrument of sonic inscription.

Although Compton and Evanson may appear to take opposite approaches in their performances, each achieves "a different expression of agency" by revolutionizing the performer-audience dynamic through a critical repositioning or rerouting of the somatic relationship between them (*After* 193). While Evanson does this through a kind of sensorial exchange, Compton harnesses sound recording technologies—not to supplant the body in performance, but to highlight the work and consideration of the artist in the creation of the art-object, to turn the workings inside-out, make the poem visible and tangible, like the open body of the phonograph. In "Voices Out of Bodies," Hayles questions whether the tape recorder can "be understood as a surrogate body," and if so, "does the body become a tape recorder?" (75). This question began to emerge after 1950 with the *audio-poème* compositions of Henri Chopin and in the writings of William S. Burroughs (Bök 132). Compton's work continues to experiment with this notion. In *After Canaan*, he writes:

> My pre-recorded voice and poem is broken and re-broken, arranged and re-arranged, combined and re-combined with a shifting repertoire of other sources. Between us, the artists, and you, the audience, is the material poem—on the tables, under discussion, and subject to revision by the nature of the performance's form. The poem is not inside me, waiting to be expressed. It is in our crate, waiting for us to position it. (194)

Compton's postbody poetics break the historical link between vocal and bodily presence. Not only can the voice "persist through time outside the body, confronting the subject as an externalized other" (Hayles 78), but, as Compton's articulation of his work suggests, the "material poem—on the tables" and in the "crate" works as a positionable, material postbody that can be (re)broken, (re)arranged, and (re)combined in Compton's sonic schema, in a "play of reproduction and displacement" (Hayles 83). Compton's descriptions of the spatial coordinates of his performance are strikingly similar to that of a medical operation, with the body of work "on the tables," waiting to be positioned. The storage of the materials in crates, along with the activity described as crate digging for sample tracks, intimate something both corporeal and carceral, even suggestive of the grave. Compton's language is reminiscent of Hayles' discussion of Burroughs' *The Ticket That Exploded* (1962), in which a doctor extracts parasites from the narrator's body in a graphic scene wherein the parasites stand for "pre-recordings" that are "[e]ntwined into human flesh . . . [and] may be thought of as social conditioning" (Hayles 86). The material manipulations of Compton and de Couto resituate these "pre-recordings"—through acoustic delay, repetition, rupture, and mutation, they proliferate multiple meanings that interrupt and dissonate prevailing discursive formations/inscriptions.

Despite enacting the severance of sound from the body through his use of sound technologies, Compton's turntable poetry exerts a phenomenology of presence as he manipulates his voice by scratching, spinning, and splicing it with sounds in a practice that echoes the materiality of what Antwi calls the "unfinished yet lived-touched sensibility" of dub poetry. Antwi's understanding of the materiality of dub extends to the manner in which it is read/heard and felt by the audience: "[T]he poem travels in your mind, reminding us that what is done here is not complete in its moments of performance, it takes material route, requires contingency of reception" (72). The sensibility Antwi identifies can be traced in the silent space of Evanson's "The African All of It," which amplifies her audience's sensorial implication in the performance: each audience member's (fractured, incomplete, unfinished) interior responses become a part of a larger poetic dialogue within the silent space of the performance, further blurring lines between self and other (Gilroy 79). Dub poetry's "unfinished yet lived-touched sensibility" can also be traced in Compton's description of handling the dub plates, which creates a contact zone between the body and the disembodied voice—"my fingers touch a physical impression of my voice" (*After* 192)—whilst de Couto scratches the threshold between them. The tactile nature of the dub plate expressed here underscores a sense of temporal erosion: dub plates degrade more quickly than vinyl records, but are cheaper and quicker to press. Compton notes that it is "a kind of auto-destructive art . . . the acetate corrodes rapidly after continued contact with the oils and acids naturally found on human fingers. . . . I think of this impermanence as part of the performance, yet another echo of instability, mutability, and temporality" (192). This embrace of impermanence is compatible with Burroughs' belief in the revolutionary potential of sound technologies like the tape recorder: according to Hayles, "[t]he inscription of sound in a durable medium suited his belief that the word is material, while its malleability meant that interventions were possible that could radically change or eradicate the record" (91). Compton's use of the dub plate to remix and "cut up" sound extends this sense of malleable interventionism. If we think of recordings as permanent imprints of something temporary or fleeting in nature, Compton's temporizing of the permanent through his use of dub plates as positionable postbody reverses this process: the body corrodes, destroys, and degrades the postbody incarnation of his voice.

As noted above, Compton's goal of dislocating or decentering the body in the performance is achieved through placing the material poem—on the tables, in the crate—between audience and performer. This is an attempt to create "a different expression of agency" and subvert the "consumption of racialized bodies . . . a central part of the capitalist spectacle, [in which] consumers favour 'authentic' racialized creators . . . seen as less than artists, but instead as individuals who embody their culture intuitively and without meta-artistic consideration" (*After* 193-94). Compton's repositioning of artist and art-object works to denaturalize the "binary opposition between '(black) orality' and '(white) literacy,'" which figures musical and oral forms as "immediate, authentic" modes of Black expression (Lordi 18).[11] The poem also achieves a kind of geographical debordering, challenging the notion of authenticity by marshalling the processes of defamiliarization and deterritorialization. In "The Reinventing Wheel," Compton recites:

> I echo New York back
> like a code-cracker.
> Reality hacker. A Crusoe.
> Cuts cued.
> I intervene
> by plugging in
> code, tapping
> Babylonian routes. My cuneiform. (*Performance* 108)

Hyphenation syncopates the lines of the poem and offers a blended and unifying space, inverting the breath in a sprung rhythm. Rather than viewing US cultural influences as colonizing Canada, a common perception, Compton positions North American culture within frameworks of defamiliarization and communication, as he echoes "New York back like a code-cracker," able to read, respond to, explore, and penetrate—or "hack"—the language of the American metropolis. I turn again to Antwi's essay "Dub Poetry as a Black Atlantic Body-Archive" to elucidate the transboundary power of dub:

> [T]he cultural, aesthetic, and political horizons of dub poetry do not begin or end at national borders, nor do they assign a privileged, mediating position to one nation. Here, in its collaborative interdependence across multiple borders (temporal, national, 'performance/poetry/politrix/roots/reggae,' of textuality and orality, of African and Western cultural traditions), dub stresses its geohistorical matrix. (71; Antwi quotes from d'bi young's *art on black*)

Compton articulates dub poetry's dexterous border-crossing capabilities by harnessing symbols of inscription, "plugging in code" and "tapping Babylonian routes," the "cuneiform" of the final quoted line. Evanson's "The African All of It" also harnesses this symbol of inscription, asserting: "Whatever your appearance I am listening / Be it air or cuneiform I am listening" (147). Here, Evanson both listens to sounds that are communicated through air (or breath), and subverts the binary between visual and oral modalities by *listening* to, or subvocalizing, a system of writing inscribed into stone or clay. Additionally, the scratching of records is reminiscent of the activity of scratching cuneiform on stone, which both Compton and Evanson use to articulate a heightened critical receptivity to sound.

A synaesthetic understanding of cuneiform is uncovered by Compton's use of the ideogram. Compton conjures the *vévé* for Legba in a number of works, including his long poem "Rune," collected in *Performance Bond*. In Haitian voodoo, Legba opens a metaphysical doorway for communion between humans and spirits, facilitating communication in all human languages (*Bluesprint* 274)—providing a contact zone. "Rune" features a conversation, subtitled "Vévé," between two modes of recording technology, personified as Analogue and Digital, in which Compton references Barbadian poet and theorist Kamau Brathwaite's contention that voodoo marks the emergence of an Afro-Caribbean language "after the Middle Passage blotted the African languages out" (*Performance* 116).[12] About the *vévé* signifying Legba, Analogue states: "It's magic. It's more than language, it's sorcery, or worship. It's a portal between worlds" (118). There is a tension perhaps between the longing for "an ephemeral language that can drift away in the wind or be eaten by birds" expressed in Compton's "Rune" and his embrace of sound technologies, which preserve and reproduce sound (121).[13] This tension is partially resolved by Compton's use of the dub plate, which corrodes as it is handled and played, and by his experimentation with the processes of deterritorialization and defamiliarization, which estrange works from the cultural-spatial specificities in which they were originally produced. In his essay "The Reinventing Wheel: On Blending the Poetry of Cultures through Hip Hop Turntablism," Compton contextualizes this tension through the use of a postbody poetic and his own self-referencing:

> The idea is not to break, or even to preserve, but to repeat; and to celebrate repetition. . . . Where is agency? Perhaps in the doubling: I enjoy the idea of transforming my voice (myself, that is) into a static disc to be manipulated by the later me, the next me, from above. The remix is a way of—in one moment and one performance—re-enacting the manipulation of history and source culture. In *The Reinventing Wheel*, this happens in the body of one man made into two voices by the turntables.

Compton's schizophonophilic experiments with the dub plate can be interpreted as an effort to externalize, rewrite, and recodify prevailing discursive formations through a process he likens to *détournement*, in which the pre-existing artistic (cultural, historical) sources lose their importance in the creation of a new, meaningful ensemble (Debord 55). In the poem, Compton addresses the generative effect of splicing:

> The word is the body
> of Osiris, it's spliced. A communion
> is happening worldwide, a whirlwind
> of performances, black English, black expropriation
> scattered to the four corners. Every ear shall here.
> The words of the prophets are written in graf.
> James Brown never said, "Say it loud,
> I'm mixed-race in a satellite of the U.S. and proud."
> (*Performance* 106)

Compton's appeal for the representation of oblique kinds of Blackness—his Afroperipheralism—is articulated in this ironic utilization of African American icon James Brown, and he characterizes his art here as defamiliarizing a culture of identity politics, supplanting Brown's "black" with a hybrid and psychogeographic locus. The line "every ear shall here" phonetically combines place and sound, splicing sonic and spatial dialectics and suggesting a diasporic invocation of Blackness, "scattered to the four corners," audible everywhere. This conceptual blending of aurality and geography is analogous to Schafer's understanding of a landscape able to speak with the human voice, but Compton completes the dialogic transaction by highlighting the processes of aural receptivity to such a voice, suggesting the antiphonal impulse. Further, the ear becomes a portal for the entry of "black English, black expropriation" in the spliced body; Compton's invocation of Osiris, the Egyptian God of the afterlife and resurrection, casts language as a metaphysical hinterland, positioning Black sounds as a revolutionary, transformative, and transportive sonic lexicon. Compton's characterization of this recasting of his poetry within a new ensemble "in light of later dialectical turns" (*After* 195) as a process of *détournement* is also interesting because his choice of language suggests that other situationist paradigm, the *dérive*. Like the Burroughs/Gysin cut-up method, situationist Guy Debord's art practices have influenced digital remixing. The psychogeographic text-art project *Mémoires* (1959), for example, is famous for its sandpaper cover, signifying the use of found objects and the abrasive textured-textuality of the work, akin to de Couto's method of scratching spoken samples as commentary. Thus splicing becomes a tool for liberation, freeing the Black voice and Black subjectivity from conventional sensory, spatial, and temporal boundaries.

Schafer's work offers a paradigm for the blending of sonic and geographic landscapes, in which sound technologies enact a severance of the human voice from the body, so that the voice emerges from the landscape itself. In Compton's work, the sounding line travels across North American landscapes and beyond, exerting a phenomenology of presence through electroacoustic amplification and simultaneity. Schafer's predictions that these postbody projections, as I call them, would have implications for human subjectivity were well founded, but not necessarily negative, and they in fact can be liberatory. Compton's exercises in schizophonophilia reveal the postbody voice as a resource in the rewriting and reconstitution of inherited and oppressive notions of identity and subjectivity: counter-hegemonic affirmation through acoustic intervention. Dub poetry in Canada acts as a contact zone or blended conceptual space in which to reimagine subject positions, and further complicates a phenomenology of presence through the spectre of the ghost in sound. The ghost in the track is a manifestation of the postbody, released from the social, spatial, and temporal boundaries, the usual earthly rules that must be negotiated by the body.

In the work of Compton and Evanson, sonic inscription is represented as a sort of cuneiform, further demolishing binary oppositions between the oral and the written, and underscoring the materiality of the positionable, postbody art-object. Like sound recordings, texts are quasi-material: half artifact, half ghost, requiring human imagination to interpret orthographic markings and invest them with meaning. This interstitial threshold acts as a Legba-like vortex or contact zone in which radical, paratactical experiments of identity can be tried, forging an innovative and formally hybrid space. Ultimately, the versatile ambulation of the ghost in the track challenges geographical and historical paradigms that work to enclose and encode Black Canada.

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NOTES

1 Auditory culture develops from the natural world, local industry, percussive sounds, the human voice, or the proliferation of sound technologies (Collins 169-70).

2 Talking about these allusions, Compton states: "I'm plugging myself into those . . . revolutionary inheritances and they don't always fit, and I'm trying to turn them in some kind of way that makes them fit more" ("Reinventing" 00:30:13-24).

3 Compton quotes from Frederick Douglass' *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) ("We meant to reach the north—and the north was our Canaan") to evidence this connection between the North, freedom, and "psalmic" Canaan (*After* 15).

4 Guy Debord defines *détournement* as "the reuse of preexisting artistic elements in a new ensemble," governed by two "fundamental laws": "the loss of importance of each detourned autonomous element . . . and at the same time the organization of another meaningful ensemble" (55).

5 Donna J. Haraway reminds us that the cyborg is "a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (5).

6 For example, Schafer writes that schizophonia is "supposed to be a nervous word" (47).

7 In particular, the essay details a performance in which Compton mixes a voice recording of "The Reinventing Wheel" with other recorded samples. This version is the "Rolling Wave Mix," arranged on four turntables.

8 Evanson speaking at a performance of "The African All of It" on October 26, 2013, at the Vancouver Writers Fest.

9 The analysis that follows is based on my experience as an audience member at Evanson's 2013 performance at the Vancouver Writers Fest. A later performance of the poem, at the Words Aloud Spoken Word Festival in Durham, Ontario, in November 2014, can be viewed online for reference (00:30:48-32:45).

10 In the recorded version of the piece, from her album *Language for Gods* (2012), Evanson sings the verses, and this silence is filled by soft percussive instrumentals.

11 Pratt posits that the "redemption of the oral" is a function of the safe house (40).

12 Using Derrida's work on the trace, Wolfe explains that the "living present" is "haunted by the ghosts or specters of what will have been once any kind of archive, analog or digital—or the most fundamental archive of all, language itself" (293).

13 In conversation, Evanson expresses a similar desire to Analogue's longing for an ephemeral language "able to say things we can't think of" (*Performance* 121). She challenges herself to use language "as a launching pad, and [to] kind of leave it . . . can I create work that can transcend language, even while using it?" (Evanson and Kellough).

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A. F. Moritz

Oh Sunflower

In the black after you
will another traveller
or merely wanderer
come across the region
of where you were,
which has no regions now—
or must it be called then:
no expanse, or track, or traveller?
The region of nowhere
where someone, you, once stood
already imagining
the place he was dwelling in
that moment
become empty of him.
And later someone
comes across it except
there is no it: it has
no boundaries, no features then,
and no inhabitant, unless
this straggler now
entering. Entering into
where someone, you, already
had held in mind
that region of nowhere
springing up. It springs up
in the moment of one's leaving:
it's the dark
or the light where all
eternal moments
are to be buried
as though carefully
to wait and where
the traveller may come.

Ryan Fitzpatrick

And Tomorrow, I'm Somewhere Else

Destabilization, Dispossession, and Dissolution in the Vancouvers of Lisa Robertson and Mercedes Eng

> Local is the name of a possibility of sharing, combined with the sharing of a dispossession.
> —The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*

In their call for papers for the recent special issue of *Canadian Literature* on "The Concept of Vancouver" (*Concepts of Vancouver: Poetics, Art, Media,* no. 235, Winter 2017), Gregory Betts, Julia Polyck-O'Neill, and Andrew McEwan evoke a stereotypical Vancouver—a "vibrant hub," a glittering mecca made *liveable* (for those wealthy enough) through ongoing and historically shaped processes of dispossession. Vancouver exists at the junction point of global capital and settler colonialism. In her narrative "Goodbye Snauq," Stó:lō writer Lee Maracle returns to the violent colonial transformation of Snauq into False Creek, her reflections triggered by a court case declaring the "sale" of Snauq between 1913 and 1916 illegal. Maracle draws archival and personal memory into a consideration of the ways that the junction of colonialism and capitalism not only displaced the Squamish peoples for whom Snauq was home, but fundamentally disrupted the relations and physical shape of the space. Located where the south end of the Burrard Street bridge now stands, Snauq was liquidated, its land appropriated through an underhanded land deal, the village burned to the ground. Maracle laments the way that "[t]he shoreline is gone, in its place are industries squatting where the sea once was" (15). This toxic transformation disrupted both human and non-human relations, turning the common "garden" (22) or "supermarket" (21) of Snauq into the garbage dump of False Creek—a site that, like many other sites and neighbourhoods in Vancouver and elsewhere, has transformed again and again, most recently into the condo developments that dominate both sides of the inlet.

In this article, I compare two recent books of poetry invested in the ways the contemporary relations of Vancouver are broken up—dissolved and devalued to clear space to make room for something more profitable. Lisa Robertson's *Occasional Work and Seven Walks From the Office for Soft Architecture* (2003) and Mercedes Eng's *Mercenary English* (2013) both confront and critique the capitalist and colonial processes that *stabilize* and *destabilize* the material relations that compose Vancouver in the twenty-first century. Vancouver is repeatedly hailed as one of the world's most liveable cities while also being one of the most unaffordable. It is a city of condos and cranes, scaffolds and tent encampments. It is a city whose disparities are seen in the way its spaces are changed to benefit its wealthiest citizens. Robertson and Eng examine these dramatic and often violent spatial changes. In particular, they focus on the ways individual bodies are articulated—pinned down and set adrift—within and by Vancouver's shifting relations.

Over the course of this paper, I want to examine the ways that these two writers pose this version of Vancouver through drastically different formal approaches. Where Robertson takes a largely aestheticized and speculative approach, bringing twenty-first-century Vancouver into expressive proximity with the changing streets of spaces like nineteenth-century Paris, Eng cognitively maps the political and spatial structures of her contemporary moment, aiming for an articulatory realism that critiques the uneven processes that shape the city's Downtown Eastside (DTES) neighbourhood. Where Robertson speculates about the opportunities opened up for the transformation of subjectivity by urban change, Eng responds critically to the lived conditions produced through those changes. These distinctions are important to register both because of the different subject positions of the two writers and because of the fraught potentials of poetry as a form used to address the city's material unevenness.

The unevenness of a city like Vancouver is tied to spatial change and to the ways that parts of the city are stabilized and destabilized. Stability is a strange keyword. On one hand, it describes the way a space holds itself together over time. On the other hand, it also describes people's lives at more intimate scales as their lives *feel* more or less stable depending on the availability of work, housing, and support. Stability is central to Deleuzian assemblage theory, which theorizes how space is produced by spatial "actors," a category which includes not only humans, but also non-human actors and material.

Here, reminiscent of Henri Lefebvre, space is not a static container, but is instead continually produced by its relations—a continual state of emergence from the ground up. If space is constantly emerging, how do we theorize the ways it stays consistent? In his book *A New Philosophy of Society*, Manuel DeLanda argues that "[o]ne and the same assemblage can have components working to stabilize its identity as well as components forcing it to change or even transforming it into a different assemblage" (12). In this view, spatial change is not a naturalized cycle (though it can look like it), but the result of forces struggling over a space's "identity." In other words, any space can evolve as some actors reproduce the same structures while others push at the limits of what is possible. This form of spatial change is internal to a space. It is negotiated and incremental. At the same time, however, change can come from outside as a new set of relations can leverage power and capital to more swiftly and violently transform a space.

When Maracle discusses the transformation of Snauq into False Creek, it is this second form of spatial change that she is describing primarily—the "horror [of] having had change foisted upon you from the outside" (13). In *Mercenary English*, Eng wrestles with a similar dynamic as she maps the violent incursions of capital into her home neighbourhood in the DTES of Vancouver. In the interview that concludes the second and third editions of *Mercenary English*, Fred Moten asks Eng about her decision to move out of the DTES. "If the neighbourhood is the displaced," he asks, "rather than the scene of their displacement, then how and where does the neighbourhood go, or keep on going?" ("echolocation" 126). Moten poses the DTES through the relations that compose it, asking Eng to think through how the destabilization of the neighbourhood affects her geographical location by displacing and dissolving her friendships, her relations, and her support network. Moten's question identifies a tangled mix of concerns that comes out of Eng's position in the two assemblages struggling over the DTES—the lower-income residents of the neighbourhood and the wealthy new businesses and condo owners (in assembly with real estate developers, city planners, and police working to gentrify the neighbourhood). In their conversation, Eng and Moten recognize a tension around the place of the individual, who, caught in the thinning relations of a neighbourhood, finds herself left with the choice to leave or to self-gentrify by folding herself into the new relations of the incursive neighbourhood.

The work of gentrification operates through a logic where capital, looking for new territory to build on, often needs to demolish and evict, driven, as described by Neil Smith, through a frontier logic that exploits the uneven values of different spaces in order to extract the greatest profit; a logic that resembles, in its push to eliminate one set of relations in favour of another, the work of settler colonialism. Robertson identifies this kernel in her use of "dissolving" as a metaphor when she claims, at the beginning of her book, that in the period from the 1986 World Exposition (or Expo 86) to the 2003 selection of Vancouver as host of the 2010 Olympics, she "watched the city of Vancouver dissolve in the fluid called money" (1), echoing Marx's famous remark in the *Grundrisse* that "[w]here money is not itself the community, it must dissolve the community" (224). Dissolving or dissolution poetically describes what is materially felt through the movements of money as it interacts with individual bodies and alters neighbourhoods and cities as architectures and populations shift and groups are pushed out through processes of gentrification and colonization. As a metaphor, dissolution involves the breaking apart of bonds and relations. Dissolution describes the ways that one set of spatial relations needs to be denatured before another set can take its place, like the transformation of Snauq into False Creek, through investment and disinvestment in neighbourhoods (shaped, in part, by racist practices like redlining), the appropriation and dispossession of territory, and the uneven and racially motivated application of police violence. When we read Robertson's and Eng's texts together, a tension emerges between theoretical possibilities and material realities of instability that can help us think through the potentials of poetry to transform spaces and spatial relations.

Refashioning the Body and the City in Robertson's *Office*

To think about destabilization and "dissolution," we need to think about the relationship between spatial parts and wholes, between the actors who compose the city and the city that shapes their lives. In other words, we need to ask how these two texts investigate a tension between the body and space. For Robertson, this question begins with surfaces and the kinds of things that can be "draped" over spaces and bodies to transform them. In "Soft Architecture: A Manifesto," Robertson lays out the piece's origin as a catalogue essay[1] for artists Sharyn Yuen and Josée Bernard, a context that allows her to develop a "theory of cloth, memory, and gods" that somehow pertains to "urban geography, especially to the speed and mutability of Vancouver's built environment" (4). Robertson describes the city's abstract, changing character as the fabrics that adorn it also change. Framing Robertson's work within a larger context of an urban, "cosmopolitan" poetics in his essay "On the Outskirts of Form," Michael Davidson suggests the ways that Robertson's *Office* sees a city "not [as] the glass and steel corporate landscape of Vancouver so much as a state of transience" (749) that offers "a malleable surface to corporate modernism's seeming permanence" (750). Robertson's work, according to Davidson, connects to a larger set of poets across North America whose work *speaks* to a post-NAFTA context and an ongoing tension between those able to move across borders and those policed by them: in his words, "a world in which the illusion of mobility and expanded communication masks the re-consolidation of wealth and the containment of resistance within a totalized surveillance regime" (737).

Robertson's work imagines the ways that the city changes by taking on the conceptual persona of the "Office for Soft Architecture," a move with a potentially critical, but also deeply ambivalent relationship to capital. In his essay "The Utopian Textures and Civic Commons of Lisa Robertson's Soft Architecture," Christopher Schmidt argues that Robertson's book "inscribes the logic of global capital into its cultural production" (150) by fatally adopting the persona of a fictional star architectural firm—a literary Koolhaas who writes about the potential of temporary or *transient* architectures. Through this "fatal" strategy of critiquing capital by obscenely performing it, Robertson repeatedly turns to leisure and consumption as practices throughout her book: she and her unnamed walking guide picnic in an unnamed park, she trawls the aisles of the Hastings Street Value Village. How does this minor leisure or consumption square with the urban anxiety Schmidt assigns to Robertson? Schmidt poses embodiment as a potential answer, turning to Robertson's poetic theorization in "The Value Village Lyric" that the body can change itself at the level of fabric by remobilizing the detritus of past consumption in a practice of recycling identity. Robertson is concerned, according to Schmidt, "with the interplay between the situated and the dispersed, between the actual garment and the global semiotic system in which this garment travels and signifies" (153). In other words, with the way the garment changes the meaning of the body (or, alternately, the way the body changes the garment) depending on the assemblage around it, on how the body is perceived, received, and acted upon by the larger social field—a playful and *experimental* way to transform identity or duck surveillance.

Robertson's interest in circulating texts, garments, and bodies is reflected in her interest in the topological writing of Gilles Deleuze, who, in *The Fold* (1993), examines Leibniz's work on the baroque to analyze the relationship between topological organization and the affective relational exchanges of the virtual. For Deleuze, subjectivity and identity are shaped by and through the movements of the social through the tension between self-fashioning and surveillance. Robertson gestures to this externality in her *PhillyTalks* discussion with Steve McCaffery, arguing against the tendency within certain psychoanalytic discourses to theorize the production of the subject as "all interiority" in favour of a Deleuzian reading of the subject as produced by its relations, figured in the spaces of the city:

> So to bring in the dailiness, the provisional local textures of becoming subject, poetry needs to become a kind of urbanism, or landscape art. I do agree. Also extending the idea of corporeality to the city itself helps avoid some of the deplorable essentialism that clings to the corpus as merely human. Lets [*sic*] talk about the agencies of matter. (33)

When Robertson poses that the concept of subjectivity needs "a kind of urbanism," she suggests that the external pull of "local textures" acts on the body and shape subjectivity not in a "social vacuum" (33) but in a complex assemblage that, possessing its own material agency, has its own corporeality. Robertson positions both the individual human and the city under the rubric of the body, making it possible for her to consider experimentation with subjectivity and experimentation with the city as two parts of the same move.

In a similar way to speculative urbanism's[2] alternate and critical stagings of a site, Robertson imagines the book and the codex as speculative sites for spatial experimentation, with the poet as the designer of these utopian possibilities. In her article "The Afterlife of the City: Reconsidering Urban Poetic Practice," Maia Joseph argues that Robertson "continually probes this threshold relation between the observing poet and the urban world—the space where, she proposes, ethical inquiry into the questions of how to live and relate to others is cultivated" (160). In Joseph's reading, Robertson describes the city in ways that create a "contemplative temporality" (160), a duration of time where reader and writer can speculate over new forms of relation. In "Time in the Codex," the essay that opens her collection *Nilling* (2012), Robertson turns to Deleuze's *The Fold* to ask about the potential of literature as a site for speculative thinking about space and identity. Robertson looks at the codex as a site to experiment with identity and to "become foreign and unknowable" to herself (13). She circles around the effects that the text has on her body through the alternate rhythms proposed by the text, rhythms that she adopts and follows, staging an encounter with the book to imagine a different field of embodied engagements.

But how to extend this speculation and experimentation to the city itself? When Robertson speaks of "extending the idea of corporeality to the city itself," she doesn't simply suggest that the city is a body with an internalized, metabolic structure, but, rather, she expresses a desire to affirm the agencies of matter in order to examine the relationships between those corporealities (not only human bodies, but also architectural structures) as they produce both human subjectivity and the identity of the city itself. In this, the city becomes an assemblage of bodies that also has an identity that can be changed through the recombinations of matter. Working with matter is tough to do in an expressive medium like poetry (unless we, as readers, somehow take Robertson into the streets ourselves). Robertson instead dramatizes material agencies through expressive means, overlaying archival representations of Vancouver and both literary and artistic representations of other spaces onto the present. In "Site Report: New Brighton Park," Robertson stalks New Brighton Park looking for signs of the archive, noting the broken cement chucks and truant patches of comfrey and mint that witness the histories of the site. Seemingly similar, she turns to Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* in "Playing House" and Eugene Atget's photographs of early-twentieth-century Paris in "Atget's Interiors" to not only ask what those representations can illuminate about Vancouver's transitional nature, but also to recode our understandings of Vancouver. Why, for instance, does Robertson turn to someone like Atget, whose staged Parisian rooms seem so geographically and temporally distant from twenty-first-century Vancouver? It's certainly not to *directly* discuss Vancouver (unmentioned in "Atget's Interiors"). Instead, Robertson reflects on a variety of topics: the body, habit, emotion. She ends by proposing that "Atget's interiors chart a politics of furnishing" (203). That is, she reflects on the way the combined agencies of a room, some furniture, and a person "compose an image of time, through a process of mutual accretion, exchange, application, erasure, renovation, and decay" (204). At the same time, Atget's photographs document the classic example of a city made unrecognizable by redesign and redevelopment, reflecting Paris post-Haussmannization. At once, the photographs are stylized and archival, staged and documentary. This dialectic between the critical self-fashioning of the politics of furnishing and the worry about documenting the city before it transforms defines Robertson's approach to Vancouver. Draping Vancouver in this version of Paris allows Robertson to frame her own work in the same sad tones—the Office at work describing a city in the process of dissolution—but it also carries the speculative potential to allow us to rethink Vancouver's identity by asking how it compares to Paris' transformations.

Robertson's investment in obsolescence and spatial fragility lands at the feet of the body, expected both to refashion itself and its spaces with the leftovers of the world (adopting the role of Benjamin's Parisian ragpicker) *and* to find a kind of hope in the city's instability, an instability tied to the repeated incursions of capital and the state across a space. Perhaps ironically, Robertson valorizes the precarious position of the individual living in unstable conditions—in a shack, a tent, on a scaffold, in a state of permanent transience. In her treatise on the scaffold in *Office*, Robertson proclaims that "[a] scaffold sketches a body letting go of proprietary expectation, or habit, in order to be questioned by change," ending by clearly advocating, on behalf of the Office, for the scaffold as an ideal place to inhabit: "As for us, we too want something that's neither inside nor outside, neither a space nor a site. In an inhabitable surface that recognizes us, we'd like to gently sway. Then we would be happy" (141-42). Robertson's happiness pitches itself into the future (*if only we lived on the scaffold . . .*) as a hopeful affective state contingent on the ability to experiment with the relationship between subjectivity and spatial production. The potential happiness produced by the metaphorical scaffold echoes Robertson's interest in the codex as a site of experimentation, but even as I want to affirm the importance of this kind of experimentation, the *performative hopefulness* of Robertson's text threatens to paper over the political and social realities of the city as it destabilizes and restabilizes.

Mapping Spatial Dissolution and Struggle in Eng's *Mercenary English*

While Robertson's literary and philosophical approach opens space to think through the potentials of literature to rearticulate how we understand the city, it struggles to account for the specific material conditions of Vancouver as it is dismantled and as many residents live not on a metaphorical scaffold but in a literal tent city. Where Robertson values the literary and the philosophical in her *refashioning* of the city, Eng privileges the material circumstances and experiences of those living in her neighbourhood, aiming for a kind of articulatory realism that is grounded not in the speculative potentials of art and writing, but in the ability of poetry to map larger social dynamics in ways that recode and transform our understandings of a space. This is not to devalue Robertson's work, but there are limits to Robertson's philosophical approach to the "agencies of matter." In a way that Robertson doesn't, Eng privileges the material relations between people in her neighbourhood and in the streets as they meet one another. Eng reads the gentrification of the DTES alongside the policing of marginalized communities and the disappearance of Indigenous women (locally and on wider scales) to map a slow-motion spatial takeover, where tents rise and fall in response to the destruction of both social housing and a community with a history, as developers rebuild the physical buildings block by block and replace the neighbourhood body by body.

In her afterword, added to the second and third editions of *Mercenary English*, Eng relates life in the area between 1996 and 2016, reflecting on her decision to move out of the neighbourhood:

> I'm leaving because I'm saddened by what the area's become: an expensive enclave that has displaced some of the city's most vulnerable people. For years, United We Can, the recycling depot, was located across the alley from my building; it was moved, forcing the poor people who do our recycling to travel further to do their work. Last summer the building was demolished—suddenly, surreally, I could see Hastings from my window—and construction began for a new condo tower. (119)

Pointedly, Eng frames this demolition as part of a larger "war on the poor" (119) whose greatest weapon is real estate. In this moment, Eng reads the demolition of the United We Can building in a way that connects gentrification to the relations it disrupts and the ones it enables. United We Can's movement into a warehouse space just east of Main Street shifts the work lives of many poor people both out of the neighbourhood and out of sight. In turn, the replacement of the building with a new condo tower furthers the enclaving of the neighbourhood, reterritorializing the space for the rich.

Eng's concretely localized poetics repeatedly considers the competing stabilizing and destabilizing forces that struggle over and change the neighbourhood, from the incursions of real estate development to the longer historical lines of colonialism in Vancouver. In a series of poems titled "how it is," Eng produces a textual time lapse of the street, providing a diachronic map of the neighbourhood's slow dissolve. Because of their shared context and interest in flatly representing the front face of Hastings, Eng's "how it is" echoes Stan Douglas' panorama photograph *Every Building on 100 West Hastings* (2001), which captures the south side of the titular block at night and entirely unpeopled. Reid Shier's catalogue essay for the photograph situates it within its social and historical context in a moment where, to use Shier's language, 100 West Hastings had "declined," "deteriorated," and was "disintegrating" (11), just before the redevelopment of the Woodward's building. In the same catalogue, Jeff Sommers and Nick Blomley trace the "pathologization" of the area, whereby "[t]he pathologization of the poor turned into the pathologization of the entire neighbourhood" (21)—the neighbourhood itself becoming the cause of localized problems that threatened to spread to the rest of the city. Sommers and Blomley suggest that it is unsurprising that the *poverty* of the DTES is what's represented in Vancouver media and urban planning as a spreading social menace, rather than "the unfettered consumption and spiraling housing prices that mark the affluent side of the widening gap" (44). Following this, they lay out the logic coding the space:

> Overlaying this is a sense of loss, deepened by mythologized memories of Hastings Street's past as a shared space of commercial vitality. The city has been "taken" from its inhabitants by the poor: as commuters speed down Hastings Street, they are invited to reflect that this is no longer "our" neighbourhood. The only way the valued landscape of the Downtown Eastside can be saved, on this account, is with the removal of what threatens it—the poor—and its replacement by citizens who are better equipped to reclaim its potential, both economically and historically. Property owners, attuned to "heritage" values, are to be encouraged to homestead the wilderness, and recapture this space and its authentic meanings. (49)

Echoing Neil Smith's reading of gentrification as the exploitation of an urban frontier, Sommers and Blomley frame this settler impulse to "recapture" as both a rethreading of spatial continuity (staking a claim based on a past, "truer" version of the space) and an assertion that one group is "better equipped" to produce that space.

Taken in terms of both the historical context of its production and the decade and a half that has since passed, Douglas' photograph is a time capsule. His panoramic shot of the block differs significantly from the present street, its composition changed by the development of the Woodward's complex and the slow, drastic shift of the photo's empty storefronts to upscale businesses. The 100 block of West Hastings is a flashpoint for anti-gentrification activists. Woodward's became an anchoring point for critiques of gentrification after the 2002 Woodward's Squat—documented by Aaron Vidaver in the Woodsquat issue of *West Coast Line* (2004)—where residents of the DTES occupied the then-empty Woodward's building for three months demanding more social housing. This resulted in Woodward's becoming a key example circulating in local urbanist rhetoric of the positive potentials of mixed-use, mixed-income development, while the larger culture of development within the city has raised rents, reduced affordable and social housing stock, and increased homelessness. Part of the punctum of Douglas' streetscape comes out of the recognition that so much has changed. Making explicit the temporality inherent in this change, Eng's diachronic map in "how it is" records the shift over time, making the shift visible not as a sweeping, immediate change but as a piece-by-piece process determined by relationships to property. Eng's map makes visible the destabilizing edge of deterritorialization and the subsequent reterritorializing moves to stabilize the neighbourhood as the lot-by-lot, block-by-block movements of gentrification swap out parts over time. For Eng, this material shift connects to similarly shifting relational networks in the neighbourhood, where those not "equipped" to produce the good community by colonizing the frontier of gentrification get pushed out.

Eng responds to the way she sees her neighbourhood being taken apart, her home dissolved to clear space for something else. But we need to be careful with how we read Eng's mapping in "how it is," because of the way that, like Douglas', her representation of Hastings is largely depopulated (though with occasional personal interjections).[3] In her afterword, Eng bristles at the way Douglas' photograph excludes the neighbourhood's residents. "I wasn't impressed," she suggests, "[t]here are no people in it, none of the low-income people that populate the area" (120). Eng points to Denise Blake Oleksijczuk's reading of the photograph's absence of people in her 2002 essay "Haunted Spaces":

> The photograph's deep emptiness provides an opening in which to contemplate the fate of Vancouver's missing women. Considering the mounting numbers of missing and murdered sex trade workers is one way to fill the picture's void. From this perspective, the image can be appropriated to suggest that the denial of the missing women can never be complete. Its emptiness can be mobilized to evoke a space haunted by the socially disprized and unloved. (110)

In Oleksijczuk's argument, the photograph becomes a site not just of reflection and contemplation, but also of active critique as the social emptiness of the image can be "appropriated" and "mobilized" to draw attention to missing and murdered women. Eng rejects this, asserting that "[f]or some of us, this erasure is lived, not the subject (object?) of art" (121). By asserting the lived experience of the residents of the DTES (herself included), Eng points to a limit of contemplation—of standing at the threshold of an art object (or a codex) to "reflect"—namely that, in a moment like the one Oleksijczuk imagines, there is not only an erasure of women themselves (which the photograph opens space for), but also an erasure of the spatial processes and histories enabling the disappearance of women. Though a speculative frame like Douglas' provides a frame for reflection and even structural analysis, it lacks, for Eng, the lived experience needed to analyze the realities of a space like 100 West Hastings. Eng pointedly remarks on the way that "[s]ome of us remember the police denying that a(nother) serial killer was murdering women from the neighbourhood" (121)—an admonishment that plants her not in the distanced window of Douglas' photograph, but in the immediate middle of the peopled street where she can catch a different and no less necessary angle on the neighbourhood's rhythms.

Rather than focus on the depeopled scene or on decontextualized individuals, Eng's "new accurate maps" (72) trace the complex entanglements of the neighbourhood's social field, proposing a form of realism that articulates the processes and structures that bear down on the neighbourhood as a whole and the individuals who live there. Eng maps an array of tense and conflicting structural pressures and assembling potentials as she puts together a cognitive map of the DTES. She presents the positions different bodies are expected to take within a shifting, power-filled assemblage, grounding that map in her own experience. With the relationship between the body and structural violence in mind, while Eng maps a DTES and a Vancouver where one set of spatial relations, practices, and architectures replaces another—one assemblage stabilizing in the space where another dissolves—she also presents subjectivity as fraught and multiplied. In the process, she mobilizes a political anger navigated through the ways her persona is contextually tugged between subject positions from activist to artist to sex worker. Eng's sequence flips between "different frontlines" (51); that is, between different points of struggle, different face-to-face conversations that, through their accumulation and interconnection, provide a glimpse of the spatial relations that articulate Eng's speaker's body. In "February 2010," set amidst the activist organizing during the 2010 Olympics and constant engagements with police and surveillance, Eng dramatizes a position caught between the linked gazes of cop and man:

> don't worry, you can trust us
>
> I look right into his boyish, handsome face
> and then the other one's and I say
>
> no, I don't think so
>
> he smiles at his buddy, replies
>
> ouch! . . . stone cold
>
> did the cops just flirt with me? (61)[4]

In this comedic short circuit, Eng pairs two instances of being "checked out." While Eng's speaker reads the cops coming to check out a disturbance, the cops themselves are busy checking *her* out. Both overlapping instances are predicated on not only a kind of surveillance—one body checking out another—but also of a potential violence, one state-enforced, the other patriarchal. By exposing the overlap of these two gazes—a pairing that repeats throughout her sequence in the positions of the male activist and artist—Eng underlines the violence inherent in both, demonstrating a different timbre of stability and instability applied not only at the scale of the neighbourhood, but at the scale of the body. There isn't the ease or potential of refashioning the body here. Instead, Eng repeatedly challenges the ways she is articulated by others, calling out discomfort with her relationship to activism and academia.

For Eng, spatial instability (like stability) is precisely produced through the ways a relational network can act as a source of violence and an articulatory form of policing. If the flattened, depeopled street of "how it is" shows a deterritorializing edge rippling through the built environment, the shifting positions of "Vancouver 2010" show how the identity of a neighbourhood, city, and individual body are defined and stabilized by the historically developed striations that shape both space and the movements available to different bodies. When Eng describes being policed over and over, she is reminded of what potential roles she can assume within the spatial relations of the city. Extending this discussion of violence, in the poem "knuckle sandwich," Eng repeatedly quotes from Yasmin Jiwani's work on gendered violence against Indigenous women and women of colour to underline a distinction between visible and invisible violence. Jiwani's article "Mediations of Domination: Gendered Violence Within and Across Borders" articulates the ways in which the media frequently circulates representations of Muslim women as victims—a trope that further justifies the military interventions of the Canadian state overseas—and compares such representations to those of Indigenous women, who are presented "less as victims deserving rescue than as bodies that simply do not matter" (137). Jiwani, as quoted by Eng, explicitly links the violence done to Muslim and Indigenous women through an inverse relationship directly related to the border of the colonial state:

> *The visibility accorded to one expression or manifestation of*
> *violence and the invisibility of the other are interlocked.*
> *One supports and depends on the other.* (qtd. in Eng 12; Jiwani 132)

Working from Jiwani's argument about the connections between visible and invisible violences against racialized women, Eng notes an interlinked web of violence produced at different scales but landing squarely on the local. For Eng, violence is not limited to specific bodies, but its effects shift depending on which bodies are involved and emerge from ongoing processes of colonial dispossession.

In this frame, Eng's reading of the DTES begins to resemble Mexican journalist Sergio González Rodríguez's concept of the "femicide machine," a term he uses to map the ways the city of Ciudad Juárez (connecting at the US border to El Paso) "normalized barbarism," specifically a local culture where women were regularly murdered. Through the productive force of a "mutated" and "anomalous" urban ecology (7), he illustrates the way these spatial mechanics can produce a terrifying and deadly situation. Eng scales this sense of an anomalous ecology to not only encompass the dangerous conditions for racialized women in the DTES of Vancouver, but also to articulate a wider connection with the war on terror and colonial appropriation of Indigenous territory. Eng triangulates three "trails": the US Trail of Tears that saw the violent relocation of five Indigenous nations from their traditional territory in the 1830s, the Highway of Tears between Prince George and Prince Rupert in BC where a significant number of Indigenous women have vanished over a forty-year period, and the stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway in BC between Langley and Abbotsford renamed the Highway of Heroes to memorialize thirteen soldiers who died in Afghanistan. Eng abuts these three trails, moving from territorial dispossession to bodily disappearance to imperial valour to ask not only which bodies have value, but also what *kind* of value—which bodies are honoured, which need rescue, which are disposable. Within Eng's poem, the thirteen soldiers honoured with the so-called Highway of Heroes stand in stark relief against the over twelve hundred missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls across Canada including those from the DTES.[5]

Somewhere Else

Mercedes Eng's Vancouver is not Lisa Robertson's Vancouver, despite a shared concern over the way the city is reshaped by capitalist and colonialist forces. Eng's work in the tension point between the territorial specificity of the DTES and the complex relational forces and networks that produce and struggle over it both reflects an often literal sense of contestation and stabilizes a sense of the relations dissolved alongside the row of storefronts on Hastings Street. The result is an articulation of the space as *more* than real estate. In her bending of scales and folding of histories into the present, Eng produces a relational map alongside her territorial one, writing a spatial poetics that reads the DTES under crisis but not isolated in that crisis, related to colonial wars both outside and inside borders. Eng's work complicates Robertson's appeals to instability or fragility or temporariness as a condition for speculative experiment with potential resistance. Eng's articulatory realism—her "new accurate maps"—proposes that instability is actually a problem for certain bodies (now and historically). What we end up with is a tension between stability and instability that depends on both the way the assemblage is coded and the subject position of the one navigating it.

Mercenary English, then, poses a different kind of urban-focused challenge to this problem of what possibilities emerge when space changes, grounded in the realities of life in an embattled neighbourhood as they connect to similar struggles historically and globally. If Robertson's appeal to the "agencies of matter" in her conversation with McCaffery points us to the co-productive engagements we have with human and non-human others (including the field of texts she mobilizes), Eng more pointedly asks *how* those others matter and what logics or narratives shape those engagements. What Eng pointedly asserts in her conceptual roleplay is a tension around value that directly shapes how spaces are produced, how actors engage with one another, and how different actors are articulated by spatial and social relations. In spaces like the gentrifying DTES, understandings of what or who is valuable (or profitable) shape the kinds of relations that can make space. Speaking about the struggles for Indigenous sovereignty across North America, Audra Simpson argues that "[i]n situations in which sovereignties are nested and embedded, one proliferates at the other's expense," noting further that "under these conditions, there cannot be two perfectly equal, robust sovereignties" (12). Simpson's sense of struggle between spatializing sets of relations, writ large in the conflict between colonial and Indigenous nations, plays out at smaller scales like the DTES (and Snauq) as incursionary groups slowly dissolve, denature, and unsettle existing relations in order to remake that territory as Canada, Vancouver, or whatever the neighbourhood along Hastings Street will be called in the future.

NOTES

1 Most of the pieces in *Office for Soft Architecture* share this pedigree and are part of Robertson's ongoing practice of art writing, a practice shared by other former members of the Kootenay School of Writing given the social proximity of the poetry and art communities in Vancouver. As such, Robertson's work in *Office for Soft Architecture* carries not only genre elements of architectural writing, but also of the catalogue essay.

2 Rem Koolhaas' speculative urbanism, collected in a book like *S, M, L, XL* (1995), imagines architecture and urbanism as forms of research. In this form of "paper" urbanism, proposals for architectural or design projects can act as critical interventions into a site even when they aren't used to rebuild that site. A more recent and more obviously political example is described in the book *Architecture After Revolution* (2013) by the Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency, who, looking to challenge colonial violence in Palestine, "mobilize architecture and individual buildings in our vicinity as optical devices and as tactical tools within the unfolding struggle for Palestine" (Petti et al. 32). The texts they produce propose projects not with the intent of building anything, but with the intent of critiquing spatial violence.

3 To provide one example, on the north side of Hastings between Main Street and Columbia Street, Eng records an empty building, but adds in parentheses that the building was previously "the Smilin' Buddha where my dad saw Jimi Hendrix" (80)—a personal connection to the street that stretches back decades.

4 Eng edits this particular poem between the first and second editions of her book. This passage reflects the formatting of the recent third edition.

5 The figure of over five hundred missing and murdered women is provided by Eng, credited to the Native Women's Association of Canada and collected in the middle of "knuckle sandwich": "the Native Women's Association of Canada has documented / over 500 cases of Aboriginal Missing and Murdered Women / from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (and Prince George and / Edmonton and . . .) and across Canada over the last 30 years" (26).

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Franco Cortese

Il Aqua

Essence. A makeshift mirror of itself. A stretch at best beset to boot. A foot, a head, itself. A sense and sentence, seamlessly seemly. An echo allways, onword runnur and river sliver etchling eschered and eggy again, a humpbackagain clown and pregnant ass with hunchbacked crown. Gaudy doggod agog in sellfreefelective gag, a ha aha. Aching amongrel ken; a housialeighter for knowing wit now in tow, gnoing noun owing ghostly gown n hostly down to what ex actly, stages bound to round abound. Murmur murder mummur, mother mirror father feerer freer for being farther along all along, lone but honing tward somethink eerily simylar toots'elf innanother diemention. Esprit estrit sick n strangaled by cunseeld mobiousia tit lhacking tation tat furst yet farthere fortit. Man air a mirror of his further, the mireore ur mirari and skyflex cleft astarry, sum halfbegotten sun of a stoary nearly done, fathered by post and pun and tittle deeds wondone asund, a sunspun spire and crown lyare leyne dun dheue brest n drunk on old rivers strhiving air fhire yet keupt tat baee bye cold innert coulp detatched fro mitself bi juste a hare arriven from wherr indheed. Eis t for slavory lips slackmawed and fallgagged, an mt tubyorknotuby true itself and ropy hinnterscope that can be travaled but nair unvailed without sundoing itself asund. A bend unending. A sleeping mined ali've and the ghost of a mind awake. A solem plaster spell injuncted into the gusty gist of an occidantel shell. A band of bugelnoz bungles jest ahedah an aptr ganga cooks crooking you afore. The manus manes defamed in nightpane pire aghast in the moonlight. A ruahral speisees of spirazship strung from spiers spun from spirastalk lusind by leukwarm waters aflame. Ghosti hostis to the guessed inside.

Andre Furlani

"*Flânoter*"

The Montreal Pedestrian Narrates

1. Gress

The Montreal pedestrian passes advertisements in French and English recruiting to the Canadian Association of Chartered Accountants:

> _ _ _ GRESSEZ PLUS VITE.
> _ _ _ GRESS MORE QUICKLY.

The advertisement anticipates the on-and-up work ethic prefix *pro*, then supplies it: "Devenez pro"—"Become pro."

Progress literally means a motivated step, a "forward stride." Though familiar in both languages only in their pronominal compounds, *gressez* and gress are independent verbs, denoting intransitive bipedal locomotion. The ad thus betrays a contrary impulse, cousin to the Latin saw *festina lente* and the German *eile mit Weile*: DAWDLE FASTER. Many footloose Montreal writers get the message; while the accountants urge pedestrians to stride towards professional accreditation, they invite readers to dally. This is not as innocent as it sounds.

Reading public signs against type mimics Situationist *détournement*, the extraction of a saucy sense from atrophied public communication. *Détournement* was first practised on foot, during randomized urban *dérives* that Guy Debord defined as "a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances" under "the domination of psychogeographical variations by the knowledge and calculation of their possibilities" (62). This mode of urban gression self-consciously derives and yet also deviates from *flânerie*, a practice retaining class hypocrisy: both genteel sauntering and delinquent "loitering," gadding about and vagrancy. No longer, however, does it narrowly denote disaffected bourgeois masculinity, decadence, or a patrician imperturbability immune to the clamour and solicitations of the city. Montreal's diverse *flâneurs* and *flâneuses* are stalkers and foragers on the prowl for the composite character of a city that defies subordination to a single or unifying social script.

André Carpentier rehabilitates *flânerie* over three years of intermittent strolls along the four hundred kilometres of Montreal's alleys, a bivalent routine of idleness and activity that organizes his *Ruelles, jours ouvrables* (*Alleys, Working Days*):

> La flânerie engage à conjuguer par la promenade des espaces publics, à zigzaguer sans but, sans calcul, prémuni de son flair, de son acuité, de sa pleine subjectivité, de sorte à enclencher sa function de machine à percevoir, aussi à se cogner aux lieux, puisque *le corps nous unit aux choses*, comme l'écrit Merleau-Ponty. (16, emphasis original)[1]

Carpentier coins the portmanteau verb *flânoter* to denote the twin practice of loitering and noting: "J'aime à croire que le verb clé de mon entreprise est flânoter, qui, à l'oreille, joint la flâne à la prise de notes" (102).[2] Carpentier's very title insists on the productive cultural work mere meandering may accomplish, and his neologism unites peripatetic and rhetorical agency. Such conflation has an august pedigree, for already in the 1589 *Arte of English Poesie*, the earliest English manual of its kind, George Puttenham translates *digressio* as "straggler" (240), personifying as pedestrian the figure of insouciant verbal deviation.

That straggling can be unlawful, Carpentier is reminded by the local police. The bipedal deviant must answer for his presence in the very lanes of his childhood, and when he explains that he is taking notes for a book, the constable retorts that "ce n'est pas la place pour écrire un roman" (32)—this is no place to write a novel. Carpentier must assume a cognito, pushing a bicycle to gain safe conduct. One of his inspirations, Franz Hessel, whose pedestrian itineraries of Berlin inspired Walter Benjamin to recuperate the category of *flânerie*, identifies himself as "the suspect" ("*der Verdächtige*") (Hessel 23), because his moseys along the Kurfürstenstraße routinely arouse suspicion. Echoing the distinction between gress and progress, Hessel laments that, in his bustling metropolis, "one doesn't go wherever, one goes *to* somewhere. It is not easy for our sort" (26).[3]

Pedestrian zones are precisely where a good many Montrealers have been writing their novels, in part because these areas elude or thwart official enforcement. Jane Jacobs identified sidewalks, alleys, and small parks as the basic units of urban vitality in *The Death and Life of Great American*

Cities. Carpentier and his fellow pedestrial writers are keen to "*flânoter*" the polyglot interstitial passages of the city, in the pervasive electric light looking and pricking up their ears to the diapason of the bilingual and intercultural dual city. These writers, including Leonard Cohen, Hugh Hood, Gail Scott, Rawi Hage, and Peter Dubé, register Montreal's meshwork in the itinerant plurality of languages, descending into the aural labyrinth to recombine its elements into an insurgent public space. They equate wandering with knowing and reveal, indeed revel in the fact, that third spaces—those proximate, levelling, and convivial public areas between home and work that foster transient encounter (see Soja)—are not confined strictly to determinate sites but are as fluid and situational as the languages used there, and as fluid as pedestrial subjectivity itself.

A narrative orientation on linear, successive street-level vulnerability accumulates relations through saccadic, unpredictable lived experience. Deviation, surprise, and change of aspect are at the basis of such an aesthetic. Far from being a nostalgic throwback to pre-mechanized modes of transit and social organization, or a supplement to the tourist guide, pedestrial narrative can offer a vigorous restatement of the primary and ineradicable conditions of human encounter within blurred and fluctuating boundaries, including linguistic and conceptual boundaries. In the Montreal of these writers, relations are impelled rather than impeded by ambiguity, the etymology of which is bipedal indecision ("walking to and fro"). In political terms, such labile relations confound the restrictive identities of conventional political affiliation; for liberty is exercised on the hoof as well as at the barricades, a mutable positionality that anonymous, informal pedestrianism promotes.

The peripatetic Montreal narratives examined here seek a mutable ecology hidden in plain sight. They recover what Francesco Careri calls "passional regions" in "a fluid space" ("terreni passionali" in "uno spazio liquido"), urban areas that generate disorienting but productive affective tensions (73). Areas that, in this essay, comprise Carpentier's alleys, Hood's Mont Royal, Cohen's parc Lafontaine, and the Main of Scott and Hage. The walkers here examined do not simply record but also remake Montreal in a stealthy guerrilla urbanism (see Hou 1) that is in the process of reforming the contemporary city.

2. Transgress

Though characterized as an exemplary "walkable" city (see Soderstrom 218, and Speck), Montreal is not a placid jurisdiction, and indeed the city's layout enables literal aggression: confrontational walking. There are many large squares and boulevards well adapted to unauthorized public circulation of the kind that disrupted the 2008 World Economic Summit and sustained the *printemps érable* protests against university tuition increases four years later that contributed to the defeat of the Jean Charest Liberal government.

In Peter Dubé's peripatetic political novel *The City's Gates*, the city's gaits assume a radicalizing logic that crystalizes in anti-capitalist campaigns when Montreal hosts an international summit. At a speakeasy named the Ocean, where the narrator, Lee, collects intelligence in the conflicting roles of turncoat and secret agent, a member of the clandestine "Mals" says to him of the renegades, student protestors, and street kids:

> [T]hey all land here because they're *moving*. They're not sitting still. What you just don't get, Lee, is that we're—all of us—about trajectory, about a kind of voyage. We're the fucking city's gates. People come through us when they're on the way in to the clanging, clashing life of the town, or when they're on the way out. Which way are you headed? Because right now you're stationary. (Dubé 123)

The novel follows Lee's pedestrian passage through varied ambiances into enlistment in revolutionary activism. He acquires a progressive social conscience by moving on foot.

In Dubé's novel, Montreal is a vigorously contested social imaginary, a city of uneven geographies and spatial instabilities that its pedestrian narrators gingerly tread. The densely varied urban scale, intensified by the historical diversity of buildings and architectural styles, as well as the topographic compression between river and mountain, invites the plotting of narrative vectors on an insistently bipedal scale. The writers examined here recognize, like Dubé, the possibilities inherent in so much propinquity from port to peak: ethnic groups, economic classes, and linguistic borders are contiguous, largely unmarked, and fluid.

A walkable city reinforces the real conditions of knowledge that the prevalent transport paradigm elides. "For all of us, in reality, knowledge is not built up as we go across, but rather grows as we go along," social anthropologist Tim Ingold writes in *Lines* (102). People come to know what they do, Ingold explains in a later essay,

> by *going around* in an environment. The knowledge they acquire, I argue, is integrated not *up* the levels of a classification but *along* paths of movement, and people grow into it by following trails through a meshwork. I call this trail-following *wayfaring*, and conclude that it is through wayfaring and not transmission that knowledge is carried on. (*Being Alive* 143, emphasis original)

The wayfarer contrives an itinerary along a way, from which narrative emerges. Ingold contrasts the wayfarer with the navigator, who "has before him a complete representation of the territory, in the form of a cartographic map, upon which he can plot a course even before setting out. The journey then is no more than an explication of the plot" (*Lines* 15-16). For the wanderer, by contrast, route, text, and memory are journeys made "rather than an object found" (16). The philosopher Frédéric Gros similarly exalts the walk as a liberating opportunity "to be disentangled from the web of exchanges, no longer reduced to a junction in the network redistributing information, images, and goods" (4-5).

Walking is the means by which stories are converted to a form of knowledge that never forgets its basis in processes and that derives its vitality from the vulnerable conditions of finite embodiment rather than in hypostatized forms. "The urban stroller is *subversive*," Gros insists: "He subverts the crowd, the merchandise, and the town, along with their values" (177). The ambiguous forms of "resistance" the walker takes can be peculiarly potent precisely because, by and large, resistance is impalpable: "Subversion is not a matter of opposing but of evading, deflecting, altering with exaggeration, accepting blandly and moving rapidly on" (Gros 178). As we will see in the case of Gail Scott, *la flâneuse* subverts by definition, as Lauren Elkin notes:

> [I]t's the centre of cities where women have been empowered, by plunging into the heart of them, and walking where they're not meant to. Walking where other people (men) walk without eliciting comment. That is the transgressive act. You don't need to crunch around in Gore-Tex to be subversive, if you're a woman. Just walk out your front door. (20)

Such literal aberration ("wandering off") becomes a subtle tactic of urban reconceptualization, and the inconspicuously renegade wanderers of Montreal pedestrian fiction collect into an unarmed militia that has goaded and increasingly guided city planners into what is now becoming axiomatic of public policy.

3. Congress

Mont Royal is the city's most prominent pedestrian contact zone. Sherry Simon notes that Frederick Law Olmsted, in designing the park in the 1880s,

> conceived of the mountain as a poem whose meaning would progressively unfold as the viewer/walker followed its paths. The landscape was a work of art not only through the shapes that the author had scripted into it, but through the ever-changing readings that the viewers/walkers would create as a result of their particular trajectory and viewing positions. (194)

These "ever-changing readings" attract writers like Hugh Hood to the park. His choice of the mountain as the hub of his Expo '67 periplus *Around the Mountain: Scenes from Montreal Life* is consonant with Olmsted's determination to rectify sectarianism in a morally improving *théâtre verdure*. In "Looking Down from Above," Hood's alter ego hikes along the paths behind the Université de Montréal during la Fête nationale, Quebec's national holiday, ascending in easy stages the north salient, where he happens upon *la fête champêtre* of his old neighbours les Bourbonnais, who invite him to partake. The emaciated husband, who had improved Hood's French and revealed to him the plight of the city's working class, suffers from a pulmonary disorder likely contracted on his menial job, which he must retain because he is without employment insurance. Yet he and his wife have raised their children into the middle class, and together they raise a toast to national self-determination. Suspended above the city and beyond its social stratification, this is as close as they come to politics on this most political of Quebec holidays. Douglas Ivison notes how, in *Around the Mountain*, practices akin to Situationist *dérive* and *détournement*

> allow the narrators to make the urban space comprehensible for themselves and for their readers. More significantly, they allow the narrators to stumble across palimpsestic sites and to go to the margins of the city, and occasionally beyond. They are the means by which the text is able to make visible the process of urbanization (Ivison 356).

Hood continues upwards towards a promontory that will make the city visible and "comprehensible." "I could look directly down on the Bourbonnais, still soberly picnicking, and below them again on girlish tennis players whirling short skirts, a strangely mixed perspective, but I couldn't hear any voices" (Hood 94). The diorama unites the contrary purposes of a city in the midst of Expo glamour and nationalist clamour, but it can do so only in the absence of increasingly disputatious "voices." Hood's irenic conception of incremental civic rapprochement between French, English, Indigenous peoples and diasporic groups, which the mountain appears to nurture and his tread to affirm, hazards a naive anachronism that the October Crisis soon chastened.

In the months before the eruption of the FLQ insurgency, Hood could still entrust social division to the "safety valve" of the city's parks: "Urban life is full enough of strain, God knows, and if it were not for the parks the multilingual confrontations of our two million might soon become unbearable" (96). Yet in the book's next story a nationalist melee occurs in parc Lafontaine, the very name of which dignifies French-English collaboration in nation-building:

"There's trouble anyway" (96). Hood attempts to represent that most politically volatile of pedestrian masses, the demonstration, when a street-fighting manual labourer is roughed up by a riot squad at an *indépendantiste* rally. For the love of a level-headed working-class student, the labourer eventually rejects mobilization to take advantage of the educational opportunities emanating from the newly established CEGEP college system, which in Hood's earnest liberal allegory salves ethnic and class conflict. There's trouble anyway, of the kind that romantic love and educational reform paradoxically will only promote. Although the Quebec Liberal government established them partly to contain and redirect working-class nationalist dissent, the CEGEPs instead incubated the sovereignty movement.

In *Beautiful Losers*, Leonard Cohen had recently and sardonically conjured parc Lafontaine as a cradle of national grievance and self-affirmation during *la Révolution tranquille*. The renegade federal parliamentarian F. barges in on the apolitical narrator's apartment and jostles him awake: "We're going for a walk" (122). He compels his bleary friend to confess that he "wanted miracles" and leads him in the direction of secular wonder (124). "Arm in arm, we walked through the narrow harbour streets of Montreal" (125) towards the park, where a nationalist rally is protesting Queen Elizabeth II's state visit.

The rapidly changing topography and toponymy of the geographically varied and historically rich city tangibly predisposes the course of an episode organized along pedestrial vectors. The harbour streets, which Cohen would shortly memorialize in the sedating feminine rhymes of "Suzanne," are a cobbled warren of vacated limestone warehouses, notary offices, seminaries, Catholic churches, and townhouses, vestigial successively of Ancien Régime absolutism, Roman clerical domination, and British colonialism. The mercantile and financial activity has shifted downtown, and the port authority has moved operations to larger quays, leaving the old city to fall back on tourism. In strolling towards an Arcadian greensward of utopian nationalist autarky, Cohen's pedestrian pair literally shifts from the riparian, pre-industrial provincial harbour towards a congested, commercial quarter of the working poor. Parc Lafontaine is a Confederation common planted for the political palliation and salubrious cultural uplift of the French working-class, but as *Around the Mountain* chronicles, it is being repurposed as a shambolic venue of nationalist *ressentiment*.

Cohen's narrator quickly recognizes the precariousness of his status. "This is an ugly crowd, F. Let's walk faster. —No, it is a beautiful crowd" (125). F. "pulled me to the scene of the commotion" (125) where, to F.'s satisfaction, the narrator is groped and soon joins in the denunciations against the English. "I was now a joyful particle" of the crowd, reciprocating the gropes: "[O]ur rhythmical movements . . . corresponded to the very breathing of the mob" (127, 128). F. is triumphantly raised by the protesters, "and I knew all of us were going to come together" (129). The ecstatic demonstration, however, prematurely dissolves in a kind of *coitus interruptus*. Though the narrator implores the protestors to resume, they are in no mood to appreciate his irreverence. He is exposed as an Anglo and vilified as Jew. He has to be rescued from the angry mob by his guide. Yet F. reassures his crestfallen friend of his success: he has "passed the test" (131). How so?

Individual and collective aspirations, vital to the constitutional debates surrounding Quebec sovereignty, conflict in *Beautiful Losers* and *Around the Mountain*. A decade after the publication of "Two Concepts of Liberty," Isaiah Berlin's distinction between positive and negative liberty has been taken to the street. The positive concept, Berlin asserts, is self-realized in principled political action, while the negative is a bulwark against state interference in private life (for recent discussion, see Gatti). It was the constitutional privileges of Catholic worship, freedom of assembly and association, the parliamentary franchise, and *habeas corpus* accorded under the Crown, rather than the regicidal secularism of the French revolutionary *droits des hommes*, that resonated most profoundly in an ultramontane French Canada wary of the expansionist Protestant capitalism emanating from its southern border, with consequences that survived the 1837 Rebellions, the Conscription Crisis, the October Crisis, and the unilateral repatriation of the Constitution (see Lamonde, chapters 3-6). The political career of Pierre Elliott Trudeau epitomized the transition between polarities of positive and negative liberty that issued in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Cohen's narrator walks from private liberty to civic republicanism and back out again, like many Canadian liberals of the period of the Quiet Revolution, but this does not signal disavowal, disaffection, or impassivity. He has indeed "passed the test." The civic is measured out in footsteps, mapped as precisely described commons where personal freedoms and group obligations intersect and entangle, then just as freely disentangle and separate. Transient assembly, rather than institutional partisan affiliation, becomes a pedestrial mode of political agility, an anonymous mode of circulation divested of stable ideological markers or fixed self-identification. This becomes a guerilla tactic, as in Dubé's *The City's Gates*; walking off, as in

Beautiful Losers, does not necessarily equate with political disenchantment or apathy, any more than marching in demonstrates fealty to a program, as in *Around the Mountain*.

The *flâneurs* and *flâneuses* of the texts under discussion are not the blasé possessive individualists of Marxist critique from C. B. Macpherson to Alain Badiou, but social actors engaged at the level of their gait, along the sidewalk that Jane Jacobs first identified in this very period as a political space where personal freedoms and collective political agency converge (see Jacobs 29-88). The sidewalk and other pedestrial third spaces align and permeate the politics they facilitate.

A material performativity may be simultaneous with, or, as Judith Butler proposes, operate even prior to its discursive complement. Butler argues that speech acts constitutive of political enlistment do not precede but proceed from an emergent consensus of action: "the assembly of bodies, their gestures and movements, their vocalizations, and their ways of acting in concert" (Butler 50). Performative political enactments, in conjunction with speech acts (themselves increasingly virtualized through portable and other electronic media), materially may give rise to collective self-constitution. What the Montreal pedestrians narrate, then, is not quietist defection from civic engagement but footloose forays against a politics that impedes alternative interstitial paths into the urban imaginary.

4. Digress

In Gail Scott's metafiction *Heroine*, the eponymous protagonist is wholly a creature, indeed creation of, the city, and of a city author—the interdiegetic one, as well; both are mobile textual entities generating provisional, conflicting representations of politically enfranchised femininity. In the era of the first Parti Québecois government, the feminism and class solidarity of this heroine with the *indépendantistes* is jeopardized by her English origins, her Marxist abhorrence of ethnic nationalism, her avant-garde aesthetic, and her vestigial petit-bourgeois yearning for domesticity. The leftists, sovereigntists, and surrealists with whom she makes common cause are not immune to chauvinism, for their anti-establishment radicalism often excuses sexism and personal irresponsibility.

With rare exceptions (notably Virginia Woolf's saunter in "Street Haunting"), *flânerie* was a male prerogative almost until the Situationists began recruiting female street kids, such as Michèle Bernstein, into their milieu in the 1950s. *Le flâneur*, like *der Stadtbummler*, *il vagabondo*, and other vagrants, is male because urban space is, literally, aggressively gender encoded, necessitating the recent neologism *la flâneuse*. What is overlooked, however, even by Lauren Elkin in *Flâneuse*, is that the activity itself is grammatically feminine: *la flânerie*. Stereotypes of femininity get attached to the act, regardless of actor. The blasé window-shopping traipse of the leisured bourgeois woman, on display yet enticingly unavailable among the Paris *passages*, is not a deviation from, but paradigmatic of, *une flânerie* resistant to the gendered criteria of male taxonomists. This forager empowered by her purse meanwhile crosses paths with the determined gait of her stalking double the streetwalker, a recurrent figure in *Heroine*. In "Théorie de la démarche," the earliest such "Theory of the Walk," Honoré de Balzac makes the implicit distinction: "En marchant, les femmes peuvent tout montrer, mais ne rien laisser voir" (75).[4] *Allure* is the literal French for gait.

Le flâneur roved bearing the safe conduct of his sex. Women could not even sport proper boots, as George Sand realized when she discarded her delicate shoes, which made her feel on the pavement "like a boat on ice," and donned male attire and boots in a Paris at once brought effortlessly under heel: "With those steel-tipped heels I was solid on the sidewalk at last. I dashed back and forth across Paris and felt I was going around the world" (Sand 203-04). An exhilarating mobility unencumbered by tight dainty footwear revealed itself and the city to her, as it does to Scott's heroine, who strides out to affront a closely monitored, confined, and menaced female mobility. Dianne Chisholm notes that, in contrast to the disaffected bourgeois individualism of the Second Empire male epitome, "Scott's *flâneur* is neither self-possessed nor naturally detached" (166). She cannot be because, in the fractious public spaces of *Heroine*, Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial narratives disrupt as much as complement one another in ways that hobble her step. Scott adopts a corresponding rhetoric of interruption modelled on the saccadic pace of her troubled *flâneuse*. The prose is inflected by the everyday conditions of highly politicized linguistic and gendered duality.

Scott's alter ego puts on "the pink lenses I call my glasses of objective chance" (*Heroine* 73) and sallies forth to meet her Surrealist cénacle for a *déambulation*. On a detour up the mountain she runs into her fellow members, who are draping André Breton slogans from trees in a park whose designer barred signage from it.

> LA BEAUTÉ SERA CONVULSIVE OU NE SERA PAS. Who's that Black Guy R's talking to? Trying to persuade, I bet, that there are similarities between the québecoise and Black revolution.

> "Yeah," says the Black guy. "I doubt it."
>
> . . .
>
> "Well," says R, getting ready to give him one of Mary's posters. (A good revolutionary never gives up.) "If you don't trust white revolutionaries, what about we artists?"
>
> The Black tourist says: "You tell me: how would you treat me in a novel? Among other things, I bet at every mention you'd state my colour." (78)

A Quebec nationalism that forgets the province's own history of racial oppression, including slavery, and identifies its aspirations with those of disenfranchised African Americans, Third World postcolonials, and oppressed women is mocked on a bucolic mountain pavilion. The stranger, whose meander through Montreal lays down another set of tracks through *Heroine*, objects to the expedient political analogy. This is not the kind of "convulsive" beauty that the group wishes to trigger, and the protagonist, as a female Anglo, is marginal enough in this group to discern the ironies. "I step back in the trees, unable to bear another contradiction" (78). She has to "step back" in the figurative sense as much as the literal. Her politics alter with her gait.

The protagonist recovers the sensation of freedom that William Hazlitt had identified in 1821 as the dominant trait of walking in the earliest English essay on the subject, "On Going a Journey" (136-38). However idyllic, this freedom is not incompatible with her collectivist commitments, divided as they may be. The limited, in many respects "negative," liberty she attains in the concluding sections of the novel inheres in her pedestrian adroitness. That liberty is never wholly free of social entanglements and ironies, as the dissolution of her love affair underscores. She had admired how a free-spirited girlfriend strutted down Saint Catherine Street, "her mysterious smile and a way of walking well back (so that the pelvis protrudes) on her flat-heeled shoes, indicating certain women never never never will be slaves" (149). The facetious allusion to "Rule Britannia" redounds upon her when, a year later, she spots her unfaithful lover striding hand in hand with this same all-too-free spirit.

"This is a boot city" (78), she declares, yet dons soft soles that allow her to prowl and register the city's textures through the soles of her feet. At the end of the novel she gads along the Main in damp sneakers that make her conscious of the pedestrian performance of gender: "The heroine keeps walking. Wondering why a woman can't get what she wants without going into business on every front. Social, political, economic, domestic. Each requiring a different way of walking, a different way of talking" (184). In

Heroine, the woman talks in two languages and walks in several. She adjusts her gait according to the changing terrain, a nimbleness that bodes well for her adaptability to the various affordances of the city, where she must be able to alter her gait from detached loiterer to involved republican possibly within the span of a single block. She does not have to choose between submission to restrictively gendered state ordnances or indulgence in private fantasies of unencumbered personal autonomy. She can reach both places on foot, because the pedestrian elation in part originates in the confidence that they occupy the same ground.

Frank Davey argues that, in leaving her bathtub to stride out into the city, G. S.'s bid for "heroinism" "no longer has political content; it has become merely an individual's 'brave' attempt to continue to live—to leave a bathtub, or take a mundane walk outside one's home" (69). This overlooks the inherent political content in female pedestrianism, which strides against the gendered curtailments to mobility that organize urban space, constraints that also determine women's footwear in the period the novel describes. In reference to *Heroine*, Lianne Moyes notes: "Whereas a man's movement, his capacity to exercise his gaze, and his presence in the city is a function of his anonymity and invisibility, a woman's limited movement, her inability to return his gaze, and her historical absence (invisibility) in the city, can be understood as a function of her visibility" ("Introduction" 8). Ellen Servinis notes that, in Scott's work, pedestrial randomness "signifies differently for women in the city" (149). The eponymous *Heroine* anticipates Lydia in *Main Brides*, who, Servinis notes, "inhabits and reflects a part of Montreal that defies easy categorizations and eludes unitary notions of identity or of the city itself" (150).

Janet Wolff and Deborah L. Parsons, among other scholars, have denied the historical existence of the female *flâneur* (see Wolff 45; Parsons 4); Griselda Pollock insists that "there is not and could not be a female *flâneuse*" (71). Yet writers like Scott, not only in *Heroine* but in *Main Brides* and *My Paris*, adopt the category, with the republican ictus of George Sand's iron-shod heels. Implicitly claiming to be *une flâneuse* reclaims a bipedal dignity from gender stereotype.

The public exercise of private "negative" liberty has a cumulative force that this novel, like all those here examined, traces. Scott's heroine is a postmodern "character-in-progress," Nicole Markotic notes (38), but so too is Montreal; the city shapes and is shaped by ambulatory passage. Scott calls her *flâneuse* a "'writing subject' in-the-feminine. Not the self as a (feminist or otherwise) predetermined figure, but a complex tissue of texts, experience, evolving in the very act of writing" (*Spaces* 11). The negative freedom from state interference and the positive freedom of participation in the *res publica* match stride at the level of Scott's street. "I say nothing," Scott's later *flâneuse* declares of her detached yet receptive immersion in *My Paris*: "Wanting to stay afloat. To stay out of categories. Moving back and forth. Across comma of difference. A gerund. A gesture" (107). Freedom to roam the metropolis depends on the success of civic actors like Scott's heroines to cut across differences to claim and thus spatially modify the city through their surveying step.

5. Aggress

The pedestrians of *Ruelles*, *The City's Gates*, *Around the Mountain*, *Beautiful Losers*, and *Heroine* attempt to walk away from the constraints of class, sex, language, and ethnicity without denying their force or dispelling their dignity. In *Cockroach,* it may be easier to walk away from one's species than from one's race. Rawi Hage's nightwalker is a refugee from the civil war in Lebanon, where he thieved and intrigued. His penchant for walking in his adopted Montreal is one externalization of a repetition compulsion that determines his fate. Having botched a vendetta that cost his sister's life in their Lebanese town, he now conspires with the Iranian refugee Shohreh to exact vengeance on the putative officer, residing now in Montreal, who raped and tortured her in one of the Ayatollah's prisons. Hage's inadvertent *flâneur* has limited access to Isaiah Berlin's negative liberty and almost none to the positive variety.

The author of *De Niro's Game* and *Carnival*, which concerns a taxi driver, Hage has created an émigré Travis Bickle, an anti-hero whose homicidal fantasies of becoming an armed catcher in the rye are acted out in the winter city. Hage's underground man, who like Dostoyevsky's yearns to identify himself with the cockroaches that silently swarm his tenement in the dark, circulates among Middle Eastern and North African émigrés. He loiters with intent, trespassing and stalking shoppers, restaurant patrons, an Iranian government official, an Algerian professor, and even the court-appointed psychiatrist who is treating him in the aftermath of attempted suicide.

Meanwhile, his apparently aimless confinement largely within regulated public space coincides with his precarious status as a *méteque*: although fluently bilingual in the "official" state languages, the designations "English" and "French" are palpably denied him; though a Christian, he is subject to Muslim stereotyping; and though a beneficiary of a federal system of universal welfare entitlement, he is tacitly refused assimilation into such sovereign imaginaries as "the people" or "*le peuple*" (see Olson 123). The latter terms are neither necessarily synonymous in Canada nor, to Québécois nationalists, even compatible. This anonymous walker is more at ease with an unassimilated ethnic denomination—the "foreigner"—that declines the hyphenated citizenship of federally mandated multiculturalism (see Harel).

The peripatetic English writer Iain Sinclair calls ours the age not of the *flâneur* but of the stalker: "walking with a thesis, with a prey" (75). The stalker, he notes, is "a stroller who sweats, who knows where he is going but not necessarily why" (75). The stalker is also both utterly self-absented (leaving no tracks) and predatorily present, an expeditionary, like Sophie Calle pursuing a stranger through Venetian alleys (Italian *calle*) in the performance piece *Suite vénitienne*, her gendered riposte to the masculine tracker, from Poe's "Man of the Crowd" to Vito Acconci's *Following Piece*. What Benjamin said of Hessel's Berlin applies equally to Hage's Montreal: "Here rather than in Paris one understands how the *flâneur* could part company with the philosophical walker and acquire the features of the werewolf, restlessly prowling in the social wilderness" ("Die Wiederkehr" 420).[5] To be human, Hage's creature must first become animal. The difference from Benjamin is the descent from romanticized mammalian predator to Kafkaesque vermin, where the distinction between figurative and literal senses blurs.

Hage's diasporic malingerer, who collects welfare and later becomes a dishwasher in a Persian restaurant, has a paired means to assert himself in the dual space: to write and to walk. The novel sustains a dodgy pedestrian enunciation. Not content to answer compliantly the therapist's questions and walk the straight and narrow, he follows his own plot and path—into private dwellings and even into other people's shoes. It is not by means of therapy but by errancy that the narrator hopes to regain command of his own narrative; the talking cure accedes to the walking cure. In contrast, however, to the other works discussed here, the narrative and peripatetic trajectory is not gressive but aggressive, not aimless meander but adversarial march.

The plot literally turns on its narrator's heels, each stage signalled by a particular pair of shoes. Emigration becomes a process of being discalced and gradually refitted for foreign terrain. Because the narrator lacks boots during the winter that spans the novel, footwear properly becomes vibrant matter for this interloper—an entity modifying another entity in an interfolding assemblage of energies and bodies (see Bennett 111-17). In soggy loafers he glares at "heavy boots" treading invulnerably through the slush (Hage 8), covets a venerable pair of officer's boots, envies the "well-mannered feet" of a bourgeois couple (89), and, like Charles Bovary arrested by the row of shoes tidied by Mademoiselle Emma in her father's vestibule, marks the "two pairs of shoes neatly placed side by side" in the invaded professor's basement flat (149). He is able to recognize his psychiatrist in the street by her shoes.

The therapy is suspended when he insolently confides to the psychiatrist that he broke into her condominium and filched her slippers. Without proper shoes he lacks the footing to execute vengeance on the purported Iranian torturer, so he bargains illicitly for the boots of a British officer, a Royal Military accoutrement resonating with echoes of the Levantine Protectorate. He nicks the boots from the officer's widow: "Anyhow, the old lady's husband stole everything from the Indians, or the Chinese. Maybe he paid nothing, or very little" (41). Like Ralph Ellison's eponymous invisible man thieving the current from Con Edison to illuminate his Harlem barrow, the narrator disguises self-interest as restitution, claiming that he wants "the stolen treasure put back where it belongs, in the underground" (42). The shoes give him needed impetus after his bout of suicidal despair: "Then I ran down the stairs and out of the building and walked above the earth and its cold white crust, feeling warm and stable" (253). On the icy streets friction is no mere figure of speech: "The grips of my boots' soles anchored me more firmly than ever in the soil hidden beneath the street's white surfaces" (257). The telluric energies beneath the frozen pavement course through his body and impel his close conspiracy with the Iranian refugee.

These shoes take the émigré along the city's third spaces, including a Persian restaurant, a Mediterranean café, a welfare office, the old port, and along the sidewalks that connect them. Listening in *Cockroach* extends from different languages to different surfaces. In the rain he hears "the tempo of my wet feet" (287); he attends to the impact of boots on sludge, the swish of slippers over pine floorboards, and high heels "clacking along the street" (298). Just about any space can resonate in this novel of insect echolocation. His turf is the resonant Main, where so many of Montreal's pedestrian narrators botanize on the pavement, as Benjamin described the *flâneur*. A Lebanese Christian like Hage, the narrator is both resident alien and ideally mobile Montrealer: like many older Quebeckers, he too was educated by French nuns; he is a fluently bilingual subject who also, as an Arab man, has that outsider's perspective that, paradoxically, even Quebec's dominant social groups arrogate to themselves (Francophones as a Canadian minority, Anglophones as a Quebec minority).

Cockroach is directed against the flattering pieties of federal multiculturalism and Quebec's more ambiguous "*interculturelle*" policy that would soon polarize social groups during the Pauline Marois government, when, in a controversial bid to shore up political support in conservative francophone regions of the province, her Parti Québécois tabled mandatory secularization (*laïcité*) legislation, modelled on France's calamitous policy. The law, which the recently elected Coalition Avenir Québec government of François Legault vows to enact, would ban conspicuous ("*ostentatoire*") religious garb and pendants by civil servants and educators, while the crucifix would continue conspicuously to hang from the provincial legislature, L'Assemblée nationale. The novel depicts pockets of immigrant groups stagnating in the interstices of the French and English societies. Some are obliged cynically to trade on their vulnerability to gain the charity of self-serving liberals, whose inclusive idealism is flattered with an image of Canada's improving influence on the lives of refugees of authoritarian regimes and "failed" States (see Libin).

In a novel whose dominant trope is of intrepid cockroach tenacity, the narrator manoeuvres in the fissures between social groups and languages. More like the metamorphosing heroes of *The Thousand and One Nights* than Gregor Samsa, the protagonist revels in an unsustainable identification with the despised vermin. Even after he murders the Iranian official and his bodyguard at the Persian restaurant, he persists in imagining himself making an escape down the kitchen drain as a cockroach. The novel pointedly does not divulge where he washes up, since he really has no place to go.

The sound of the narrator's voice is not more insistent than the sound of his wet feet over the snow. What he hears through the "crunchy white crust that breaks and cracks under your feet" is the acoustics of the underworld, realm of the cockroach, of the Id, and of the dead: "It is something that comes out from underground and then stays at the surface" (127). Here is another language, that of the urban underworld after hours. "My feet had a different rhythm than usual for them, and I was not sure if this was because the snow was different, the ice less squeaky, or if it was I who was not in harmony" (157). The snowbanks impeding him, he attempts "walking to another rhythm," only to find a liberating alternative pace in these very obstacles: "I felt that the cleaned-up paths were disruptive, hindering me from creating a perfect harmonious rhythm from my breath and the falling city lights" (157-58). What he thus registers, with an eloquence that the vicissitudes of speech between state representatives and refugee claimant often thwarts, is the discord between foreign figure and alienating ground. Even more than his coerced language of testimony to state agents, the narrator's constrained bipedal reverberations do not align with the civic, administered, and existential thoroughfares of the ambivalently hospitable emigrant city (see Harel 129). Only once he assumes a fatalistic pace does the narrator achieve, at sickening cost, a sinister peace with his surroundings. At a "crossroads" his feet lead him, oblivious to the cold, not to Shohreh's apartment or the bars on the Main, but, "for no reason," to the old port, which yields him a pedestrian epiphany of mortal migrancy: "Maybe we, like elephants, walk towards our chosen burials" (160). He has emigrated not to better his life but "to better my death" (160).

Seduced by misleading personal symmetries that pathologically heal the impotent failure of his earlier scheme to murder his brother-in-law, the narrator conspires in Shohreh's revenge fantasy. When she sends him back to his tenement in the middle of an icy night, he refuses her offer of cab fare.

> I wanted to walk and hear crushing sounds under my feet again. Night is the only time when one can impose one's own sounds on the world. In the absence of wolves' howls, hyenas' laughs, nightbirds' songs, and a full moon, it was up to a human to make noises, to fill the void. But the snow was soft. My steps were muffled. It was quiet, so quiet that I felt as if I did not walk but instead crawled in silence. (249)

The desired homology between walking and enunciation is both sustained and jeopardized by this winter. The foot leaves tracks but dampens the step. Desire for a self-affirming stomp and retaliatory "crushing" is not gratified. He notes diurnal effects (a moonless sundown), the rhythm of his step (muffled), and the effect of weather (crisp fresh snow). And shod now in a British officer's boots, he both symbolically rehearses the Protectorate that succeeded the Ottomans in the eastern Levant and symbolically overthrows it. The boots are a reminder that the root of sabotage is French footwear, *le sabot*, clog pitched into the cogs of machinery. His nihilism both prospers in Montreal's third space and mocks complacent notions of its touted hospitality.

Durable footwear is thus sufficient to power a story that circulates over compactly organized yet porous social strata. The shoe sole alters the imprint of all these narratives. Walking becomes a signature, but it is not the singular authenticating step charted by security agencies, nor the State-flattering spoor-track of harmonized intercultural migration; instead it is a medley of gaits depending on gradient, surface, and weather. Nothing is long generalized or permitted to remain an untested abstraction.

Walkers accede to a finite, exposed, successive, and linear subjectivity, and without retrenchment in Romantic idealism transform these constraints, not unproblematically, into limited freedoms. The step leads them into spaces that slowness deepens into place. In an age of spatial compression and temporal acceleration, where time is a pre-eminently valued commodity, space is reaffirmed through an embodied politics and poetics. All paths the strolling Montreal story takes wend towards altered notions of civic participation. The rovers may be anonymous and unsponsored subjects on the bummel from the encroachments of social identity and State categories, yet equally they belong to an informal civilian militia made up of those who patrol its liberties and modify its contours.

NOTES

1 "*Flânerie* invites one to link together public spaces by strolling, zigzagging aimlessly, without purpose, armed with flared senses, acuity, full subjectivity, in a way that engages one's function as a perceiving machine, bumping against places as well, since *the body unites us with things*, as Merleau-Ponty wrote." Unless otherwise noted, translations are by the author.

2 "I like to think that the key verb of my venture is *flânoting*, which to the ear links *flâne* to note-taking."

3 "Hier geht man nicht wo, sondern wohin. Es ist nicht leicht für unsereinen" (Hessel 26).

4 "In walking, women can show all but without revealing anything."

5 "Hier und nicht in Paris versteht man, wie der Flaneur vom philosophischen Spaziergänger sich entfernen und die Züge des unstet in der sozialen Wildnis schweifenden Werwolfs bekommen konnten." See also Benjamin, 416-55.

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Angeline Schellenberg

Sunset on Deep Bay

Water the colour of mercury
surrounds me. Only a line of trees
divides the blue above and below.
"What a Wonderful World" carries
from a pinprick of light
across the lake.

Maybe dying is like that. If
you don't turn around
the sand behind you disappears,
the ripples from a distant radio
give the feeling you are moving
closer.

Or maybe
we spend our whole life believing
we could walk on water and death
is the moment we take
our first step.

Heather Macfarlane

The Resurrection of "Charlie" Wenjack

Shortly after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) released its final report in December 2015, now-deceased Canadian musician Gord Downie of The Tragically Hip released his phenomenally successful solo album and graphic novel *Secret Path* in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the tragic death of twelve-year-old Chanie ("Charlie") Wenjack. Wenjack, of the Marten Falls Ojibwe First Nation in Northern Ontario, died in an attempt to escape from the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in Kenora, Ontario, in 1966. He was trying to return to his father, who worked in a mine near Ogoki Post, and, wearing only a windbreaker, walked for more than three days before he died of exposure by the CNR railway tracks, seven hundred kilometres from home. This same tragedy inspired numerous artistic efforts coinciding with the release of the TRC's final report, including music by A Tribe Called Red and the short film "SNIP" by Métis filmmaker Terril Calder. Controversial writer Joseph Boyden created three works based on Wenjack's story: the novella *Wenjack*, the Royal Winnipeg Ballet's *Going Home Star*, and a "Heritage Minute" funded by the Canadian government.

The TRC report condemned Canada for its attempt to eliminate Indigenous cultures and assimilate Indigenous peoples. "The establishment and operation of residential schools," the report reads, "were a central element of this policy, which can best be described as 'cultural genocide'" (Truth 7). The release of the report and the years of testimony that preceded it contributed to a desire among many Canadians for change, and the resurrection of Wenjack's story is testament to that desire. What the various treatments of the story reveal, however, are two very distinct approaches to change; the first foregrounds the Canadian nation, while the second highlights Indigenous sovereignty as the only real avenue for change. Beginning with an analysis of versions authored by Joseph Boyden and Gord Downie and moving on to an analysis of Indigenous versions by Willie Dunn and Lee Maracle, this article demonstrates that these conflicting priorities have obvious implications for the reconciliation process, and complicate desires for a new national narrative.

Wenjack's story first appeared in print one year after his death, in 1967—the year, ironically, of Canada's Centennial celebrations. *Maclean's* reporter Ian Adams wrote a feature on Wenjack detailing his escape and subsequent death. He had written an article two years earlier that was critical of the Kenora region's treatment of Indigenous peoples, presenting clear examples of segregation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, and detailing attacks on Indigenous teenagers by gangs of white men and women. The complicity of society at large demonstrates the widespread mistreatment of Indigenous peoples. In writing the article, Adams interviewed townspeople who knew of the mistreatment of the children housed in the Cecilia Jeffrey residential school, but who did nothing about it. They describe the children as frequently running away, and when they were caught and brought back, being "locked in a room with just a mattress on the floor, left only their underclothes, and put on a bread-and-milk diet" (Adams, "The Indians" 4). A past employee of the school had seen an eleven-year-old child treated this way, and had also seen "a pair of teenage Indian girls humiliated by being made to come down and eat in the dining room half dressed only in their underwear" (4). When Adams questioned the school's principal at the time, S. T. Robinson, about this treatment, Robinson admitted, "Well, I've been forced to use this punishment at times" (qtd. in Adams, "The Indians" 4). Given these revelations, Wenjack's death should have come as no surprise to the townspeople in the Kenora region; nevertheless, they did their best to discredit Adams, calling him a disillusioned "'cub reporter' allied with a known Aboriginal 'political activist' who had written the article 'to create sensationalism'" (Milloy 288). Adams was also reprimanded by *Maclean's* after the publication of his Chanie Wenjack story, and was no longer permitted to publish in the magazine. John Milloy reports that whistleblowers were routinely fired for reporting on the schools, citing the 1960 example of one woman who, after complaining of poor conditions, abusive treatment, and inadequate diet at the residential school where she worked in BC, "was fired by the principal on the charge of 'not being loyal to the school'" (288).

Runaways at institutions like Cecilia Jeffrey became so common that in 1971 the federal government's Department of Indian Affairs suggested implementing survival training for the children attending residential schools (Milloy 287). The tragic irony of this directive is inescapable, since it was the schools themselves and the children's separation from their families that made the children want to run away. Running away, in fact, became a powerful example of organized resistance: in May 1953, all thirty-two boys attending a residential school in Saskatchewan ran away together following "disciplinary action," and in 1963, twelve children ran away together from a school in in Fort Frances, Ontario (Milloy 285). Bruce Hodgins and Milloy write: "Hundreds of kids ran away from such schools; most were recaptured. A few were successful, but probably more died in the attempt. These deaths were the ultimate resistance" (223). There are certainly different ways of viewing the escapes. On the one hand, the deaths could be interpreted as tragic defeat, but on the other hand, viewing the deaths as the "ultimate resistance" serves to empower rather than victimize the children.

The spirit of resistance demonstrated by the children inspired the first creative treatment of Chanie Wenjack's story, by Métis and Mi'kmaq folksinger Willie Dunn. After Adams' article, the story lay dormant for four years until 1971 when Dunn recorded the song "Charlie Wenjack" on his first single. The song became a staple in Indigenous communities: Anishinaabe musician ShoShona Kish, of the band Digging Roots, says of Wenjack, "I feel like I've always known this story. It's probably because of the song that Willie Dunn wrote about him. I grew up with his music. The stories he told were part of my education, musically, socially, culturally" (qtd. in Kinos-Goodin). Kish's description of the story is testament to its mythic status in Indigenous communities[1]—she describes it as an integral part of her cultural development, and one that recognizes the enduring resistance of Indigenous communities. The circulation of this communal Indigenous story was reinforced by Stó:lō writer, activist, and feminist Lee Maracle's short story "Charlie" written in 1976, five years after Dunn recorded his song. Following traditional protocol, Maracle asked Dunn for permission to re-invent his song in story (Maracle, Personal interview). Despite the wide circulation within Indigenous communities of the Indigenous versions, however, it is Adams' 1967 article that Downie and Boyden cite as the inspiration for their versions of Wenjack's story, which is telling of the cultural divide that exists between Indigenous and settler artists and audiences in Canada. The fact that settler audiences had no prior knowledge of the story also demonstrates either the very successful attempts of the Canadian government to hide the atrocities resulting from colonization, or the public's wilful ignorance of such events.

The versions of the Wenjack story authored by Boyden and Downie promote a distinctly Canadian subjectivity, which separates them from the stories by Dunn and Maracle. Both Boyden and Downie undeniably promote change and recognition of the tragedy of residential schools, but their narratives are removed from the communal Indigenous tellings, and never reference Dunn and Maracle. The audiences Boyden and Downie address are primarily non-Indigenous, and unaware of previous versions of the story. While Dunn and Maracle celebrate Indigenous sovereignty by adding their voices to Indigenous communities' stories, the goal of the settler artists telling Wenjack's story is removed from such communities, and promotes a stronger *Canada*. As Downie notes in his artist's statement,

> Chanie Wenjack haunts us. His story is Canada's story. We are not the country we think we are. History will be re-written. All of the Residential Schools will be pulled apart and studied. The next hundred years are going to be painful and unsettling as we meet Chanie Wenjack and thousands like him—as we find out about ourselves, about all of us—and when we do, we can truly call ourselves "Canada." (Downie, "Statement")

The repetition of "Canada" is telling in Downie's comments in that it stresses Canadian rather than Indigenous sovereignty. There is also an element of ownership and belonging implied in "Canada's story" and "call[ing] ourselves 'Canada,'" which suggests that the story is more about healing and reconciliation for Canadians than it is for Indigenous peoples. Of all Canadians, Downie, made famous by his role as frontman for what the BBC describes as "the most Canadian band in the world" (Smith), was well positioned to promote this message to a Canadian audience. The Tragically Hip appeared on a Canadian postage stamp in 2013, and their songs include lyrics about hockey, history, geography, writers, Bobcaygeon, Toronto, Jacques Cartier, and the CBC. By including lyrics about residential schools in his roster of Canadian songs, Downie popularizes the story for Canadian audiences, educating Canada about its genocidal history. This, along with initiatives like the "Heritage Moment" written and narrated by Joseph Boyden, have put Chanie Wenjack's story back into the Canadian national spotlight at a moment when Canadians, particularly after the release of the final report of the TRC, are arguably more willing to hear about their hidden history.

Downie and Boyden share a desire for change in Canada, and use the Wenjack story as a vehicle, but while they reference each other continually, they make no reference to Maracle at all, and very little, if any, to Dunn. Kktunaxa scholar Angela Semple comments on what she signals as the danger of reducing Indigenous experience of residential schools to only one story, and also on the perception of Downie's story of Wenjack as the only story. She writes,

> rather than being, as the screen says before the novel's animation goes up 'the story of Chanie Wenjack,' [Downie's work] is merely one version of one story of not only Chanie, but of generations of residential school students. And therein lies my main issue with Downie's project. We—individually, as nations, as Indigenous peoples, are so much more than one story.

Where did the communal story reflected in the works of Dunn and Maracle go—the works Kish describes as "always there," and always a part of her "education, musically, socially, culturally"? The story, not new for Indigenous communities, is clearly new for Canadians—so much so that Joseph Boyden, when asked why he chose to tell the story of Wenjack over that of another child, wrote in an article in *Maclean's*, "Chanie chose me" ("I Believe"). Boyden does not acknowledge that if Chanie did choose him, he wasn't the first. In ignoring other tellings, intentionally or not, Boyden interrupts the communal Indigenous telling and returns instead to the settler community that originally broke the story with his statement that it was Ian Adams' article that moved him to commemorate Wenjack with his novella. Boyden takes the story and frames it for a non-Indigenous audience with the goal of moving them emotionally as the story moved him.

Boyden and Downie, both Canadian icons, were well equipped to bring the story to Canadians, but their inability to acknowledge Dunn and Maracle is troubling. If unintentional, it signals a lack of involvement in Indigenous community, and if intentional, it risks being culturally appropriative. Boyden, in fact, avoids taking responsibility for choosing the material, insisting on numerous occasions that the story chose him. In an interview for *Publishers Weekly* he reiterates that Chanie's "voice channel[led] through [him]" and explains in the same article that "a second voice came to him—that of the Manitous, the spirits of the forest" (Williams). This statement is disconcerting coming from a man whose claims of Indigenous ancestry have been discredited, which leads us to see his statement claiming that he had communication with Manitous as an appropriative gesture aimed at legitimizing his project. He similarly failed to address concerns from people who feared that the focus on the Wenjack story reduced the vast experience of residential schools to only one story, stating "All I can say is this: I believe that Chanie Wenjack chose me, and not me him" (Boyden, "I Believe"). It is also worth noting that Jeff Lemire, the established illustrator of the *Secret Path* graphic novel, went on to publish another graphic novel, *Roughneck*, which tells the story of an Indigenous hockey player. His success with *Secret Path* seems to have given him more licence to tell Indigenous stories. In this instance, giving voice to Chanie Wenjack does not seem to have opened up space for Indigenous artists, but rather for Lemire himself.

In spite of these criticisms, these artists have undeniably reached a wide audience, and this is a crucial element of the reconciliation process. Indigenous audiences know all too well about residential schools, and do not need to be educated; Canadians do. What the disconnection between Dunn's and Maracle's early works on Wenjack and those by Downie and Boyden demonstrates, however, is that dialogue and cultural/creative exchange between Indigenous peoples and Canadians is lacking. "The time for a national reckoning has arrived," Boyden writes ("I Believe"). He describes how he was haunted by the image of "this little boy just trying to get home" and decided he had to do something about it. His editor suggested he write a novella in commemoration, and shortly thereafter, *Wenjack* (2016) was published. One of the most startling differences between Boyden's version and those of Dunn and Maracle is his very strategic use of first person to tell the story. In so doing, he reduces the distance between the readers and the protagonist, forcing them to confront the painful consequences of residential schools head on. His goal is to move his readers to action, and he makes this clear when he writes in "'I Believe that Chanie Wenjack Chose Me'" that

> [t]he Truth and Reconciliation Commission has collected the names of thousands of children who perished while in these schools and never returned home. The TRC fears the number may be has high as 30,000. . . . Perhaps sit down one day soon and begin to read the names of the children the TRC has collected so far. Whisper them, shout them, absorb them. Just don't let them be forgotten. Think of them as your own children. (18)

Considering the residential school experience from the perspective of a child provides an emotional gateway for readers, since a child's innocence and vulnerability immediately elicit empathy, and this is what makes the novella so powerful for the Canadian audience. Yet it is also troubling; Boyden's attempt to narrow the space between settler self and Indigenous Other makes the novella appropriative and at times overly reliant on pathos.

Drawing on work by linguist Lisa Philips Valentine, Anishinaabe scholar Brian McInnes describes the act of telling another's story according to protocol as a "taking on of words" rather than a "taking on of voices" (106).

Boyden ignores this protocol, however, when he chooses to narrate the novella in first person and opens with Chanie, who asks: "Do you remember? I remember, me" (1). Here the use of first and second person immediately implicate the readers in the story, and they are reminded of their responsibility to remember. The affective experience is heightened by the author's decision to highlight Chanie's innocence and vulnerability rather than his agency and ingenuity. Boyden chooses to try to replicate Anishinaabemowin speech patterns and colloquialisms in English, and the result is an infantilization of Charlie, who repeats phrases such as "ever far, that," and "ever cold": "I can tell which niijii, which friend, ran away from the school this week by the long red marks on his back. Ever a lot of red marks. Ever a lot of friends who ran away this week" (3). Chanie's innocence is further highlighted in lines such as "I don't know what I did, me" (26), and "I can feel they are no longer mad at me for what I don't know I did. I think they don't know, too" (28). His innocence in Boyden's version conforms to narrative conventions of childhood innocence and helplessness, and reinforces the stereotype of Indigenous peoples as innocent, helpless children, which serves to justify paternalism on the part of the state, and here in particular to create pathos. Boyden arguably portrays Chanie this way not out of malice, but rather to achieve the desired reaction from his readers: an affective response that will, he hopes, drive them to act. Downie uses the same tactics in his song "I Will Not Be Struck," when he describes Chanie's fear of the wilderness: "Enter the wilderness, and we only have ourselves"; and in "Haunt Them" when he describes Chanie as "waiting for something to come along and eat [him]" (Downie and Lemire). These songs heed closely to the kind of "garrison mentality" theorized by Northrop Frye and other nationalist critics like Margaret Atwood who adopted his thematics, for whom fear of the wilderness became one of the defining characteristics of Canadian settler literature. As such, Downie's songs about Wenjack are more reflective of settler tropes than Indigenous emotional responses.

According to Australian media studies scholar Anna Gibbs, affect amplifies the "weak" drives. Drawing on seminal work on affect by Silvan Tomkins, Gibbs writes, "affects are the primary human motivational system, amplifying the drives and lending them urgency, since the drives on their own are relatively weak motivators" (336). This sense of urgency helps illuminate the potential of a text like Boyden's *Wenjack* to move Canadians through its creation of pathos, a reaction engendered by affective responses. There is a fine line, however, between pathos and pathologizing, which can mean the difference between action and inaction. Playing on its readers' affective responses, Boyden's novella portrays Wenjack as "broken," and the Indigenous community he encounters as unable to help him. When Chanie seeks shelter with his friends' uncle, Boyden writes, "The uncle doesn't understand this young boy. . . . He fears the boy carries a burden that will kill him. And the uncle doesn't want this curse passed on to his family" (52). He tells his wife, "Your job is to send the stranger away. . . . Someone broke something in him. We don't have tools to fix it. Send him back to the school" (54). In Adams' version of the story, the uncle sends Chanie away because he doesn't have enough food to feed him, and this is the way Maracle also presents it. In Boyden's version, however, Chanie is pathologized and depicted as beyond repair, which removes any sense of agency or hope from his character. This, in turn, erases Indigenous subjectivity. The implication is that the imposition of colonialism is irreparable. Roger Simon problematizes this kind of representation within the context of reconciliation:

> [T]here is the danger that inter-generational Aboriginal life will be reduced to images of a problem-ridden, broken existence serving to confirm stereotypes offered as explanations for the marginalization of native populations. . . . Furthermore, this mis-recognition risks reducing the political to the therapeutic so that restorative justice is defined solely within support for personal healing from the wounds of colonialism. (132)

Portrayals of Indigenous people as damaged, as we see in Boyden's text, ultimately remove their agency, and trap them in stereotyped representations of dysfunction. As Simon states, this can result in superficial attempts to heal wounds rather than the systemic change necessary to promote Indigenous resurgence.

Perhaps recognizing the danger of disempowering Chanie completely, Boyden adds a note in the afterword to the novella. "Chanie," he writes, "for me and a number of others, has become a symbol not just of this tragedy but of the resilience of our First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people" (102). He is clearly aware of the danger of removing his subject's agency, which makes one narrative choice in particular startlingly problematic. Boyden chooses to recount a rape scene between Chanie and a minister from the boy's own point of view. In doing so, he covers ground that Dunn and Maracle choose not to in their versions. Boyden's decision to narrate rape in the first person mimics testimony, and arguably appropriates and in doing so undermines the experience of residential school survivors. Authors using the *voice* of survivors and victims of violence take great risks. Nowhere is this better demonstrated recently than in the 2018 example of settler/Mi'kmaq poet

Shannon Webb-Campbell, who chose to narrate a poem on missing and murdered Indigenous women in first person in her book *Who Took My Sister?*, using the voice of one of the victims of rape and murder. After the family of victim Loretta Saunders expressed their dismay at the graphic portrayal of their family member's violent death in Webb-Campbell's book, its publisher Book*hug removed it from public sale.

If we argue that Boyden crosses the line, especially given the controversy over his own identity, how do we approach rock musician Gord Downie's immensely successful telling of Wenjack's story, *Secret Path*? Downie and Lemire deploy many of the same affective strategies as Boyden in order to move their audience. In so doing, however, they also risk over-reliance on pathos, which can also backfire by victimizing Indigenous peoples and disempowering them, or by overloading listeners so that they stop listening or "split" themselves off, as Simon puts it. Over-reliance on pathos and victimization, Simon argues, "increases the likelihood of a dissociative splitting off in which listening accords no need to take on a sense of responsibility for a social future that would include those whose stories one is listening to" (132). Audiences become either oversaturated or desensitized, and this prevents them from acting. Like Boyden, Downie uses the first person to narrate his songs in the album, and in fact played the role of Chanie Wenjack in his final concert, pacing back and forth across the stage as though following the tracks toward his death. While this elicited tremendous affective responses from the audience, it also treaded dangerously close to appropriation, and risked offending the families and communities of other survivors. It also risked engendering the splitting off that Simon refers to, something evidenced by the *Toronto Star* columnist who reviewed Downie's final concert:

> *Secret Path's* union of music and visuals is powerful enough when you're listening to the record, yet having Lemire's stark, two-colour drawings brought [to] life in front of you while Downie gradually crumpled to the stage in emulations of Wenjack's fate during the second side's slow, certain march towards the end . . . was almost too much to bear. Then "Here, Here and Here" came around . . . and it really was too much to bear. (Rayner)

Artists tread a fine line in representations of tragedy, and overdoing it can push tragedy into the realm of excess, where it becomes spectacle and loses sight of the dignity of the human lives involved.

At Downie's *Secret Path* concert, Lemire's graphics were projected onto the screen above and behind the stage where Downie performed. The drawings showed Chanie with a permanently wide-eyed innocence about him that, in effect, elicited an affective response, all the more because it was a visual representation that was larger than life and thus immediate. He was also consistently portrayed meekly wrapping his arms around his thin, bent body. The impact of the visual is something Gibbs addresses in her discussion of the media's use of affect: "What is co-opted by the media is primarily affect, and . . . the media function as amplifiers and modulators of affect which is transmitted by the human face and voice, and also by music and other forms of sound, and also by the image" (338). The combination of image, movement, and music is thus a powerful formula—Downie's dramatic and haunting music and lyrics in *Secret Path* compound the visual effect with lines such as "I am the stranger / You can't see me," and "Enter the wilderness / And we only have ourselves." Downie sings, "I am soaked / To the skin / There's never been / A colder rain than this one I'm in," and this, along with the knowledge that Downie was dying of cancer at the time, had the potential to affect a very significant portion of Canadians. Downie's influence was further experienced by the 11.7 million (roughly one third of the Canadian population) who watched The Tragically Hip's final concert on television or listened to it on the radio in Canada, according to the CBC. An article in *Maclean's* by Scott Reid states the following:

> The emotion and attention that has greeted Downie since news of his condition was made public has been almost unprecedented. With an audience that's never been larger and a platform that's never stood higher, one gets the feeling that Downie knows exactly what he's up to. He's going to unleash the full force of his current influence to tell Chanie's story as loudly as he can.

Downie is clearly aware of the power of affect, and his illness accentuates the tragedy of Wenjack's story. This can, on the one hand, help push people to action, but on the other it can cross the line so that people disassociate themselves entirely. Affective responses create the empathy necessary to elicit an active response, but as Simon has noted, excessive pathos can result in a defensive splitting off. This splitting off may disengage the audience enough that they distance themselves from the emotion and perceive the use of pathos as excessive and manipulative. There is also the risk here of conflating two very different tragedies so that the focus becomes Downie himself instead of Chanie Wenjack and residential school victims.

Like Boyden, though, who rehabilitates Chanie's agency in his afterword, Downie seems to grasp the dangers of excessive pathos. At the final Tragically Hip concert, in front of the audience of almost twelve million, he entreated Canadians to act. In an effort to harness and direct the audience's affective response, he invited Chanie's sister on stage to sing a traditional healing song; further, proceeds from the album and graphic novel are being donated to a fund set up by Downie and Wenjack's family to promote education about residential schools. It's hard to say whether these gestures are enough to counter the over-reliance on pathos, and the risk of unintentionally pathologizing Indigenous experience. The TRC's practice of collecting the tears of witnesses during hearings to eventually release in a sacred fire was replicated at Downie's *Secret Path* concert. This ceremony arguably does not translate to a rock concert setting, and trivializes the very real and ongoing effects of colonialism and land theft. This trivialization was also seen in one audience member's response when the Wenjack family asked why Chanie died. "To bring us together!" the audience member replied (King). Pottawatomi/Ojibwe scholar and activist Hayden King responds to this in his review of the concert: "In that moment I could not imagine a more grotesque thing to say, shocking and predictable at the same time. Because I suspect that individual would not, for one second, sacrifice their son or daughter for our unity. The capacity of some Canadians for reconciliation is often so clearly shallow." King praises Downie, however, for making the Wenjack family such an important part of the evening. Their presence, he writes, countered the tragic as they cheered at scenes of their home and laughed, talking loudly among themselves. Nevertheless, King underlines the dangers of damage-centred representations of Indigenous peoples:

> It was pain, though, that was the predictable and over-arching theme of the show. . . . While the pain is captured in the poetry and music, the animation drives it home, often uncomfortably. From the very first scenes, Charlie's humanity is stripped away. It is difficult to watch and I have to wonder about the result if taken on by an Indigenous artist.

According to King, the concert had the desired effect of moving the audience; whether it had the power to make people act is another question altogether since, as King states, it was pain that was the dominant theme of the show.

While pain dominates the narratives of Downie and Boyden, it is hope and resistance that dominate in the Indigenous tellings. At the time of Willie Dunn's death in 2013, a *Globe and Mail* headline called him a "First Nations Troubadour" who "sang truth to power" (Shanahan). The same article reports that he was heckled off the stage by a racist audience in Kenora in the late 1960s—not long after Wenjack's death near the same town. Rather than writing from a position of privilege, Dunn, while a victim of racism himself, was still able to resist. In the folk tradition of the 1960s protest song—designed as a call to action—Dunn's song honours Chanie Wenjack's resilience, and turns him from what could be considered a powerless victim into one capable of escape and survival. The song begins and ends with the words, "Walk on, little Charlie / Walk on through the snow." Here the singer does not merely describe the boy's plight, "moving down the railway line," but he goes so far as to encourage the boy to "try to make it home." Although Dunn tells us the situation is dire—"he's made it forty miles / six hundred left to go"—he never gives up on the boy, and never once suggests he return to the school. Drawing upon the civil rights movement of the time, and foregrounding the work of the American Indian Movement and texts such as Cree activist Harold Cardinal's revolutionary *The Unjust Society* (1969), Dunn grounds his work in a tradition of protest. Dunn's "Charlie Wenjack" is part of the tradition of protest music influenced by such musicians as Woody Guthrie and Phil Ochs, and is written in much the same vein as his most famous song, "The Ballad of Crowfoot" (1968), where the central subject may die or be "held hostage," but can never be defeated. Dunn's "Charlie Wenjack," then, is written not to bring about despair to Indigenous communities but conversely to bring hope through active resistance.

Protest implies agency, and it is action that leads to survival. This is where the narratives by non-Indigenous writers so often differ from those authored by Indigenous writers. Ian Adams' 1965 and 1967 articles, like the works of Boyden and Downie, and in spite of their calls for social justice, portray Chanie Wenjack and the Indigenous peoples of Kenora solely as victims, which feeds the idea of powerlessness and ultimately inhibits agency. Adams repeats the word "lonely" continually, first in reference to a "lonely" Indigenous leader, and then the "lonely minority" in the school system ("The Indians" 6). His 1967 article is titled "The Lonely Death of Charlie Wenjack," and he refers to the "lonesome" students at the residential school. The element of collective agency and resistance celebrated by Dunn is absent here, which serves to perpetuate stereotypes of helplessness. Unangax scholar Eve Tuck, like Simon, warns of the dangers of "damage-centred" research and writing about Indigenous peoples in her article "Suspending Damage," suggesting that focusing on loss and trauma reinforces the one-dimensional perspective of Indigenous peoples as "depleted, ruined, and hopeless" (409). Cynthia C. Wesley-Esquimaux (Chippewa) echoes this warning in her article "Trauma to Resilience" when she underlines the importance of privileging hope over despair:

> Instead of telling only the stories about trauma and victimization and pain, let us talk about our survival and our undeniable strengths. It is essential for us to articulate the strengths that we have, not only in a way that validates our survival, but in a way that validates and 'victorizes' our ability to take control of our lives and be, in spite of past pain and present dysfunction. (28)

Dunn's use of the protest song to tell Wenjack's story conforms to both critics' calls for narratives of resistance. The act of running away, and what it tells us about the strength of the children attending the schools, is what explains the survival and resilience of Indigenous communities; damage-centred narratives simply contribute to what Marie Battiste (Mi'kmaq) refers to as "cognitive imperialism," where Indigenous peoples are "led to believe that their poverty and powerlessness are the result of their cultural and racial origins" (26). Cognitive imperialism, as Battiste explains, removes agency and traps Indigenous peoples in cycles of powerlessness. This does little to encourage reconciliation that privileges Indigenous subjectivity and resurgence.

Like Dunn, Lee Maracle understands the strength and resilience of Indigenous communities, and her short story "Charlie" portrays Chanie Wenjack accordingly. In 1976, Maracle produced one hundred copies of the handwritten story, which was subsequently published in her collection *Sojourner's Truth* in 1990 and later anthologized. The fact that Maracle herself hand wrote and made copies of the story contributes to the "political tract" nature of her narrative, and honours the call to action introduced in Dunn's protest song. That Maracle chose to include her version of the story in her first published collection fourteen years later is no coincidence—as Kish indicates, Dunn's song kept the story circulating among Indigenous peoples, while the tragedy of residential schools was being repeated across the country. In the tradition of protest, Maracle demanded change. Thus in adapting Chanie Wenjack's story, and Willie Dunn's song, to the medium of fiction, Maracle re-energizes the boy's story.

Like Dunn, Maracle uses third-person narration. Unlike the first-person narratives of Boyden and Downie, this would seem to follow the storytelling protocol McInnes describes as "taking on [. . .] words" rather than "taking on [. . .] voices" (106). Accordingly, it is Maracle's voice more than Chanie's that is audible throughout the story, most significantly in its use of irony, as in the following example:

> Charlie was a quiet boy. This was not unusual. His silence was interpreted by the priests and catholic lay teachers as stoic reserve—a quality inherited from his pagan ancestors. It was regarded in the same way the religious viewed the

> children's tearless response to punishment: a quaint combination of primitive courage and lack of emotion. All the children were like this and so Charlie could not be otherwise. (327)

Maracle's voice here is clear in its mockery of the ignorance of the religious figures and teachers. In the same vein, she repeatedly gives the child agency, careful not to remove Charlie's voice, as per the protocol McInnes describes. Chanie masterfully manipulates his situation at the school in order to survive: "Like the other children, he would stare hard at his work, the same practiced look of bewilderment used by his peers on his face, while his thoughts danced around the forest close to home—far away from the arithmetic sums he was sure had nothing to do with him" (327). The word "practiced" belies the intelligence of the children, who manage to deceive the teachers with little effort. Moreover, not only Chanie but *all* the children are "practiced" in deceiving the teachers, demonstrating the same collective resistance that allowed so many groups of children to plan their escapes from residential school together. Charlie is able to preserve some sense of individuality by skilfully manoeuvering his way around the rules and by using the biases of his teachers to his advantage: "He learned to listen for the questions put to him by the brother over the happy daydream. He was not expected to know the answer; repeating the question sufficed. Knowing the question meant that, like the others, he was slow to learn but very attentive. No punishment was meted out for thickheadedness" (327). Maracle also describes Chanie's intelligence and self-awareness: "He was bothered by something unidentifiable, tangible but invisible. He couldn't figure it out and that, too, bothered him" (328). Like Dunn, Maracle writes to give her community strength and not despair. In both versions, Chanie depicts resilience rather than victimhood and agency rather than powerlessness.

Both tellings thus successfully deploy protest and ultimately resistance strategies, and in doing so advance an agenda of change. Maracle's contextualization of the school adds to this effect, since it underlines its far-reaching impact, both spatial and temporal. The first paragraph, in which she details some of the stereotypes contributing to the ministers' treatment of the children, places the story of the schools within the broader context of the ongoing effects of colonialism. Speaking through the lens of the teachers at the school, she qualifies Chanie as "stoic," "primitive," and "emotionless," but then disproves the stereotypes in her descriptions of Chanie's self-awareness, intelligence, and agency. As Simon points out, to isolate the schools as the only tool of cultural genocide would allow readers to historicize them, and to speak in terms of "closed chapters," as Prime Minister Stephen Harper did during his 2008 apology to the survivors of residential schools. Harper has been widely criticized for referring to residential schools as a "sad chapter in our history," effectively closing doors on the damage caused by residential schools, as though the effects are finished and neatly in the past. If the experience of Indigenous peoples is relegated to the past, however, no one considers the ongoing and systemic effects of colonialism, and no substantive change is possible. Maracle further demonstrates the far-reaching impact of the schools when she speaks of the self-loathing of Chanie's father when he is forced to send his children to the schools: "His private agony was his own lack of resistance. He sent his son to school. It was the law. A law that he neither understood nor agreed to, but he sent them [*sic*]. His willingness to reduce his son to a useless waster stunned him. He confided none of his self-disgust to his wife" (331). The father's shame is insidious, and contributes to the intergenerational effects of residential school and of colonialism more broadly, making it impossible to speak of "closed chapters." Anishinaabe activist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes that "[s]hame traps us individually and collectively into the victimry of the colonial assault, and travels through the generations, accumulating and manifesting itself in new and more insidious ways in each re-generation" (15). Maracle's choice of the word "resistance" in the passage about Wenjack's father demonstrates the imperative of resistance to ongoing colonial practices.

Both Dunn and Maracle seek to empower their subjects in an attempt to "validate and 'victorize'" (Wesley-Esquimaux) Indigenous experience and bring about change, and this is enhanced by the propagation of a communal story. The artists' fictionalized accounts of Chanie Wenjack, both of which include the mythic figure of the Windigo at the end of the story, demonstrate their movement from the realm of everyday stories (dibaajimowinan in Anishnaabemowin) into the realm of mythic stories (aadisookaanan) ("dibaajimowinan, ni"; "aadisookaanan, na"). It has become a story that is told and retold transnationally in order to reinforce the imperative of resistance and illustrate survival. In becoming a part of Indigenous mythology, Wenjack's tragic story becomes one of cultural strength and validation, and unites communities as a kind of dialogue develops between tellings. Following traditional protocol, Maracle asked Dunn for permission to re-invent his song in story, and she further emphasizes the communal element when she acknowledges Dunn in her portrayal of the Windigo at the end of the story. The inclusion of the mythic Windigo links both stories to the oral, thus further enhancing communal empowerment. Both artists unusually depict the Windigo as a positive, welcoming figure, where he is most commonly depicted in Anishinaabe tradition as the embodiment of insatiable consumption. Dunn speaks of the "great Wendigo / Come to look upon [Charlie's] face . . . Her arms outstretched and waiting," while Maracle describes it as "the Great Wendigo—dressed in midnight blue, her dress alive with the glitter of a thousand stars" (332). Here it is Chanie's arms that are outstretched as "he greet[s] the lady that came to lift his spirit and close his eyes forever to sleep the gentle sleep of white death" (332). The embrace is an embrace between works, and the artists' depiction of a welcoming Windigo reflects their efforts to empower rather than create despair, showing death as a welcome return home to culture and away from the assimilationist and genocidal forces of residential schools. The turn to the mythic in the form of the Windigo is significant here, since myth represents the distinct worldviews that ultimately define culture. It is culture and agency that these two artists emphasize, knowing that it is senses of identity and nationhood, or what Tanana Athabascan scholar Dian Million terms "Indigenous subjectivity (to be Cree, to be Anishinaabe, to be Inuit, to be Stó:lō)" (171), that can serve as an antidote to colonial violence. Simpson describes the importance of Indigenous subjectivity in resurgence this way:

> We need our Elders, our languages, and our lands, along with vision, intent, commitment, community and ultimately, action. We must move ourselves beyond resistance and survival, to flourishment and mino bimaadiziwin. If this approach does nothing else to shift the current state of affairs—and I believe it will—it will ground our peoples in their own cultures and teachings that provide the ultimate antidote to colonialism. . . . Building diverse, nation-culture-based resurgences means significantly re-investing in our own ways of being. (17)

Culture, as Simpson posits, is essential to resurgence, and the celebration of distinct cultural elements highlights distinct national identities. Indigenous subjectivity or sovereignty thus underlines cultural survival and permits Indigenous cultures to flourish.

The versions of the Chanie Wenjack story as told by Dunn and Maracle both honour the same type of call for Indigenous subjectivity made by Million, as both are dominated by strength and resilience rather than by pain and powerlessness. The versions of Downie and Boyden, however, threaten Indigenous cultural sovereignty. Simon signals this threat clearly when he states, "There is present in contemporary society a historically specific, socially organized mode of regarding the pain of others that has the potential to deny a person a subjectivity that is self-constituting. This is particularly troubling in the context I am discussing here as it seems to edge towards a replay or instituting of colonial power relations" (131). This hearkens back to Downie's statement that only after "we" learn about residential schools can we "truly call ourselves 'Canada.'" Truly calling oneself "Canada" appears to be nothing less than claiming Canadian subjectivity, which ironically undermines Dian Million's call to claim Indigenous subjectivity. This is where "re-writing history" becomes difficult. Wenjack's story told in its communal form by Indigenous communities is markedly different from the versions told by Canadians for Canadians. The first reflects a need for a distinct Indigenous subjectivity, while the second subsumes Indigeneity under the Canadian national umbrella. If the tellings are divergent to this degree, then how do we go about creating a new national narrative?

NOTE

1 The song became popular enough in Indigenous communities that it was released in three different formats: first as a single in 1971, then on Dunn's first self-titled album in 1972, and finally on the album *Akwesasne Notes* in 1978. Dunn's music was also popular with both the Native Youth and the Red Power Movements (Maracle, Personal interview).

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Sara Mang

Pithy

Sloppy little word
its p and th and its whining y
something muttered
with a head cold and a lisp
tiny linty pill of wool
that evolves on an old tired sweater
sounds like a spit
a cat's hiss

But alas
it means succinct

Not a whine or a drag at all, really

tight-knit
in a nutshell, jam-
packed
chock-full

compendious…mmm, nice one
—Lucy Maud would roll it right off Marilla's tongue

epigrammatic
laconic
aphoristic, apothegmatic
some doozies, prim without punch

Puissant!
—now you're talking

heavy, weighty
meaty, profound

Pithy, you did alright.
You are sharply focussed.
You are finely honed.
You are essential.

But be careful with your essence
—you live right above pitiable and its fraternal twin pitiless

Other Voices, Other Routes

Nurjehan Aziz, ed.
Confluences 2: Essays on the New Canadian Literature. Mawenzi $24.95

Bill Gaston
A Mariner's Guide to Self Sabotage.
Douglas & McIntyre $22.95

Reviewed by Krzysztof Majer

It is amazing that "self-sabotage"—a fitting term for the behaviour of many of Bill Gaston's characters—has not surfaced earlier than the title of the seventh collection by this intriguing, tremendously gifted writer. With as many novels to his name, plus a recent memoir, the Victoria-based author has, over the last three decades, developed and mastered a certain type of short fiction in which a wild premise is taken seriously and rendered eerily relatable. It is no surprise that one of his most celebrated collections is titled *Gargoyles*, since something of the grotesque often attaches to his characters. And yet the quirkiness is never sensational or played strictly for laughs. Gaston's emotional palette is broad: the humour is laced with sorrow, while tragedy is never without a hint of the ludicrous.

The latest volume offers all that we have come to expect from him: aging misfits, resurfaced past lovers, unhinged seekers of profundity, weary families, and couples on the verge of romantic collapse. Gaston has become adroit at chronicling sexual dynamics from the male point of view (especially, perhaps, in the aptly titled *Sex Is Red*), but it is two of the stories with a female perspective—"Levitation" and "Anonymous"—that contain some of his finest material to date. Other standouts include the touching yet oddly mischievous farewell in "Drilling a Hole in Your Boat" (ostensibly the source of the collection's title) and "Carla's Dead Wife," in which revealing a long-held secret may have catastrophic results for an already volatile family reunion. As ever, there is a touch of the purely bizarre, especially in the Southern Gothic-tinged "The Church of Manna, Revelator" and "Hello:," a deranged and perhaps spurious first-person confession, somewhat in the manner of Gaston's famous Malcolm Lowry send-up, "A Forest Path." In short, *A Mariner's Guide to Self Sabotage* is further proof that one of the most talented Canadian storytellers is still fully in control of his craft, and as deserving as ever of the most prestigious literary prizes, as he continues to mark out his own, singular routes.

The question of singularity is one of pressing importance in *Confluences 2*, a collection of essays edited by Nurjehan Aziz. Co-founder of what is now Mawenzi House (formerly TSAR Publications), Aziz continues the commendable task of showcasing exciting voices "to emerge in Canada in the last four decades, following the post-colonial wave of immigration of the 1960s and 70s." As in *Confluences 1* (2016), Aziz is careful to include essays focusing on the work of one writer at a time: the writer's name, printed in bold capital letters, precedes a given essay's title and the name of its author. Such a strategy precludes comparative work, which could in some cases yield remarkable results. However, and more importantly, it also strengthens the idea that each of these authors must be read within a specific, irreducible cultural context, as if to counter the trend observed by Madeleine Thien, among others, who a few years ago deplored the scarcity of "historical context or literary precedents" in reviews and critique of "the work of Asian, South Asian, African, and Arab-Canadian writers." Most contributors to this volume narrow their scope; the most prominent exception in that respect is Laura Moss' superb essay on M. G. Vassanji's "unapologetically multinational figure," where the critical eye is trained also on the shifting paradigms of Canadian studies, the various "hungers" of academics and readers alike.

Confluences 2 offers a fascinating panorama of contemporary postnational writing which, according to the editor's preface, "draws its inspiration . . . from the histories, cultures, traditions, and experiences of . . . areas considered historically outside the purview of the 'Western.'" With two further volumes still in preparation, it would be futile to list omissions. Where *Confluences 1* highlighted the work of, among others, Michael Ondaatje, Hiromi Goto, Austin Clarke, Rohinton Mistry, and Anita Rau Badami, here—in addition to the author of *The Book of Secrets*—the essays deal with the writing of Dionne Brand, Wayson Choy, Ramabai Espinet, Cecil Foster, Rabindranath Maharaj, Joy Kogawa, and Shauna Singh Baldwin. Aspects addressed by established academics and writers (e.g., H. Nigel Thomas, Asma Sayed, and Dannabang Kuwabong) as well as emerging scholars range from "nowarian" consciousness, lingering racist heritage, and feminist interventions, through complicated domesticity and postmodern city space, to the fluidity and interpenetration of genres. Taken together, these varied and astute essays respond to what Moss calls, in a somewhat different context, "the desire of global readers to think laterally about identity and place."

Being Seen by Place

Nelson Ball
Walking. Mansfield $17.00

Tim Lilburn
The Larger Conversation: Contemplation and Place. U of Alberta P $34.95

Reviewed by Susie DeCoste

When read next to Tim Lilburn's collection of essays, Nelson Ball's *Walking* may be unfairly diminished because its approach is so vastly different from Lilburn's sustained contemplation of place and its consequences for identity and belonging. Each of Ball's nature poems is like a rock skimming on the surface of water. It touches on a specific point and then leaves it for the next. The short poems of a few lines each mirror one's undirected thoughts when out in nature—the momentary epiphanies that can be captured in a few words, the brief descriptions of a single significant image. Some poems are composed of as few as four words. "Fog" reads:

air
occupying

its
shadow.

This type of poem has the potential to offer fodder for contemplation. In his notes on the text, Ball quotes one of his critics who believes that he "[writes] from inside the landscape," perhaps drawing out some essential truth through these short lines. There are poems in *Walking* that achieve this effect, such as "Signs: Late Fall," "Signs: Early Spring," "Across Fields," "Shallow Creek," and "Anomaly: The Pasture." In "Excuse for Writing Short Poems," Ball undermines these poems, selling his work short when his speaker explains:

My jottings
that develop into poems

are written

in a small notebook

I carry
in my pocket.

To get to the truly rigorous work of envisioning place, readers need to turn to Lilburn. *The Larger Conversation* is a beautiful, patient, and persistent philosophical work, a collection of different types of essays—lectures, interviews, personal reflections—that enhance and widen the discourse on the consequences of living in and encountering (and thus being encountered by) place, particularly in the ethically dubious position of Euro-settler descendants who are beneficiaries of "a colonial situation." Lilburn expertly draws on Western philosophy, negative theology, and Eastern and Western contemplative thought, as well as Chinese poetry and poetics, in order to carve out the problem of living as a descendant of colonial explorers and settlers. He argues that inhabitants of Canada whose ancestors exploited and appropriated have never learned to see the land any differently. As a consequence, we "float over the land, but also float in an intellectual tradition that offers no chthonic or sapiential mooring." As Western (thinking) settlers, we need new ways of talking about land, being, and the meaning of being in place in order first to understand, and ultimately to find meaning through, a relationship with place.

Lilburn suggests that in entering a relationship with place, with any specific place that we care about, we can be seen by place and thus be given our identity—indeed our Being—through a kind of grace. I love this argument and line of thought for its beauty and practicality. It offers a true way to move forward from the colonial past by first making changes to how we perceive reality—a reality that we constantly misunderstand—about how and why and who we are in place. As Lilburn urges us to see, such changes come through poetry and contemplation.

Wilted Vegetables and Hope

Gary Barwin
No TV for Woodpeckers. Buckrider $18.00

Richard Harrison
On Not Losing My Father's Ashes in the Flood. Buckrider $18.00

Robyn Sarah
Wherever We Mean to Be: Selected Poems 1975-2015. Biblioasis $19.95

Reviewed by MLA Chernoff

These collections by Gary Barwin, Robyn Sarah, and Richard Harrison possess an exemplary ability to denaturalize our assumptions about elegiac writing. By injecting a doubly bound sense of élan into sorrowful subject matter, they demonstrate the ways by which *poiesis* can disclose the fullness of loss and revivify what it means to undertake the work of mourning.

Harrison's Governor General's Award-winning collection, *On Not Losing My Father's Ashes in the Flood*, is concerned with the inheritances between fathers and sons: "My father taught me a poem is not its words, but the ringing it leaves behind." The force of the text is derived from a death knell, specifically the loss of Harrison's father to vascular dementia in 2011, a devastating event whose intensities, for Harrison, mirror the destruction later engendered by the Alberta flood of 2013. The waters, which nearly swept away his father's ashes, prompted Harrison to repeat the work of mourning. The focus of the text, then, is not so much on the values of patriarchy or Oedipality in themselves, but rather our memories and impressions of these steadfast ideologies in the wake of their absences. This is particularly true of "Skype," one of the most poignant poems in the book, in which the speaker dreams of a technologically mediated conversation with his dead but stereotypically silent father: "My father will never say he is sad, / but I can tell that he has not yet finished mourning my loss." Harrison deconstructs the labour of loss, exploding the question of who mourns whom, while interrogating masculinities. The poet is thus critical and elegiac in the same breath, carving out for readers a "paradise / on the other side of criticism"—a site of ambiguous splendour that locates joy in the reading and rereading of one's own life.

In this sense, Harrison finds a great deal of kinship in the prolific works of Robyn Sarah. Sarah's *Wherever We Mean to Be*—which contains representative selections spanning her career from 1975 to 2015—shows the multiplicity of meanings that can be gathered from a careful minimalism. Her genius lies in the ability to collapse the complications of worldliness into instances that are accessible and open. Examined closely, however, the sparse language of the ordinary is an idiom eerily evacuated of egoistic excess. We see this vividly in "A Prayer for Prayer":

> God! I am dead empty.
> Pour me full again.
> I am leaden; lighten me.
> My cables are cut.

Here identity is refused in the same moment in which it is begged for. The first-person singular pronoun is caught between weight and weightlessness, grounded only by the urgency of the utterance; we are faced with exclamatory confusions rather than a speech act of devotion or earnest request—a prayer without prayer gesturing toward the uncanniness of religiosity. Here each line grieves over its own brevity while simultaneously bursting with a kind of renewed life, as is also the case in "The Trust":

> A good death, it's a gift
> to the living. To be remembered
> when we're gone, to remember our dead,
>   these
> we know are to be desired. But to be
> remembered by our dead! that
> is something else—a trust,
> a blessing.

Caught between the blandness and beauty of day-to-day minutiae, the many poetic voices at play together constitute a sigh-like fugue delighted by the imperative that we "be grateful for neutral days." The quotidian is, moreover, chafed in its flustered appearances; for Sarah, it is not the case that the poet must translate everydayness into the idiom of poetry—poems are not tools with which one can disclose hidden beauty. On the contrary, the thingliness of things is already, in itself, a production of bewildering aesthetics.

So too is Gary Barwin attuned to this serene weirdness, but in radically disparate ways. Barwin's notorious brand of surrealism attends to the laughter provoked by ecological anxieties. His title, *No TV for Woodpeckers*, is a nod to an undue philosophical propensity to concurrently belittle and fetishize animals and their apparent lack of representational capacities. In other words, there is no screen upon which the woodpecker can project its own desires, no symbolic order for the animal to traverse as it attempts to fill some originary lacuna. Barwin turns the pathos of this parochial philosophy on its head, beginning with an epigraph from Lucretius, as translated by W. E. Leonard: "[O]ur pauper speech must find / Strange terms to fit the strangeness of the thing." Even if there were a black mirror over which a woodpecker could swoon when faced with its own image, the human is already condemned to the shortcomings of language: "we make the forests / but they suck." Although the text is, in this sense, an elegy for humanism, it is nevertheless punctuated by a kind of slapstick whose attention to sound and linguistic play is as discombobulating as it is innovative. While the efficacy of language as a descriptive, world-creating medium is a non-starter in itself, there is still hope to be found in experimentation as Barwin employs an eclectic mix of poetic frameworks from conceptualism and flarf. "Needleminer," for example, recentres the diverse wildlife that persists on the margins of the stereotypically industrial city of Hamilton, Ontario. By introducing a catalogue of species into pre-written texts, by way of OuLiPo, Barwin reimagines Hamilton as a haven for ecological diversity —a kind of materialist reality-testing that is as luscious as it is anti-capitalist.

No TV for Woodpeckers is, finally, a daring venture into the inner workings of inherited cultural trauma—namely, the inheritances of being Jewish. In a meditation on the infamous vampire from *Sesame Street*, Barwin's speaker asks:

> What are the numbers, Count? Your Transylvanian cackle seems Yiddish to me, your unhinged delight, your bitter joy enumerates the world, an inventory of what's there, what hasn't been destroyed.

There is no media that can wholly distract from loss. There are, however, modes of aestheticizing these catalogues of lack such that they are otherwise than elegiac. This is as apparent in the writing of Harrison and Sarah as it is in that of Barwin. These poets offer fleeting realities which, in the instant, help to remediate our own—a kind of *poiesis* that Barwin refers to as the production of "alien babies":

> Rub one on your head or let it make a melancholy wall . . . I'm an alien baby, too. At least the part of me that is already alien baby. The rest of me is spring, summer, TV, wilted vegetables and hope.

The Resonance of the Past

Chantal Bilodeau
Forward. Talonbooks $18.95

Sean Devine
Daisy. Talonbooks $19.95

Rahul Varma
Truth and Treason. Mawenzi $19.95

Reviewed by Alexandre Gauthier

Chantal Bilodeau's *Forward* is the second play of *The Arctic Cycle*. In this project, Bilodeau wishes to write eight plays about the effects of global warming on countries within the Arctic Circle, such as Canada, Finland, and Russia. In *Forward*, Bilodeau tells the story of Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen, who reached the North Pole in 1893 and "opened up the Arctic for development." In doing so, Nansen wanted to give Norway its rightful place within the concert of nations and to help his country gain independence from Sweden. If there is no doubt that Nansen's project was motivated by personal ambition, stubbornness, and pride, it did encourage Norway to pursue exploration of the Arctic and—from the early-twentieth-century era of industrial revolution to the era after the Second World War—to undertake a quest for industrialization, for urbanization, and later for oil that would once and for all secure Norway's future.

In her play, Bilodeau offers an original treatment of time as she intertwines the narrative of Nansen's three-year expedition with that of Norwegian society. In his quest for the North Pole, Nansen did everything he could to keep going forward, and so did his society. But although Bilodeau tells Nansen's story chronologically, she tells Norway's story by starting from a recent point in time and going backwards. The past and the present are in dialogue, showing that humankind's determination to dominate nature is at the origin of its downfall. Nature can be seductive, as Bilodeau's characterization of Ice shows. She is a character who, like a mermaid, sings to and wheedles at explorers such as Nansen, who are clouded by their own pride and will. It is an old image, not that original perhaps, but powerful nonetheless, as it clearly shows that this endeavour will lead him to his death. But *Forward* is not moralizing or apocalyptic. There is hope. Even if change is inevitable and global warming a real issue, *Forward* suggests that we could use the same determination and willpower not to dominate nature, but to dominate ourselves and, by making the appropriate changes, to gain control.

Like *Forward*, which uses historical fact to expose a very contemporary issue, Sean Devine's *Daisy*, set during the Vietnam War, tells the story of an advertisement that would have huge consequences for American politics and the power of media in our society. In September 1964, a political ad that was televised only once would secure Lyndon B. Johnson's victory over Barry Goldwater in the election to become president of the United States. This ad, called "Daisy," featured a little girl picking the petals from a daisy and counting to ten. At one point, her voice is replaced by a man's voice counting down, and the image of the girl in the field becomes an image of the mushroom cloud that follows a nuclear explosion. Devine's play follows the creative team behind the ad and their interrogations of media, manipulation, and the power (or weaponization) of communication.

It is a challenge to put on stage real characters and facts, but Devine's exhaustive research and interviews allow him to succeed in recreating what it was like inside that think tank. He also offers an original point of view by including a woman and a Black man in the team, which helps to anchor the piece in its period, and talks about issues relevant to the post-Kennedy era (and still relevant today, of course). The play is centred around the character of Lou Brown, a talented copywriter whose personal ambitions, and position as a woman in a man's world, outweigh her own convictions. The play also focuses on Tony Schwartz, an agoraphobic sound engineer and communication specialist who believes that the message is already in the audience. Instead of telling the audience its message, the ad simply needed to activate the message already there. While the authorship of the ad is certainly unclear, Schwartz's role in creating "Daisy" and its impact on political advertising are unquestionable. The play is a discourse on the power of media, and, in a world marked by the rise of Donald Trump and alternative facts, it has a resounding contemporaneity.

Unlike Bilodeau and Devine, Rahul Varma offers a fictional story set in a context that is, unfortunately, not fictional at all. *Truth and Treason* is set in Iraq in 2007, with US military officers and government officials on one side, and fundamentalists on the other. The assassination by a US soldier of a little girl who went looking for her father changes Captain Edward Alston's perspective on his mission. While the Army is trying to hide it and make it look like an accident, Alston can hardly cope with the manipulation and dishonesty. On the other side, the little girl's mother, Nahla Ahad, changes her perspective on war after her daughter's death. She does everything she can to free her husband, Omar, an accused and imprisoned terrorist, and to seek refuge in Canada. Meanwhile, Omar and the Sheik want to make the little girl a martyr, and the Sheik calls a fatwa against Captain Alston. The manipulation of facts exists on both sides, and while Alston seeks justice and wants to free himself from guilt by making amends, Nahla wants to free herself from a country that is taking everything from her, and to find peace. Omar refuses, since his allegiance to Iraq is greater than everything. What is interesting about the play is that it uses the Iraqi conflict to reflect on war from a more personal and inner perspective, centring on such private issues as relationships, family, love, honesty, and doubt.

With their subject matter, but even more so with their original, insightful, and personal treatments of history and memory, the authors of these plays succeed in creating necessary and powerful works which shed light on our society and our own relation to truth.

Running and Riding Away

Yvonne Blomer
Sugar Ride: Cycling from Hanoi to Kuala Lumpur. Palimpsest $19.95

Tony Robinson-Smith
The Dragon Run: Two Canadians, Ten Bhutanese, One Stray Dog. U of Alberta P $24.95

Reviewed by Zoë Landale

Travel writing in Canada is alive, well, and robustly athletic. At the end of a two-year teaching gig in Bhutan, Tony Robinson-Smith and his wife, Nadya, accompanied by ten college students, go on a thirty-five-day ultra-marathon of 578 kilometres up and down the Himalayas. Along the way, they encounter bulls on the three-metre-wide roads, cars that glide down upon the runners with their engines shut off, intense heat in the valleys, orchids blooming in trees halfway up the mountains, and snow at the summits. At night, for their aching joints, the author prescribes "blue-legging" for all. The team submerges sore legs deep in ice-filled streams and then warms up around a campfire. The "Tara-thon," as it was called, contributed money to the Tarayana Foundation, sponsored by the Queen, to raise money for Bhutanese village children to attend school.

The students who join Robinson-Smith are devout Buddhists motivated by the idea of helping others; one young man had broken rock as a child to earn money so he could attend school. The author includes enough quotes from the students to give an idea of how difficult it is for them to stay the course. Incredibly, despite injuries, not a single person drops out. The students help and motivate one another to keep going.

Bhutan has been called a modern Shangri-La. In 1972, the Fourth King of Bhutan declared, "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross Domestic Product." Robinson-Smith does a good job of juxtaposing Western perceptions, both historic and modern, with the challenges faced by the Bhutanese, such as a hundred thousand feral dogs, garbage disposal via littering, no sewage treatment, and an isolated population that may well starve if crops fail. But what happened to the dog who ran with the team? The story finishes without telling.

Yvonne Blomer is Victoria's Poet Laureate. Her foray into narrative non-fiction stems from a three-month bicycle trip across Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia, and Thailand that she took with her husband twenty years ago. The prose is layered. Blomer writes the trip in the present tense, with commentary in italicized sections written in the past tense. This innocent/experienced narrator juxtaposition gives a nice depth to the writing. The story jumps in time and from country to country. There are dates, so it's possible to chart that we're now in October and then back in September. Presumably Blomer had a strategy she was following—writing achronologically is more difficult than writing sequentially—but even a second reading failed to prevent confusion.

The title, *Sugar Ride*, refers to Blomer's relationship with her husband, Rupert, her type 1 diabetes, and attempts to manage fluctuating blood sugars. At one point she ends up in the hospital. Half of what she carries in her bicycle panniers, and a third of what her husband carries, is diabetes testing equipment and insulin. Blomer is a likeable narrator, spunky and unwilling to be defined by her disease. The trip is meant as a farewell to Asia; the couple is on the way home after two years of teaching in

Japan. A yearning for the familiar suffuses the adventure and imparts a longing quality to their travels. Both Robinson-Smith and Blomer are aware of their privilege and worry about the state of the developed world. But having taught in Bhutan for two years and being sponsored by the Queen, Robinson-Smith is not as vulnerable on his run as Blomer is on her ride. She and her partner move resolutely through a much more urban and at times menacing environment where they know no one. Sometimes they manage to make friends; sometimes other people attempt to take advantage of them, like the student who really wanted them to pay his whole year's tuition. Blomer's dialogue with her body is continual and disconcerting for her; as a blonde foreigner, she is such a novelty that she is never invisible. Food plays a big part in Blomer's story—finding it, enjoying it or, sometimes, gagging it down to sustain herself, as when they find themselves in an isolated locale with nothing but rice fried in pork lard, anathema to a vegetarian. Blomer's prose is crisp and well paced; she worries about being part of a colonial narrative.

Reconciling Treaty Relations

John Borrows and Michael Coyle, eds.
The Right Relationship: Reimagining the Implementation of Historical Treaties.
U of Toronto P $39.95

Reviewed by Cheryl Suzack

The purpose of this important collection of essays by legal scholars and practitioners from a diverse array of legal backgrounds who specialize in Indigenous law is to reconcile the spirit and intent of the 1764 Treaty of Niagara with Canada's contemporary legal formation. As an event that brought together more than two thousand Indigenous people representing twenty-two First Nations, the signing of the Treaty of Niagara established the political relations of peace, friendship, and respect that secured the legal basis for settlement through the consent of Indigenous peoples. Its foundation, as the editors of *The Right Relationship* explain, was premised on mutual understanding: Indigenous peoples entered into "sacred agreements" to share their lands with settlers, and Crown officials established "respect for the rule of law" and "democratic self-governance" as the highest aspirations through which treaty relations would be upheld. Despite these solemn promises, treaty relations foundered, placing Canada and its political institutions upon a "dishonorable foundation." The task of each contributor is to assess this failure while hypothesizing the scope, consequences, and remedies through which treaty partnerships may be rebuilt between Indigenous communities and the Crown, not only by restoring the political intent represented by the Treaty of Niagara, but also by empowering Indigenous sovereignty and the principles of law that constitute Indigenous legal orders.

Several contributors address specifically the viability of these goals. The opening essay by John Borrows condemns Canada's constitutional failures. Noting the prevalence of legal principles that justify Indigenous peoples' dispossession and displacement through "doctrines of discovery, adverse possession, and conquest," Borrows denounces courts for upholding Crown sovereignty while simultaneously affirming Indigenous peoples' "inferior legal status." This status has important implications for Indigenous communities. As Michael Coyle explains, it makes it unlikely that Canadian courts will negotiate with Indigenous peoples as equal treaty partners by taking into account Indigenous cultures and world views, even as the Canadian court system remains the only viable means for Indigenous communities to seek reparations for treaty violations. Why courts refuse, resist, or are indifferent to Indigenous world views affords a point of comparison and debate among contributors.

In view of what happens in courts, Kent McNeil analyzes the role of expert witnesses, along with the muddying of distinctions between legal history and legal analysis, in assessing treaty claims. Julie Jai explores how Indigenous peoples lost bargaining power over time, while Francesca Allodi-Ross speculates about Indigenous legal strategies and the dilemmas associated with deciding among individual rights versus collective rights. Sari Graben and Matthew Mehaffey assess the conceptual standing of treaties, exhibiting their principled legal status in contrast to the Crown's narrow view that they represent antiquated historical documents. Mark D. Walters demonstrates how Indigenous legal orders may be enforceable today, and Aaron Mills/Waabishki Ma'iingan reflects on the legal meanings and cultural associations of treaties.

Linking cultural productions with law, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik Stark shows how Anishinaabe creation stories give meaning and purpose to Anishinaabe law. In a different vein, Jean LeClair argues that the absence of Indigenous legal orders in the judicial arena perpetuates the tragic consequences suffered by generations of Indigenous peoples at the hands of the Canadian state, while Sara L. Seck considers the potential of international legal mechanisms for resolving disputes between Indigenous communities and the Crown, noting that such mechanisms may initiate a more robust recognition of treaties as nation-to-nation agreements. Shin Imai berates the Crown's "infringe-and-justify" framework through which all negotiating parties lose and already impoverished Indigenous communities are forced to court, yet again, to seek reparation and to defend against the Crown's violation of a First Nation's treaty rights.

The compelling case studies that run through the collection offer insights for the lay reader about how treaties contribute to law and humanities scholarship. An exceptional analysis by Sarah Morales of the meaning of "good faith" complements and extends a fascinating study of the protection of Maori land rights in New Zealand by Jacinta Ruru. Focusing more closely on law and justice, McNeil's astute analysis of the role of expert testimony demonstrates how close reading and legal hermeneutics permit insight into the potential for legal decisions to inhibit social change. Delaying justice is also a central concern of Graben and Mehaffey, who, alongside Walters, undertake critically nuanced arguments that support and protect Indigenous sovereignty.

Some questions remain unanswered. Do identity categories such as race, class, gender, and sexual identity make a difference at the negotiating table? Would we oppose Indigenous individual rights to Indigenous collective rights if the issue were pro-choice? Do all parties to resource development lose equally when the risk for investors is financial and the risk for Indigenous communities is their lifeways? In essays by Jai, Allodi-Ross, and Imai, these questions provide opportunities for ongoing engagement with this thoughtful contribution to Indigenous legal studies and law and humanities scholarship.

Lives and Myths

Gérard Bouchard; Howard Scott, trans.
Social Myths and Collective Imaginaries.
U of Toronto P $24.95

Tom Smart
Palookaville: Seth and the Art of Graphic Autobiography. Porcupine's Quill $16.95

Reviewed by Scott Duchesne

Scholars of graphic narrative, especially in Canada, have been waiting for Tom Smart's *Palookaville* for some time. Smart, a gallery director and curator, has turned his well-calibrated critical lens onto the work of

Seth's multi-volume work *Palookaville*, and in so doing has articulated what so many already know, and hopefully others will soon realize: that Seth and his contemporaries, including Chester Brown, are artists whose work is equal to that of artists in other mediums who have rendered, and continue to render, Canadian life in exquisite detail.

Smart's thesis, that Seth can be described "as a sophisticated performance artist" who carries out a mutable, "holistic" practice, enables him to investigate Seth's abiding interests, his own thesis on "the nature of life, on the elasticity of time, on the qualities of memory and on one's relationship to the past." From Seth's anachronistic glasses and coat to the "electric frisson" of his restless play with style in *Palookaville*—his shifting between "comic, episodic story, fictional narratives, ironic commentary on form and function and a self-reflexive compendium of [his] artistic sources and influences"—Smart deftly guides the reader through the narrative and aesthetic topography of the fictional city of Dominion, its key residents, and the forms in which Seth brings them to life. Smart's book is hopefully the first of many studies that will engage in deeper, interdisciplinary research into the art of graphic narrative in Canada and abroad. His *Palookaville* will be long regarded as the gold standard for such scholarship.

In the conclusion to *Social Myths and Collective Imaginaries*, Gérard Bouchard writes: "The mythical lies at [the] heart of the cultural and the social. There are no societies without myths; there are only societies that ignore them." And, if he is to be believed, more often than not, they ignore them at their peril. This dense and exhaustive study constitutes the inaugural text in what Bouchard calls a "vast research project" that seeks nothing less than to "advance our understanding of social myths and the process of mythification" in cultures. While primarily attuned to scholars in his discipline and somewhat problematic in terms of a lack of definitions and unquestioned assumptions, *Social Myths* is an intriguing and potentially valuable analysis of cultural development.

For Bouchard, social myths are a "blend of imagination, emotion, reason, and sacredness that is sustained through narratives, rooted in the psyche, and used as leverage in political life"; they are types "of collective representation . . . a vehicle of what I would call a message—that is, of values, beliefs, aspirations, goals, ideals, predispositions, or attitudes." Collective imaginaries, based primarily on myths, are fluid cultural structures that "shap[e] a particular appropriation of reality that combines emotion and reason." He embraces "emotion" as a key aspect of his research and acknowledges that his position emphasizes the mutability of his model, in contrast to a stable and coherent system.

Bouchard sets the scope of this project clearly in terms of establishing foundational definitions and clarifications, positioning his work as original and eschewing established modes of approach, and avoiding details in terms of speculating where this project might lead him and his discipline. As a result, keywords, such as "sacredness" and "emotion," are left ill-defined, and in many cases are simply assumed to be "natural," therefore intuitively and universally understood and not requiring definition. There are also facets of culture, particularly ideology, which Bouchard gives short shrift in terms of their influence as powerful structural appropriations of reality.

For Canadian readers, a remarkable subtext is Bouchard's designation of Quebec as a separate nation in his analysis of social myths, set apart from anglophone, or the "Rest of," Canada. Such a position is not surprising from the brother of Bloc Québécois founder Lucien Bouchard, as it is unsurprising that his barely implicit advocacy for the myth of Quebec sovereignty or separation and the collective imaginary of "reconquest," spread out over the entirety of the study, is the strongest and most comprehensive aspect of this book. English Canadian society, he seems to suggest, would be wise not to ignore these emotions. At this stage of his research project, Bouchard offers in *Social Myths* a nebulous, sweeping hypothesis of the convergence of the mythical, the imaginary that at the moment appears to have little to no application beyond the academic. However, I look forward to future publications that might point a way to praxis, a way to apply this work to encourage social critique, engagement, and change.

Restricted Visibilities

Michael Boughn
Hermetic Divagations. Swimmers $17.00
Jon Paul Fiorentino
Leaving Mile End. Anvil $16.00
François Turcot; Erín Moure, trans.
My Dinosaur. BookThug $18.00
Reviewed by Kyle Kinaschuk

François Turcot, a Montreal-based poet who has produced four collections of poetry to date, published *Mon dinosaure* in 2013 with Éditions La Peuplade. In 2016, Erín Moure, the eminent poet and translator, took up the momentous task of tracing the resonances of Turcot's lapidary and minimalist poetics in English for the first time. *My Dinosaur* is a making of mourning, a paleontological *poiesis* of missed experience, that materializes the absence of Claude Turcot, the father of François Turcot, by giving poetic form to the final days of his life. Nonetheless, the collection, like all elegies worthy of the name, is acutely aware of the operative infidelities that arise when grieving the singular name, since these poems, which traverse multiple voices and temporalities, also mourn loss in general. Accordingly, Turcot populates these poems with the textual "shadows," as he calls them, of authors such as Bruno Schulz, Nicole Krauss, Blaise Cendrars, Francis Ponge, Katerina Iliopoulou, and Jacques Derrida: "just say that I'm gone down / the road / of the animal that therefore I am," Turcot writes. In her essay that concludes the volume, Moure acknowledges how the act of translating *Mon dinosaure* was inflected by the loss of her own father. The sites of grief multiply.

My Dinosaur contains a range of poetic modes from prose to correspondence to narrative to lyric to fragment. In the hands of Turcot and Moure, the preceding poetic topographies become excavated imaginaries that constellate around the prehistoric figure of the dinosaur—an extended metaphor for the impossible, albeit necessary, task of memorializing what will have never been. "A dinosaur," Turcot writes, is a "creature or man who exists by half, who offers a reading of a world without words." Between world and word, then, Turcot tempers the elegiac as a testament to digging the remains of a world without words—a work of mourning that emerges from the rewriting of *A Book of Hours*, which Moure characterizes as "a meditative notebook purportedly lost by the father then rewritten by the son." These poems, hence, are to be missed again and again, and this is precisely why Turcot and Moure's collaboration is such a compelling and remarkable project—one that is as demanding as it is rare.

It is certainly not fanciful to write of *My Dinosaur* and Michael Boughn's *Hermetic Divagations* in the same breath, as both poetic projects are experimental in form as well as delightfully solemn in scope. Also, both texts stage an immanent encounter that entangles world and word. Boughn inventively attends to H. D.'s *Hermetic Definition* by taking her late work as the volume's condition of formal possibility. In other words, Boughn formally mirrors the exact number of lines and stanzas that occur in H. D.'s poems to generate elegant palimpsests that radically reconfigure poetic relationalities. The volume, Boughn notes,

> constitutes a material connection that opens a relationship that is neither homage nor conversation nor explication nor history, but is all those things and more—a kind of grateful thinking brought to attention through her words.

It is Boughn's privileging of form, in the preceding constraint, that allows the work to foreground the materiality of poetic relations. *Hermetic Divagations* becomes an occasion for a profound and engaged poetic experimentation that does not lapse into a conceptualism that calcifies the immanent registers of formal and linguistic innovation.

Boughn's poems, which "wind in and out of signs / of hidden entrances, restricted visibility," are indeed hermetic, and this is their charm. He sustains this double gesture of "hidden entrance" and "restricted visibility" across all three parts of the volume through enjambed lines that give themselves over to a tracing of H. D. while also proffering strings of obscured images, which defy easy entrance: "savage rose gracing constant / doom, *un prêtre mis en / pièces*, battered kitchen." Here, Boughn interpolates Saint-John Perse's image of a priest in pieces to interrupt a line that is already shattered, and the dissonances proliferate, yet there is a hidden entrance, a restricted visibility, that persists in these lines, locating "grace" in "constant doom." *Hermetic Divagations*, perhaps, provides the best dictum for its own poetic practice: "each word lit with death glow." The foregoing line perfectly apprehends the splendour of these poems as they gratefully move language to its limits. Such is Boughn's dizzying undertaking in this highly innovative new volume of poetry that affirms both "dung and myrrh" while productively dwelling within the formal vestiges of H. D.

Leaving Mile End is Jon Paul Fiorentino's seventh collection of poetry and his tenth book. While Fiorentino's poetics are very much embedded in the cultural life of Montreal, the collection self-consciously appropriates the language of the Internet to dramatize digital phenomena from "doxxing" to "click bait" to "unfriending" to "Uber reviews." For example, "Click Bait" is composed entirely of mock titles such as "This 12-Year-Old Girl Just Died. Then a Puppy Came Along" and "A Couple Beautifully Says Goodbye to Their Deceased Dog. Step Inside . . . Right Meow." Similarly, "The Unfriending" adopts the egotistical persona of someone who is absorbed in their "online" reputation. The poem begins with the following threat: "You did a real stupid thing there for your career when you unfriended me." The speaker continues: "I can end you." In "The Cocks of 50 Shades of Grey," Fiorentino puns upon the verb "cock" for thirty-four lines: "I giggle, and he cocks his head to one side." Fiorentino, moreover, goes so far as to pen reviews of his own book: "What the hell? This is the worst poetry I have ever read. I could actually feel myself getting more stupid." Alexia, an imagined reviewer, observes, "lol. 'poetry.'"

Indigenous-Settler Relations

Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton, eds.
Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity in Canada.
U of British Columbia P $29.95

S. Douglass S. Huyghue
Argimou: A Legend of the Micmac.
Wilfrid Laurier UP $24.99

Marianne Ignace and Ronald E. Ignace
Secwépemc People, Land, and Laws: Yerí7 re Stsq̓ey̓s-kucw. McGill-Queen's UP $39.95

Reviewed by Sarah MacKenzie

Tethered by a deep investment in Indigenous issues in Canada—contemporary and historical—the three texts under review make timely and poignant contributions to the growing archive pertaining to Indigeneity in North America. First published in Saint John's *Amaranth* magazine in 1842, Maritime writer Douglass Smith Huyghue's novel *Argimou* is the first Canadian-authored narrativization of the eighteenth-century decline of New Brunswick's Fort Beauséjour and the displacement of the Acadians in 1755. The book gives readers a glimpse into the hardship and suffering caused by colonialist expansion. In the new edition from Wilfrid Laurier University Press, Gwendolyn Davies' afterword makes it clear that the novel, set in the rugged New Brunswick landscape, employs historical fiction techniques reminiscent of those used by Sir Walter Scott. However, even if read as a captivating adventure story, *Argimou* is nonetheless a forthright denunciation of the ongoing disenfranchisement of Indigenous peoples following European contact.

Secwépemc People, Land, and Laws similarly reminds readers of the impact of colonialism on Indigenous communities, but the book is, importantly, also a reminder of the perseverance and endurance of Indigenous cultures despite trying circumstances and a legacy of cultural diminishment. The text, representing more than thirty years of research, engages with the history of the Interior Plateau Secwépemc peoples, addressing socio-cultural and environmental developments over the past ten thousand years.

Co-authored by Dr. Marianne Ignace, a professor of linguistics and First Nations Studies at Simon Fraser University, and Chief Ronald E. Ignace, a storyteller, politician, Secwépemc historian, and adjunct professor at Simon Fraser University, the beautifully illustrated and impressively well-researched text also includes contributions from archaeologist Mike K. Rousseau, ethnobotanist Nancy J. Turner, and geographer Ken Favrholdt. Drawing upon the knowledge of Indigenous elders and storytellers, *Secwépemc People, Land, and Laws* adeptly merges traditional Secwépemc historical narratives with academic research and is, ultimately, an adept integration of contemporary Western scholarship and oral history. In a collaborative manner, the book emphasizes the ongoing persistence of the Secwépemc people, who have, through cultural upheaval, maintained a deep connection to their laws, traditions, and, perhaps most significantly, language.

Tolly Bradford and Chelsea Horton's new collection, *Mixed Blessings: Indigenous Encounters with Christianity*, addresses the relationship between Christianity and Indigenous cultures and communities after contact. The book is, of course, especially timely given the 2015 release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's *Final Report*, which raised public awareness of the role of the Anglican and Catholic churches in the genocidal abuse and neglect that characterized the government-mandated residential school system. Taken together, the diverse and engaging essays in the collection suggest that the role of Christianity in Indigenous life is both intricate and extremely variable, hinging on historical circumstances, and thus that it cannot be categorized as simply malignant. The text is composed of nine chronologically ordered essays divided into three sections: "Communities in Encounter," "Individuals in Encounter," and "Contemporary Encounters." Each essay reveals the significance of Christianity in Indigenous cultures, including those that highlight the role of Christian churches in colonialist imperialism and racialized violence.

The three essays in the first section demonstrate the manner in which some Indigenous groups relate Christianity directly to political power. Timothy Pearson's opening chapter explores colonialist missionary involvement in northeastern Canada, suggesting that French settlers used religiosity and ritual for negotiation across cultural difference and that, interestingly, Indigenous groups employed a similar strategy. Elizabeth Elbourne's "Managing Alliance, Negotiating Christianity," in turn, discusses the way that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Haudenosaunee communities associated Anglicanism with British imperialism, while Amanda Fehr's essay discusses the twentieth-century erection of a Christian monument by a coastal Salish community as a means of demanding territorial rights.

The essays in the middle section personalize the collection, detailing specific life narratives that emphasize the fraught relationship between Indigeneity and Christianity in North America. Cecilia Morgan's contribution relates the story of Eliza Field Jones, a British woman who married a missionary and became an advocate for the Mississauga community. In the following essay, Jean-François Bélisle and Nicole St-Onge consider the story of Métis leader Louis Riel, dynamically suggesting that the 1885 Métis Rebellion involved Riel's engagement with a conservative Catholic sect known as ultramontanism. Tasha Beeds' outstanding essay, "Rethinking Edward Ahenakew's Intellectual Legacy," provides an intriguing reconsideration of the twentieth-century Cree Anglican minister's life and community involvement. Beeds demonstrates that, although he worked with settler communities, Ahenakew forever maintained a commitment to his Cree traditions.

"Contemporary Encounters" duly examines the current relationship between Christianity and Indigenous communities. Siphiwe Dube contends with the aftermath of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission *Report*, which has, in many respects, rendered the churches responsible for counselling those most harmed by colonization. Denise Nadeau's essay discusses her personal experience teaching an Indigenous Studies course in a religion department, focusing on her meaningful efforts to work in the service of reconciliation and decolonization. Carmen Lansdowne's closing essay, "Autoethnography That Breaks Your Heart," concerns the lack of primary sources available and advocates for further inclusion of Indigenous voices in historical scholarship. While contemporary historical scholarship has moved away from essentializing analyses of Indigenous/settler relations, Lansdowne's piece is worthy of careful consideration. Given that it presents such a vast range of perspectives and voices concerning Indigenous/settler relations, *Mixed Blessings* makes a critical addition to the growing body of work relating to Indigenous histories in Canada.

Toward Nation-to-Nation Relationships in Literary Studies

Rachel Bryant
The Homing Place: Indigenous and Settler Literary Legacies of the Atlantic.
Wilfrid Laurier UP $35.99

Reviewed by Jennifer Henderson

This book argues that a discursive land-clearing is perpetuated by frames that produce and organize Canadian literature in terms of such categories as "early," "regional," or "multicultural," when these either ignore or subsume distinct Indigenous traditions. Bryant makes convincing connections between European legal fictions such as *vacuum domicilium* and *terra nullius* and what the institutions of CanLit do when they suppress the existence of early Native literatures in oral or non-alphabetic forms. Maliseet writings on birchbark, Passamaquoddy wampum belts, and Innu message sticks are examples of Indigenous systems of signification expressing intimate connections of people to place. In relation to European systems, they have held "competing cultural images," stories of belonging and right relationship that settler communities have walled off in order to protect their self-justifying fictions. If nation-to-nation relationships, rather than strategies of concealment or assimilative recognition, are to be practised in the field of literary studies, Bryant argues, we must learn to read in ways that break down this defensive wall. A central goal of *The Homing Place* is to produce a sense of "cartographic dissonance," the "recognition that colonized or settled environments and Indigenous place-worlds occupy the same geographic coordinates even while existing in fundamentally distinct epistemological worlds." Several chapters resituate early settler writing in relation to the Indigenous "place-worlds" it interrupts and disavows. Other chapters connect contemporary Indigenous writing—by the Innu poet Joséphine Bacon and the well-known Mi'kmaq writer, Rita Joe—to the non-alphabetic systems whose vital functions on behalf of land and people that writing continues.

The book focuses on the space of "Atlantic Canadian literature" but reimagines it through a combination of hemispheric, Atlantic World, and Indigenous Studies lenses. It models a reading practice informed by extensive archival research (including maps, letters, petitions, and material artifacts), tribal histories, historical geography, knowledge of recent struggles to assert territorial sovereignty and Aboriginal rights, and a healthy suspicion of many of the presuppositions of settler-nationalist and regionalist criticism. Bryant is well-versed in recent early American literary history which has produced the picture of an Atlantic world in which Anglo-Protestant settlers encountered the cultural and historical density of what the Abenaki historian Lisa Brooks calls "Native space." Brooks' *The Common Pot* (2008) is about the post-contact transformation of northeastern non-alphabetic traditions into Indigenous "treaty literature"—journals, written treaties, and histories—which, Brooks stresses, continued to map out sacred geographies and preserve communal stories, often in direct contestation of settler claims. Brooks is a key influence in *The Homing Place* and Bryant usefully extends her concepts and methods, discussing a selection of writers whose situations expose the contingencies (and violence) of the borders drawn by settler states and literary historians. A chapter on settler and Passamaquoddy storytelling in the "northeastern borderlands" of what are now called New Brunswick and Maine—the border drawn in 1783 cutting through Passamaquoddy territory—details settlers' selective use and abuse of Indigenous historical and geographical knowledge in their efforts to establish a boundary between competing settler jurisdictions. A target of critique in several chapters is what Bryant calls "Canadian exceptionalism"—the set of tropes and truisms bolstering the self-image of Canada as entirely separate from and morally superior to the United States. This critique has been made before (in Eva Mackey's *The House of Difference*, for example), but Bryant shows how it can be derived from attention to the "early American roots" of English Canada and to the continuities in "code systems" that belie the strategic differentiation.

Perhaps the strongest theoretical contribution of *The Homing Place* is its identification of a deep-seated prejudice in favour of the disembodied word—rooted in the tenets of Reformed Protestantism and transplanted to northeastern North America—that underpins the continued severing of stories from land, and the demotion of non-alphabetic forms of writing and knowledge-keeping. Bryant argues that this "iconoclastic barrier" still functions to protect the "industrio-scientific culture" of settler worlds from the ethically-, epistemologically-, and (potentially) politically-transformative potential of what the Anishinaabe-Haudenosaunee scholar Vanessa Watts calls Indigenous "place-thought." While cautioning against fake breaches of this wall (in the form of self-serving gestures of settler indigenization), Bryant calls for, and models, a critical practice that does the homework necessary to respectful engagement. While I am a little less hopeful about the transition from listening to letting go, or from ethics to politics, I have not seen a more meticulously researched, historically-informed, and spatially complexifying example of what "literary diplomacy" might look like.

Teaching Contested Spaces

Anne Burke, Ingrid Johnston, and Angela Ward
Challenging Stories: Canadian Literature for Social Justice in the Classroom.
Canadian Scholars $54.95

Sylvia Moore
Trickster Chases the Tale of Education.
McGill-Queen's UP $27.95

Reviewed by Jane Elizabeth Parker

Both *Challenging Stories: Canadian Literature for Social Justice in the Classroom* and *Trickster Chases the Tale of Education* aim to lead change in education to better meet the learning needs of multicultural students in Canada. In *Challenging Stories*, Anne Burke, Ingrid Johnston, and Angela Ward provide readers with a well-organized account of a study in which Canadian educators collaborate to select multicultural texts to promote social justice in K-12 classrooms, and then describe their experiences using these texts. Burke, Johnston, and Ward are scholars, educators, and authors who promote diversity and social justice in education. This work is a follow up to a previous text about "[t]he ideological representations of Canadian identity perceived in Canadian multicultural and social justice picture books." This book serves to support teachers with the implementation of "[t]heir goals of social justice education." The audience of the text is students in teacher-education programs. The book serves the intended audience well: in broad strokes, the text gives an overview of the ins and outs of choosing Canadian literary texts to raise awareness of social issues. It discusses selecting activities to promote engagement with the works, and navigating challenging issues to foster empathy in students for people who have been oppressed.

The book is divided into three sections and details the highlights of the study. What the book does well is integrate education theory and research on using multicultural resources into classroom practice. It spells out the reflective practice of the teachers by delineating their fears and concerns about adopting their chosen texts within the schools' communities. It gives practical advice on how to incorporate the texts into learning activities and assignments. Chapter 6 does an exceptionally good job at including examples of student comments and student work.

The chapter summaries were somewhat uneven in that the writers sometimes shift from their declared intentions at the beginning to what they conclude at the end. The terms the teachers used were subjective and did not include the students' voices. What I would have liked to see in the book was an incorporation of action research in measuring the outcomes of the study, in the form of, for example, student questionnaires on empathy conducted before and after the units. However, each chapter does provide some discussion questions for the audience to consider. Overall, the book provides concrete, specific guidance and support for teachers-in-training to implement challenging literary texts in their course curricula. It offers exemplars of multicultural education from a variety of Canadian regions, from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island. I would recommend this book to be part of teacher training throughout Canada.

Trickster Chases the Tale of Education, by Sylvia Moore, is a more theoretical text on what it would mean to incorporate an Indigenous worldview into a mainstream Canadian educational institution. Both educators and education policy-makers alike should read this book. Moore provides a comprehensive bibliography of Indigenous scholars and thinkers and incorporates their ideas in very accessible prose. She also includes "conversations" she has with the figures of Crow and Weasel. Through these intratextual insertions, Moore privileges story over exposition. She grapples with her location and positioning as a Mi'kmaq community member and her role as a Western scholar. She also leaves plenty of space for silence. It is the silence that intrigues me the most, although I was puzzled by the ambiguity of Moore's ending, and this curiosity led to my researching the school's website. The website features a mascot of a Spartan figurehead, and nowhere does the school acknowledge the unceded land on which it sits. I found a friendly reminder to parents of a parent meeting. Students who finish their exams at noon can leave the school only if their parents have a car. Students who are essentialized as being "Not in Good Standing are incarcerated in room 227 and not allowed to participate in extracurricular activities until released by their classroom teacher." No wonder Moore concludes her book with questions: "'Did you ever hear the story about the people and the salmon?' . . . And then he begins . . . 'Is anybody listening?'"

Various Canadiana

Claire Elizabeth Campbell
Nature, Place, and Story: Rethinking Historic Sites in Canada. McGill-Queen's UP $34.95

Keith Garebian
William Hutt: Soldier Actor. Guernica $37.95

Andrea McKenzie and Jane Ledwell, eds.
L. M. Montgomery and War.
McGill-Queen's UP $29.95

Reviewed by Gisèle M. Baxter

We have here three quite different books that explore key aspects of traditional Canadiana: the post-Second World War theatre scene, historic sites both as public monuments and as recreational spaces, and the engagement with the representation of war by the author of possibly the most iconic Canadian children's novel. In a way, these books also suggest something about the varieties of contemporary publication and their engagement with areas of academic research.

Keith Garebian's *William Hutt: Soldier Actor* is published by Guernica Editions, an independent press backed by funders including the Canada Council for the Arts and the Canada Book Fund, and with an aim—inspired by Picasso's landmark painting commemorating the bombing of Guernica by fascists during the Spanish Civil War—of publishing books that seek to make the world a better place. This is a compelling, genuinely delightful biography that not only focuses on the trajectory of Hutt's long and active career and personal life, but also situates this personal history in the development of Canadian theatre following the Second World War, and in the coincidence of that development with the advent and popularization of television, which gave working opportunities to many actors whose first love was the stage. This book is written with seriousness and insight as well as affection: it provides analysis as well as anecdote, and Garebian's long history as a writer on theatre gives it great confidence. Both theatre historians and the theatre-loving general public will find much of interest here, including several photographs (both in colour and in black and white) from stage and television productions, reproductions of artwork, a bibliography of cultural history and theatrical biography, a detailed chronology of Hutt's performances, a section of chapter annotations, and a detailed index.

Claire Elizabeth Campbell's *Nature, Place, and Story* is intriguing in that, in some ways, it reads as an introduction to a series rather than a volume in one (the Rural, Wildland, and Resource Studies Series published by McGill-Queen's University Press). In some ways it reflects a growing trend in academic publishing of producing books of interest both to researchers and to the general public, and certainly an overview of well-known historic sites, and the hook of the author's own anecdotal reminiscences about childhood visits to several of them, will resonate with the latter, as will her argument about considering public policy concerning these spaces through a holistic environmental lens. However, the breadth of geography covered and the relative brevity of the book (there are but five chapters and so just five sites covered: two in eastern Canada, one in Ontario, and two in western Canada) mean that several ideas are introduced rather than fully pursued, although there is an impressive bibliography that provides ample material for researchers taking up any of the issues addressed, and an impressively detailed index. The black and white photographs work best when they are of archival material. Tough questions are raised in a clear, straightforward way about the pervasive conservatism both of public history and of public expectations concerning these sites; it is to be hoped that vital questions concerning who has written history and who should write it, and concerning how land ownership and use are "officially" defined, are pursued vigorously by researchers taking up the resources Campbell's book provides.

In some ways the most purely academic of these books is *L. M. Montgomery and War*, a collection edited by Andrea McKenzie and Jane Ledwell. Its publication was most welcome when I was about to teach Montgomery's *Rilla of Ingleside* for the first time. Chronologically the last of the series that started with the iconic *Anne of Green Gables*, *Rilla* flips *Anne*'s premise: its focus is not on a dislocated orphan anxious for a home and a loving family, but on Anne's somewhat spoiled and babied youngest child, whose journey from the cusp of adolescence to young womanhood is the duration of the First World War. The novel largely focuses on various women's experiences on the home front, its implication of combat experience primarily through Rilla's doomed brother Walter, a poet. McKenzie and Ledwell's collection addresses this novel as well as Montgomery's extensive journals and correspondence, her short stories and poems that made their way into *The Blythes Are Quoted*, some of her other fiction, and Canadian war literature more generally. The introduction provides a useful, compelling overview and analysis of all this material, and the ten chapters—by scholars including several notable names in Montgomery scholarship, such as Irene Gammel, Holly Pike, Laura Robinson, and Elizabeth Epperly—take it up through a variety of lenses, including gender studies, literary/cultural history, visual representation, and environmental studies. There are several black and white reproductions, mostly of war art, and a section of colour plates, an impressive general bibliography, and a detailed index. Although its topic seems like a niche area of Montgomery's output, the book situates her war writing within her body of writing as a whole. The book is also of potential interest to researchers more generally interested in Canadian literature, cultural representations of war, and gender studies.

Canada on Stage

Robert Chafe

The Colony of Unrequited Dreams. Playwrights Canada $17.95

Michael Healey

1979. Playwrights Canada $17.95

Hiro Kanagawa

Indian Arm. Playwrights Canada $17.95

Reviewed by Greg Doran

Reviewing printed scripts is an interesting exercise since plays are meant to be seen on stage. They are not really meant to be read as one would read a novel. However, three of this year's GG-nominated plays are all good reads. Each playwright explores questions central to Canadian experience. Two of the plays approach their questions from a historical perspective, and two of them are adaptations of previous works. Together, they show the current diversity and strength of Canadian drama.

By adapting Wayne Johnston's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, Robert Chafe set himself a considerable task. Johnston's novel is a sprawling work and highly regarded. However, Chafe wisely focuses on the novel's chief strength: its characters. Joey Smallwood and Sheilagh Fielding are natural characters for the stage. Chafe captures the conflicting attitudes and emotions of the main characters. While he surrounds them with an assortment of colourful other characters, it is their play.

Chafe frames the play through small scenes with Fielding, and these serve as a chorus to provide exposition and fill in some of the story's gaps. Given the size of Johnston's novel, these scenes provide a dramaturgical way to overcome some of the problems inherent in adapting a work of fiction in which more time can be spent fleshing out characters and providing backstory. The play primarily focuses on the political life of Smallwood, and starts with a meeting with Sir Richard Squires, the leader of the Liberal opposition and the former Prime Minister of Newfoundland. In this scene, Chafe establishes Smallwood's character clearly as a man with conflicting ideals; more importantly, it sets him up as a man who desperately wants to be remembered.

The other strengths of Chafe's adaptation lie in his reliance on stage techniques to compress the action of the play. For example, the scene when Smallwood and Daniel Prowse compose letters to discredit Fielding is shared with Fielding's responses to show the passage of time in an effective manner. Elsewhere in the play, Chafe relies on sound effects and simple blocking notes to move the action of the play along.

Finally, Chafe must be commended for writing a three-act play with ten characters. It is rare to see or read a contemporary Canadian play that is so large in both cast and length. Robert Chafe's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* is both a successful adaption and an excellent script, worthy of future productions.

Like Chafe's play, Michael Healey's *1979* also deals with a moment in Canadian political history. However, Healey is focused on the short-lived PC government of Joe Clark, whom Healey depicts in a very favourable light. Relying on projections and a three-person cast, two of whom portray multiple characters, *1979* serves as an exploration of what happened to the Progressive Conservative party.

1979 can be seen as the third part of Healey's political trilogy, which includes *Plan B* and *Proud*. Where those two works are not wholly successful, *1979* returns to the formula that Healey employed in *The Drawer Boy*: he bases the play in a historical moment with enough space around the edges to embroider it with his wit and insight. The highlight of this technique is a scene between Clark and a young staffer named Steve. While one of the projections acknowledges the historical inaccuracy of the interaction between the two, it highlights the strength of Healey's abilities as a playwright.

While the anger behind *Proud* brings no real insight into former Prime Minister Harper, the young Steve in *1979* suggests exactly how the PC party lost its way. Steve expresses his unvarnished political views, prompting Clark to start looking for a closet big enough in which to hang Steve's corpse. While the play is ostensibly about the fall of Clark's government, it ends up saying more about the fall of the PC party, which Healey bookends with a scene about the hanging of Clark's official portrait that Harper did not attend.

Like *The Drawer Boy*, Healey uses the fall of Clark's government as a leaping-off point to explore larger issues. Healey prevents *1979* from being a political treatise with his wit, dialogue, and ability to take a lesson from Canada's past.

While the first two plays have looked to the past, Hiro Kanagawa's *Indian Arm* looks to the future of Canada. The play is an adaptation of Ibsen's *Little Eyolf*, which Kanagawa has brought to Canada's West Coast. Kanagawa is fairly faithful in his adaptation, taking names and the basic plot of a couple who loses a son. However, the play falters because of the revisions made by Kanagawa.

Specifically, the play's greatest weakness is its Indigenous themes and characters. The play reads like an adaptation that has tried to "indigenize" Ibsen's original without fully embracing the issues. The character of Borghejm is never fully fleshed out, and the land rights issue is glossed over and used to drive the tension between the two main characters, which is where Kanagawa really shines as a playwright. In the failed idealism of Alfred and the fading youth of Rita, Kanagawa portrays boomers who have lost their place in the world and are trying to navigate this new terrain. Despite not fully exploring the issues it hints at, such as land rights and Canada's relationship with First Nations communities, the play does succeed in its depiction of a generation looking for its place in Canada's new reality.

Taken together, the three plays highlight the strength and diversity of contemporary Canadian drama. All three have enjoyed successful initial runs, and one hopes that these published scripts will encourage other theatres to stage these works which deserve future productions.

It's Not Just Food

Nathalie Cooke and Fiona Lucas, eds.
Catharine Parr Traill's The Female Emigrant's Guide: Cooking with a Canadian Classic.
McGill-Queen's UP $39.95

Janis Thiessen
Snacks: A Canadian Food History.
U of Manitoba P $27.95

Reviewed by Liza Bolen

What makes talking about food so immediately engaging? How has our relationship with mealtime managed to step aside from our basic biological needs and capture our imagination so vividly? Today it feels as though we collectively have never been so conscious of what we put on our plates: there seems to be an incessant burgeoning of television shows—or, in fact, entire networks—devoted to the culinary arts; an emergence of countless blogs and magazines dictating food trends, diets, and go-to ingredients; and, in cities and small towns alike, a growing number of cafés and restaurants that attract their curious clienteles by experimenting with unique ingredients, tastes, and techniques. This fascination with food has transpired in literature: in both French and English spheres of Canadian literature, there is a rising interest in the field of "literary food studies," in which authors integrate the culinary world into their narratives. In Quebec, for example, we are observing a growing affection for the theme of restaurants and restaurant kitchens, as demonstrated by the very positive reception of Stéphane Larue's novel *Le plongeur* (2016) and Rosette Laberge's *Chez Gigi* (2017). Publications in English have also shown a desire to engage with the many facets of food, whether it is used for its Proustian ability to trigger memory, as in Madeleine Thien's *Simple Recipes* (2001), or as a gateway to discussing society and migration, as in Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* (1996).

Taking a closer look at how food can be integrated into literature might in fact be the best way to consider the true depth of the subject. Indeed, food imagery goes beyond simple descriptive narration. Discussing a specific ingredient, taste, or texture has the power to do many things: it can automatically prompt our sensory memory; it has the ability to make us travel back to an incredibly specific time; and it can effectively evoke social, cultural, economic, and even political realities. Perhaps understanding the profundity and complexity of food as a field of study is what motivated Nathalie Cooke and Fiona Lucas to re-edit Catharine Parr Traill's 1855 manual, *The Female Emigrant's Guide*, and what inspired Janis Thiessen to embark on an investigation of the history of snacking in Canada in *Snacks: A Canadian Food History*. And although these two books are non-fiction and therefore not presented as narratives per se, it remains that the story they tell through our relationship with food is incredibly captivating.

The Female Emigrant's Guide is exactly what the title suggests: it is meant to act as a guide and to help you—*you* being a fellow nineteenth-century settler—grasp a better understanding of local ingredients, when to harvest them, and how to cook them. Yet it would be inaccurate to qualify *The Female Emigrant's Guide* as purely a niche cookbook, as it offers a mesmerizing (and frankly, quite charming) dive into the archives of everyday life in the 1800s. With its extensive definitions of ingredients such as pumpkins, Canadian hare and other local meats, and, of course, the many declinations of maple (molasses, sugar, beer, etc.), and with drawings and one map, this book has an uncanny ability to immerse its reader into the universe of those who lived and fed their families in this epoch. It provides an extraordinarily accurate snapshot of a lesser-known—yet so evocative—part of Canadian history.

Snacks: A Canadian Food History also offers a historical perspective on food. However, in this work, "homemade" and "how-to" are replaced with ready-made potato chips, Cheezies, and other snack-time favourites. If *The Female Emigrant's Guide* demonstrates how, in the Victorian era, food acted as a true mirror of Canadian life, *Snacks* proposes a much more contemporary, but nonetheless accurate, reflection of how the social sphere can have a profound effect on what we eat. Through the tales of iconic Canadian snacks, both sweet and savoury, Thiessen explains, for example, how a large migration of Eastern European populations has impacted our taste for vinegar-based chip flavours, and the ways in which class and gender played a role in creating the association between chocolate and romance. Alternating between the viewpoint of the manufacturer, the consumer, and the researcher, Thiessen's work provides a truly refreshing perspective on a vast and rich subject that has somehow managed to stay hidden in plain sight. It is also worth mentioning that, in addition to the author's fun and accessible style, this book is truffled with old photos and images of product advertisements, thus making this read as entertaining as it is thought-provoking.

It is striking, when putting these books side by side, just how much they resonate with how we talk about food today. On one hand, *Catharine Parr Traill's The Female Emigrant's Guide: Cooking with a Canadian Classic* echoes with our increasing desire to return to DIY and locally sourced ingredients, as discussed by Cooke and Lucas in their introduction. On the other hand, *Snacks: A Canadian Food History* evokes our love for something quick, easy, and comforting. As we find ourselves somewhere between the two, we are struck by a sincere curiosity about how food will continue to play such a deep role in our lives, both as individuals and as a society.

Afterwords

Julia Cooper
The Last Word: Reviving the Dying Art of Eulogy.
Coach House $14.95

Olivia Custer, Penelope Deutscher, and Samir Haddad, eds.
Foucault/Derrida Fifty Years Later: The Futures of Genealogy, Deconstruction, and Politics.
Columbia UP US $35.00

Reviewed by Ralph Sarkonak

Julia Cooper's beautifully written book is both a personal meditation on the death of her mother and a literary essay on eulogy, "a particularly vexed form." Using examples from theory, fiction, and popular culture, Cooper takes us on a journey to explore a troubled and troubling ancient ritual. She starts out with Princess Diana's funeral, an exercise in a normative Englishness destined to downplay her otherness. The recuperation of a wayward "people's princess" is deconstructed in detail, including the eulogy by her brother and Elton John's rehashing of a song written for Marilyn Monroe. Cooper gets the book off to a roaring start under her ever-critical eye for inconsistency, intellectual sloppiness, and bad faith. Later we are not surprised to come across *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and Joan Didion's *The Year of Magical Thinking*, not to mention the deaths of David Bowie and Prince.

Cooper is good at showing how late capitalism and positive thinking recuperate grieving or simply make it impossible. She could have done more with the political side of things. I am thinking of the elaborate role-playing that immediately takes over after a public tragedy such as a mass shooting. The eulogies that follow serve as elaborate cover-ups of the chaotic absurd that underpins societies that cannot bear to see their constituent (and constitutional) weaknesses laid bare. There is an economic dimension to this—the funeral and gun industries—but the eulogy is also a way for the political doxa to quickly reaffirm its hegemony. Clichés make grief palatable; they also set to rights anyone who grieves too loudly or too long. Such was the message of *Antigone*, with whose protagonist Cooper identifies. Grieving on Twitter is the subject of prescient pages: "When death starts trending, we witness information capitalism in action." This goes back to the telegraph lines that communicated the news of Lincoln's assassination. Among the most poignant pages are those about Roland Barthes' grief for his mother in both *Camera Lucida* and *Mourning Diary*. Barthes wrote in the shadow of Proust, who deserves a mention here, although Cooper's comments on grief and time have a definitely Proustian echo to them. This is a lucid, unflinching, and resolutely honest work. Cooper refuses the finality of mourning, for, as she states, "I don't want to relinquish my dead."

Foucault/Derrida Fifty Years Later, a collection of scholarly essays, stands in sharp contrast to Cooper's personal *and* scholarly opus. Reprising an old philosophical argument about Foucault's use—or misuse, according to Derrida—of Descartes in three pages (out of 673) in his *History of Madness*, this is an exhaustive approach to a specific quarrel and a more general discussion of the two theorists. The collection largely avoids the two Frenchmen's writing styles and their critical reception, as well as their influences on subsequent theory, whether it be women's, queer, or cultural studies. I wonder if the best way to approach the quarrel might be not intellectual history but fiction, just as Foucault demonstrated an uncanny ability to illustrate his research questions in his quasi-novelistic openings, such as the beautiful pages on the ship of fools. Derrida was right that the *History of Madness* "did not ask explicitly enough questions about the very possibility of its own writing." But the quarrel turned into a "*dialogue de sourds*" between theorists using different methodologies; Derrida's was based on the *explication de texte*, whereas Foucault's was grounded in historical research. The essays are somewhat uneven and there are repetitions, but four stood out for me. Lynne Huffer's contribution does real justice to Foucault's "archival thinking," whereas Michel Naas points out that Derrida went to the heart of the greater philosophical issue of "where meaning becomes possible." Penelope Deutscher detects a Foucauldian bent to Derrida's late work on animality and the death penalty. And Samir Haddad tackles Foucault's biting accusation that Derrida's method was a "petty pedagogy." The idea that a "philosophy of teaching is hiding behind Derrida's critique of Foucault" is a pertinent insight that deserves more research. I wish that the editors had steered some of their contributors toward Derrida's and Foucault's accomplishments as writers (not just as thinkers), theory rock stars, and breathing, loving men whom we still mourn.

Space and Time

Myrl Coulter
The Left-Handed Dinner Party and Other Stories. U of Alberta P $19.95

Jasmina Odor
You Can't Stay Here. Thistledown $18.95

Reviewed by Paul Denham

Myrl Coulter is not much interested in specific places; indeed, the settings of these stories and the novella which several of the stories comprise are identifiable as Canadian only by their use of the occasional place name, from Kamloops to Prince Edward Island, used to suggest possible destinations rather than real settings. There's nothing wrong with that, of course; what interests Coulter is families, and the endlessly paradoxical combinations of love and resentment, security and entrapment, which families offer. Some of the stories are connected by their characters, and the novella, "Limbo," consists of a series of stories about the same family.

Alcoholism, adultery, abuse, parental abandonment, trips into an uncertain future, suicide, secrecy, car crashes, sibling alienation—these are the stock-in-trade of Coulter's families. And yet sometimes these unhappy circumstances do get resolved, and when they do, it is almost always because, in spite of everything, families can also provide support and love. It doesn't happen always—Coulter is not as sunny and cheerful as that—but sometimes. In the first story, "Grad School," Patsy's family gathers to celebrate her university graduation, but the celebration is spoiled by her parents' announcement that they're splitting up. Thrust into an unexpectedly bad employment market, Patsy is rescued by her uncle, who finds her a job, and then, when a second job lands her in the sinister company of gangsters, he rescues her again. There's an occasional Gothic frisson—in "Uncanny," Emily is haunted by the ghost of her grandfather, and in "Limbo," an eighteen-year-old suicide retains a voice in the story for a generation, until the circumstances of his death are finally brought to light.

As the title of Jasmina Odor's collection suggests, almost everybody in her world is excluded or out of place. Several of her characters are immigrants to Canada, and those who return to Croatia find they do not belong there. Places matter in these stories, as do the sensuous details of the houses and apartments people live in, the foods they eat and where they eat them, the complexities of their relationships. In the title story, Ivona refuses to let her recently arrived in-laws stay in the apartment she and her husband share. In "Board of Perfect Pine," a woman at a family party retreats to the bathroom with an older man, and discovers that she does not regret the breach she has thus opened between her and her current boyfriend. In "Ninety-nine Percent of It" (a title which implies the inevitability of imperfection), Jonathan breaks up with Tatiana, takes up with Shannon, and discovers he'd rather be with Tatiana after all—and at the end of the story they are together again. This sounds like the ending of a romantic comedy, except that when Jonathan says, "I just want you to be happy," Tatiana shrugs, "I am resigned to my fate." Whatever that may be, it isn't comedy.

The melancholy weight of time is one of the burdens of these haunting and painful stories, most clearly articulated in "Skin Like Almonds," where two Canadian women are on holiday on the Adriatic coast, with the reverberations of the Bosnian war sounding faintly and menacingly in the distance. In early August, "we began to feel a creeping fear of the end [of our holiday]. It was a paralysis, like turning twenty-five." Summer ends, youth ends, possibilities are closed off. Years later, with middle age closing in, the narrator yearns for something of that summer when they were "on the verge of being no longer young." In the linked stories "Peanuts" and "Barcelona," beautiful Amanda succumbs to depression; she tries to escape to Barcelona, but once there, she sees that "whatever she has begun by coming here, and whether it ends with life or death, this is only the beginning of it, and it will get much worse, before it ends, one way or the other." This is bleak, but it isn't the end; back in Canada, Amanda's mother bakes buns to cheer up Amanda's bereft boyfriend. That's not much, but it's something. And it's all we're going to get by way of a happy ending.

Grappling with the Real

John Creary
Escape from Wreck City. Anvil $18.00

Concetta Principe
This Real. Pedlar $20.00

Jason Stefanik
Night Became Years. Coach House $19.95

Reviewed by Stephen Cain

No lyrical solipsism, surrealist escapism, romantic flight of imagination, or even postmodernist linguistic investigation characterizes these three 2017 collections of poetry, but rather serious, and often ironic, attempts at grappling with the details and detritus of twenty-first-century urban existence in Calgary, Winnipeg, and Toronto. While aware of, and sometimes partaking in, recent trends in post-LANGUAGE and Conceptual poetics, these books insist upon investigating materiality and the socio-historical moment we are experiencing now in a direct fashion.

Escape from Wreck City, John Creary's debut poetry collection, alternates between formal experiments—in list poems, aphorisms, and faux horoscopes—and more narrative neo-Beat poems of young adult slackers. The drugs are harder and the social media references are new, but there is a little Kerouac in Creary's description of a cross-country trip to Montreal in search of "druggy pizza," and we can hear Ginsbergian echoes elsewhere, such as:

> tattooed hippies junk starred with sticky chronic,
> blunts thicker than index fingers, frayed
>
> voices leaping over Phish in Montreal, so warped
> on six tabs of sunshine acid

—or "dance, dance neurotic, circle backstage, / blackout on amphetamines, kicking the intestine // of a squawking police car." Creary's writing is very readable, and offers many clever turns of phrase and striking images, but the poet is at his best when he drops his hipster pose to meditate upon deeper issues, such as fatherhood and mortality, as he does in "September Eleventh Zygote" and "Dead Raccoon," respectively.

As in Creary's book, the poems in Jason Stefanik's *Night Became Years* most often explore young working-class experience, in this case closer in lineage to early Patrick Lane or John Newlove than the Beats. Again, the sordidness of the sex and abuse is ratcheted up, but Stefanik's poetry is really distinguished by his equal interest in sixteenth-century slang, particularly thieves' cant, and his desire to explore his own mixed Indigenous and adoptee settler heritage. With regard to the former, while the paratextual elements of the collection imply that Stefanik is attempting to merge the cant with the contemporary, they more often remain discrete (as in his "translation" of Thomas Nashe), or quotations from cant dictionaries function as epigraphs or section breaks. The reader wishes for more poetic merging of vernaculars, as in:

> stanch with salt my paper cuts,
> cross a steppe with but a gunny sack,
> nail an ace on my physics test,
> mug a tosser at the horse track[.]

In his mixing of the spirituality of Indigenous tricksters and skin-walkers, with the materially destitute-though-surviving Winnipeg working class, and with the linguistically and culturally heterodox lifestyles of the Elizabethan underclass, Stefanik is definitely onto something big, but at this point it hasn't quite coalesced. *Night Became Years* is a strong debut, and Stefanik is a poet to continue watching and reading.

Concetta Principe has always grappled with big issues in her collections of prose poems—such as the first Gulf War in *Interference* (1999) and the birth of the atomic age in *Hiroshima: A ~~Love~~ War Story* (2016)—but with *This Real*, her fourth poetry publication, she raises the stakes considerably to contemplate the effects of 9/11, humanity's earliest artistic expressions through cave paintings of 30,000 BCE, the death of children, and the apocalypse itself. Using a form very similar to that of her previous collection, *Hiroshima*—prose poems mostly restricted to a single page (and often a single verse paragraph) and featuring footnotes that point to other sources, philosophers, and quotations (here, mostly Walter Benjamin, Daniel Paul Schreber, and the Hebrew text *Sefer Yetzirah*)—Principe divides her book into a trilogy that investigates the end of times, the question of maternity, and the recently discovered paintings at the Chauvet cave in France. While mostly meditative, and often elliptical, Principe's prose poems can also be very moving, as in her references to the murder by neglect of Toronto toddler Jeffrey Baldwin in 2002, or also frenzied, as in her description of contemporary life in end times:

> [E]vidence is everywhere: depression, suicide, anxiety, psychosis and stress; the various messianic claimants, one in particular promising salvation in the Kool-Aid; not to mention the signs that man holds on Queen Street, Bloor Street, in Dundas Square; psychiatric patients expressing their torment, pointing to Armageddon in the lungs, the Harlot of Babylon in the morning bath, Gog and Magog battling at breakfast; national newspapers calculating cold war politics and the distance of the arms race; the doomsday clock, stuttering at seconds. . . .

It may be unfair to contrast the work of an established poet with two first collections, but *This Real* asks the hardest questions and, while not providing any comforting answers, takes the most risks and is the most necessary of these three books in considering life during the second decade of the twenty-first century. *This Real* is the real thing.

Imagining Endings

Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen E. Landman, eds.
Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief. McGill-Queen's UP $37.95

Carl J. Tracie
Shaping a World Already Made: Landscape and Poetry of the Canadian Prairies.
U of Regina P $27.95

Reviewed by Olivia Pellegrino

With climate change currently at the forefront of global concern, Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman's *Mourning Nature* and Carl J. Tracie's *Shaping a World Already Made* both contribute timely discussions of how the humanities and social sciences might engage with a myriad of environmental issues. Despite varied perspectives and disciplinary approaches, both texts are focused primarily on exploring and expanding the connection between humans and more-than-human nature. Tracie, a geographer engaging in interdisciplinary work with literary criticism and poetry, focuses on landscape, on the physical and cultural characteristics of the Canadian Prairies, while Cunsolo and Landsman's anthology takes a more holistic approach to the more-than-human, featuring essays that demonstrate an investment in the agency of animals, plants, geological matter, and more.

Tracie seeks to unite scientific and imaginative perspectives in a consideration of the geographical constitution of the Prairies. Through a comprehensive survey of "literary" prairie poetry, he convincingly asserts that the two epistemologies complement one another in their efforts to understand the essence of a region. It is an ambitious project, one that raises many questions about how regions are created and defined, and one that, as Tracie himself concludes, provides "appeal" rather than "argument." In his survey of several prairie poets, Tracie is thorough, highlighting issues of race, gender, and locale to demonstrate ways in which geography (whether physical or cultural) can inform the poetic imagination and vice versa. Tracie masterfully merges his evident expertise in the diverse geography of the prairie region with an enjoyable reading of the poetry that has emerged from prairie places, demonstrating how nuance can counter reductionist or stereotypical conceptualizations of prairie landscapes.

Mourning Nature is a multidisciplinary collection that considers the cultural, artistic, and digital ways that humans engage with and perform mourning for ecological loss. In a selection of equally poignant and engaging essays, contributors outline ways in which ecological mourning can extend agency to more-than-human nature, and more crucially, how sustained personal and collective mourning engenders the possibility of shifting political responses to climate change and environmental degradation. Cunsolo and Landman have astutely compiled a book that is both a comprehensive introduction to and a sustained evaluation of ecological mourning. Together, the essays elucidate the complex and affective labour that is necessary to grieving one's environment; they work from an often common set of theoretical texts to examine the function of different mourning practices, from "resistant mourning" that "refuses consolation" to "anticipatory grieving" for species, cultures, practices, and landscapes on the verge of disappearance. Now, when environmental activism can seem overwhelming on a day-to-day basis, the essays in *Mourning Nature* provide both deeply personal and perceptive critical approaches to environmental loss, offering a balance between emotion and theory. It is this emphasis on critical affect and the possibilities of the process of collective, political grieving that makes the anthology so remarkably optimistic and successful.

Shaping a World Already Made and *Mourning Nature* share more than an interest in the connection between humans and their environments. They also share an immense power to engage readers regardless of disciplinary background, and they appeal for the necessity of widespread environmental thought, imagination, and care. As both texts conclude, environmental degradation—like our cultural, political, and emotional responses to it—is a story that is both individual and collective. It is a story that these critical and personal works invite their readers to respond to and, more pressingly, to complete.

Authentic Exploration of Animal/Exploitation

Jack Davis
Faunics. Pedlar $20.00

Mercedes Eng
Prison Industrial Complex Explodes.
Talonbooks $17.95

Reviewed by Sarah-Jean Krahn

Both Jack Davis and Mercedes Eng will magnetize readers who seek an authentic read. Davis' brief biography, consigned to the final page of his new book of animal poetry, *Faunics*, will gratify a reader hungry for a true intimacy in poetry. For what literary patron could not be romanced by the knowledge that Davis, of Parry Sound, Ontario, summers in a fire tower at the peak of the Alberta wild, moonlighting as the lookout for any telltale signs of smoke. How about by the fact that he inhabited for over a decade the woods ringing Lake Talon in northeastern Ontario with presumably little to do but observe and record the landscape and its other diverse inhabitants. And that's not to mention this poet's clear devotion to the animal world through his volunteer work with an India-based animal charity helping to heal and return injured or ill donkeys, cows, and dogs to their natural habitat of the street—the piece that will surely make animal lovers swoon. And, of course, Davis endeavours in *Faunics* to embody the real by suppressing his presence in the Canadian wilderness and instead focuses on other characters.

The authenticity of Eng's *Prison Industrial Complex Explodes* is of a slightly more sensitive nature. The writing process for her, largely composed of realia of sorts, was almost certainly a poignant one, borrowing in part as she does from documentation of the ricocheting of her father from prison to prison across BC and Alberta when she was young. In sharing a series of letters from various officials and assistant commissioners, evading responsibility for the theft of what they refer to condescendingly as his "gold or gold-coloured neckchain," alongside the various rectangular cards of lamination that claim to exhaust human identity and trace her father from immigration to imprisonment, Eng forces the reader to jimmy the gate that releases him from her memory, only to systematically slam him back in as the trail goes cold. For while the evidence regarding Sue Dong ENG is limited, there is a wealth of information from Crown and corporate sources that implicates these entities as complicit in incarcerating whole populations for profit in the manner of refugee detainment, the virtual slavery of prisoners, and the environmental destruction and resulting infirmity of First Peoples on their own lands.

Meanwhile, Davis' work marks the contemplations of a walk in the woods of those same lands, the blink of an eye and the swoop of a bird of prey across the page so the hiker, focused on her destination, may barely distinguish the subtle gust of his "animal / air" from her "own / fluttering / clothes." These largely short poems reflect the temporaneity of nature that flits by the humans who have populated themselves away from it, who inhibit instead of inhabit. The strongest, however, spring from the stories of he who strolled by them, as in "Variations on the Decomposing Fox," which tenderly depicts the "effigy of her /

dog-shaped name / in amnesial proteins" through conscious eyes of compassion. In these cases, Davis doesn't extract himself fully and thus more effortlessly mesmerizes the reader with non-human/human synergy than when the animals abide alone.

While *Faunics* occasionally stirs its reader to estimate the desecration bred by humans upon the environment—"we fail & flee" while "the worst that can happen" remains eclipsed from other beings' acumens—*Prison Industrial Complex Explodes* unexpectedly chronicles the environmental racism endemic to a Canada that caters to the corporate powerhouse by corrupting the ecological landscape. One of the most catastrophic consequences of this ransack is the indiscriminate destruction of the Mother of all peoples of Turtle Island: "we live here / this is our food back here." These words spoken so simply by Freda Huson, Unist'ot'en clan spokesperson, as the Nation safeguards its source of sustenance, explain why "[o]ur Canadian oil and gas, utility, mining, and water companies are not immune to [the] challenges" of "multiculturalism"—in other words, the inevitable backlash and steady struggle by marginalized voices for an environmental justice monitored and reprimanded by law enforcement. This leaves the final question: do the sections of Eng's book, which in their ever-increasing brevity echo a ticking time bomb, reflect the careening of a precarious society toward privatization of land and countless imprisoned bodies, or do they reflect the conquering of the carelessness of capitalist greed by the courage of commoners? Again, the title: *Prison Industrial Complex Explodes*. I'll go with the latter.

A Linguistic Turn

Dorothy M. Figueira and Chandra Mohan, eds.
Literary Culture and Translation: New Aspects of Comparative Literature. Primus US $54.95

Sneja Gunew
Post-Multicultural Writers as Neo-Cosmopolitan Mediators. Anthem $115.00

Reviewed by Shao-Pin Luo

There have been many intense and sophisticated debates about cosmopolitanism and the related concept of world literature in literary and cultural studies. In countering what is perceived as elitist and Eurocentric versions in contemporary cosmopolitan discourse, a plethora of alternative forms has emerged, such as rooted, situated, materialist, discrepant, visceral, and vernacular cosmopolitanism, or in Sneja Gunew's term, neo-cosmopolitanism (peripheral cosmopolitanism or cosmopolitanism from below). What the two books under review contribute to these discussions, besides broad and significant considerations on questions of the human and the modern, of the nation-state and the planetary, and of Indigeneity, is a remarkable linguistic turn, brought about from comparative (transcultural) and multilingual (translational) perspectives.

Gunew explains that the guiding principle of her book, *Post-Multicultural Writers as Neo-Cosmopolitan Mediators*, is the "need to move beyond the (often unacknowledged) monolingual paradigm (an assumed model) that dominates Anglophone literary studies." She argues that what has been forgotten in the contemporary denigration of multiculturalism is the crucial element of multilingualism. Her book, in six chapters, examines the intersections of a wonderfully eclectic array of literary works across the boundaries not only of geography—writers from Australia are juxtaposed with those from Canada, and connected to diasporic writers from Eastern Europe and Asia—but also of genre (film, graphic novel, visual art, and other forms of multimedia). Further, it concerns itself with "deep or geological time (often associated with Indigeneity)" and with the "acoustic 'noise' of multilingualism (accents within writing)."

Gunew argues that post-multicultural writers (the "post" via Lyotard's concept of the future anterior) "offer a cosmopolitan mediation and translation between the nation-state and the planetary." This enabling, "mediating" function is fruitfully analyzed through Gunew's method of an overarching "stammering pedagogy," a form of defamiliarization and denaturalization that emphasizes what Paul Gilroy has described as a "cultivation of a degree of estrangement from one's own culture and history." Amongst her frequently insightful readings of a vast repertoire of theoretical as well as creative works, of particular note is Gunew's interesting engagement with texts by Jacques Derrida (*Monolingualism and the Prosthesis of Origins*) and Rey Chow (*Not Like a Native Speaker*), which are reflections on autobiographical multilingual experiences that connect to Gunew's own diasporic trajectory.

Multilingualism is also the emphasis in *Literary Culture and Translation: New Aspects of Comparative Literature*, edited by Dorothy M. Figueira and Chandra Mohan. This is a follow-up to Mohan's 1989 edition, *Aspects of Comparative Literature*; indeed, three seminal essays from the original volume are re-issued here. An important and valuable volume, most of its twenty-one essays focus on tracing the development of comparative literature and translation studies in India in the context of its astonishing linguistic diversities and intricate cultural complexities. It also contains essays on the evolution of comparative studies in the US, France, and Estonia, as well as on epistemology and methodology, orature and performance, and interdisciplinarity, among other topics in the field.

In the collection's overview of comparative literature in India, Sayantan Dasgupta notes that the historical perspective of Sisir Kumar Das' reprinted essay remains a poignant reminder that while the history of comparative literature in India may have started formally with the establishment of the Jadavpur University Department of Comparative Literature in 1956, there was a long and sustained "pre-history," which included Rabindranath Tagore's lecture on *Visva-Sahitya* (or "world literature") in 1906, as well as Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's essay on "Shakuntala, Miranda, and Desdemona" (1873), the activities of the Fort William College (established in 1800), and even the literary contact situations that existed in medieval India. Commenting on the formation of modern Indian languages, Ipshita Chanda astutely points out that it is a story of borrowing, lending, adaptation, and transformation of linguistic and literary sources occasioned by contact between diverse language cultures, and that the shape of comparative literature in India has been influenced by its relationship not only to the various Indian-language literatures, but also to the literatures of the world in translation and to English literature.

In "Towards an Indian Theory of Translation," Indra Nath Choudhuri explains that the Indian translator always has the freedom to interpret the text, and that to an Indian society steeped in an oral and performative literary tradition, differing versions become the norm rather than an exception. Writers writing in English, as well as in the various Indian *bhashas*, are challenging and redefining conventions in translation theory: "We can no longer merely limit ourselves to the conventional notion of linguistic equivalence or ideas of loss and gain, which have long been a staple of translation theory," writes Choudhuri, "because of the extensive use of different *upabhashas* by Indian writers . . . ; the creation of a new language by Dalit writers; and the use of tribal languages in multilingual contexts." A highlight in this section on translation is E. V. Ramakrishnan's essay, which traces the history of regional translations of great Indian classical epics while also critiquing Sheldon Pollock's work on vernacularization in India—the decline of Sanskrit and its replacement by regional languages—as an Orientalist project that refuses to engage with the multilingual ethos and cosmopolitan traditions of regional languages. In examining the complex relationship between Sanskrit and Indian regional languages, Ramakrishnan brings up the influence of Persian and Arabic, which "provided a powerful impetus for the *bhashas* to question and subvert the hegemony of the Sanskrit cosmopolis":

> It means that before the arrival of English, India had already been in dialogue with the West and had contributed to the rise of modernity in the West through its own dialogic traditions. . . . This also means a shift from the multilingualism of medieval India to the bilingualism of the nineteenth century, where English became the intellectual language and the Indian languages their inferior other.

Malayalam serves in this context as a particularly illuminating example of a heteroglossia that incorporates Persian, Arabic, and many European languages, as well as everyday speech of the living community.

In dismantling the facile dichotomies between centre and periphery, between English and other languages, or indeed between the cosmopolitan and the local, both of these books challenge us to recognize transcultural and multilingual histories and realities as well as the limits of monolingualism, advocating the necessity of cross-cultural engagements across national and linguistic boundaries.

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Strange Encounters

Barry Freeman
Staging Strangers: Theatre and Global Ethics.
McGill-Queen's UP $32.95

Ven Begamudré
Extended Families: A Memoir of India.
Coteau $24.95

Reviewed by Lydia Forssander-Song

Staging Strangers and *Extended Families* are both non-fictional texts that acknowledge the gap between the self and the other. In *Staging Strangers*, Barry Freeman carefully develops his terminology around global ethics and selectively documents a history of Canadian theatre with his focus on multicultural theatre. In contrast, Ven Begamudré gestures at difference and pays particular attention to individuals in his family both immediate and extended. Unlike Freeman's very scholarly and convincing discourse that unifies his argument, Begamudré's more loosely constructed memoir plays with form through its inclusion of photographs, notes, interviews, and excerpts from journal articles, as well as a scholarly book, personal journal entries, self-written fiction, and mythology. In form and in storytelling style, Begamudré's text brings to mind Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*—a fictional memoir that also combines photographs, poems, quotations, and notes.

In his prologue, Freeman defines the concept of the "stranger" in contrast to the "neighbour." In Chapter One, he traces the development of multiculturalism in Canada beginning with Toronto as a "world city." He focuses on multiculturalism as an "ethical project" rather than a "political project" and emphasizes the "politics of recognition." Furthermore, he "distinguish[es] the ethical from the moral." Consequently, Freeman "analyze[s] theatrical poetics and strategies for how they configure the audience in an ethics of difference" and "provide[s] a language for understanding theatre as an intercultural, intersubjective, ethical encounter." He does this in his following chapters through a close examination of a particular theatre company, Toronto's Czech and Slovak Nové divadlo (New Theatre), and through the following plays: Betty Quan's *Mother Tongue*, Catherine Hernandez's *Singkil*, Ins Choi's *Kim's Convenience*, Ahmed Ghazali's *The Sheep and the Whale*, Matthew McKenzie's *SIA*, Mumbi Tindyebwa Otu's *Nightmare/Dream*, and Debajehmujig Storytellers' *The Global Savages*. In his epilogue, Freeman concludes that

> [i]n addition to working up a skeptical perspective on ethics, [he] hope[s] the book has also demonstrated positive ways in which strangers positioned at the threshold often exhibit a kind of psychic dual citizenship that can challenge calcified or stagnant notions of community.

Freeman also comments on his

> discovery that in discussing the ethics of staging strangers [he] was necessarily discussing audiences, both in the sense of individual viewing subjects and as a viewing 'public' that constitutes larger 'circles of the "we,"' including the multicultural nation, the West, or humanity.

Finally, he also "hope[s] the book has made clear the need for a difficult and indeterminate ethics."

On a more personal note, Begamudré asks, "Am I Indian or Canadian?" and answers "I was neither; I was both." He also confesses, "It's not that I feel like a stranger. A lot of this seems familiar to me. I've come back, but I want to go back farther." He carries on speaking to himself in italics quoting *"people," "Don't write because you have to tell a story; write because you have a story to tell."* Begamudré's inner dialogue reflects other parts of his memoir where he further reveals his fragmented self by speaking of himself in the third person: "In 1963 or '64, the boy who disliked small, dim places was living in Canada." In his memoir, Begamudré explores his sense of Freeman's "psychic dual citizenship" by reaching into his Indian past and trying to connect it to his Canadian present, by voicing and trying to understand his feelings of being in-between his estranged parents as well as other estranged members of his extended family, and by determining his identity as a writer and a non-writer of fiction and non-fiction. He includes unfinished fictional stories that follow from actual events in his family's history. He also acknowledges, "My father . . . would have told parts of this story differently. He did, in fact, tell parts of it differently." However, in spite of its fragmentation, fictionalization, and diverse forms, Begamudré's account is unified by its search for Ananda (also the name of his uncle): "Whether it means happiness or joy, Ananda is a feature of self-realization. Ananda also means bliss."

Both Begamudré and Freeman consider the multicultural nature of Canada. Their strange encounters with the estranged create spaces for reflection on a journey that is national, global, and potentially very hopeful.

L'Intellectuel post-national au Québec

Alex Gagnon

Nouvelles Obscurités. Del Busso 24,95 $

Compte rendu par François-Emmanuël Boucher

Voici un livre fascinant qui mérite l'attention de tous ceux qui souhaitent mieux comprendre la nature des dernières métamorphoses du paysage politique qu'a connu le Québec de la dernière décennie. *Nouvelles obscurités* comporte quinze courts essais d'Alex Gagnon qui ont d'abord été publiés dans *Littéraires après tout*, un blogue littéraire dans lequel ce dernier a publié abondamment à partir de l'automne 2010, soit au moment où « il entamait tout juste [s]a maîtrise à l'Université de Sherbrooke. » Essai après essai, Gagnon s'en prend à ce qu'il nomme lui-même « les pathologies de notre temps », dont, sans doute, la manifestation

suprême et génératrice des dislocations actuelles de la chose politique, pour reprendre sa terminologie, serait par-delà la politique du gouvernement libéral provincial, la domination du « gouvernement de la dette ». Par sa puissance discursive et son emprise sur l'imaginaire actuel québécois cette nouvelle idéologie politique invite tout un chacun « à capituler devant *la réalité*, puisque devant elle *on ne peut plus rien*, puisque l'état des finances publiques *ne nous laisse pas le choix*. »

« Le discours politique contemporain, écrit-il, est une école de résignation. Le pouvoir se déguise en refus du pouvoir. Souvent présentées comme parfaitement inéluctables, les coupures et compressions budgétaires paraissent ainsi s'imposer d'elles-mêmes et machinalement. Elles semblent émaner d'une transcendance qui n'a manifestement rien de spirituel, mais devant laquelle il faudrait néanmoins plier les genoux, ce qui rend d'ailleurs invisible l'éventail plus large des solutions politiques possibles. » Durant les règnes du gouvernement Charest et, encore plus, du gouvernement Couillard, le politique, au sens de Jacques Rancière et de Pierre Rosanvallon, a été piétiné, broyé, dénaturé par la politique de « l'austérité » et de « la rigueur », par la politique du « payeur de taxes » et du « contribuable »; pire encore, par les impératifs que dictent les « coffres de l'État » ou le « portefeuille » d'un ministère, au point où gouverner est devenu un acte foncièrement financier et, par-là, synonyme du « refus du politique entendu comme capacité d'intervention d'une société sur elle-même. » Triomphe alors dans ce contexte politique et culturel, le cynisme de l'être désengagé qui « ne rêve plus », de celui qui voit « l'engagement comme futile et puéril », de l'être désincarné dont les convictions en lambeaux confinent sa conception du politique au degré zéro de l'acte démocratique, et ce au point de croire que voter aux quatre ou aux cinq ans « condense à lui-seul, et démesurément (c'est-à-dire indûment et frauduleusement) l'ensemble des aspects pluriels de la présence citoyenne. »

À cette dissolution du politique correspond non seulement la prépondérance « de la grande trame cosmique de l'économie » et la confiscation de la rue comme lors de la grève étudiante en 2012, mais, de plus, une « juvénophobie » criante et sans gêne par laquelle s'impose un « paternalisme dédaigneux et méprisant » pour tout projet politique qui ne se résumerait pas au remboursement de la dette ou à l'atteinte de l'équilibre budgétaire. Ainsi, tous ceux qui pensent encore que la dissolution loufoque du Bloc québécois ou l'agonie actuelle et sans précédent du Parti québécois et, derechef, de la cause indépendantiste, sont des épiphénomènes épisodiques qu'une énième course à la chefferie saura à nouveau corriger, doivent lire attentivement cet essai, car il est produit par un jeune intellectuel brillant pour qui la question nationale n'a plus aucun intérêt de sorte qu'elle ne mérite même plus d'être évoquée dans ses analyses.

Entiché d'une forte sensibilité de gauche pour ne pas dire d'extrême gauche à l'instar des intellectuels péquistes d'autrefois, Gagnon arrive difficilement à peindre le bon peuple québécois et sa jeunesse *bouillonnante* autrement qu'à genoux et dépossédés par une joute politique lointaine, qui se trame ailleurs au-dessus de lui, étrangère à ses intérêts les plus profonds, quoique dans la logique narrative qui est maintenant la sienne, ce n'est plus la faute du fédéral ou encore moins de celle des Anglais si cette dépossession a toujours lieu! C'est l'économie pure et désincarnée politiquement et nationalement qui trône dorénavant à la verticalité des forces délétères, corrosives et malfaisantes qui brime l'évolution politique de sa province. Machiste, sexiste, autoritaire, cynique, inféodée à l'argent et, dès lors, insouciante de l'écologie et de la réelle nature du système démocratique, telle serait la nouvelle figure du mal à l'ère de l'intellectuel québécois post-national.

Nevertheless, They Persisted

Libe García Zarranz
TransCanadian Feminist Fictions: New Cross-Border Ethics. McGill-Queen's UP $85.00

Tabatha Southey
Collected Tarts and Other Indelicacies.
Douglas & McIntyre $24.95

Reviewed by Lorraine York

As I write this review, Doug Ford, running to become the premier of Ontario, has announced that he would not stand in the way of Conservative MLAs introducing anti-choice legislation, and he has vowed to roll back the current Liberal government's progressive revisions to the province's sexual education curriculum. South of the border, the Trump administration has unveiled its plan to withhold federal money from any health facility (notably, Planned Parenthood) that provides abortions or refers patients to providers of the procedure. These are only a couple of fronts on which patriarchal neoliberalism attacks those who identify as women, particularly poor women, women of colour, queer, and trans women. As feminist thinkers at this moment in time, we are thirsty for writings of resistance. These two books quench that thirst in strikingly diverse ways, one through academic theory and literary analysis, the other through journalistic current affairs satire, though each ultimately upsets the theory/praxis dichotomy.

Libe García Zarranz's *TransCanadian Feminist Fictions* combines theoretical acumen with lively political urgency. Speaking to twenty-first-century anxieties about displacement, perpetual war, globalization fallout, and discrimination, it thinks in complex ways about border crossing, affects, and materialism. Heavily indebted to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's theories of the multitude, García Zarranz sees the potential for change not in a forging of a homogeneous subaltern coalition but, instead, in an alliance of distinct, differently positioned communities. It's a pleasure to read a thinker who is so thoroughly well read in contemporary cultural theory; at times, however, I wanted García Zarranz's voice to intervene a bit more, particularly when she cites theorists whose works are not philosophically congruent. I think here, for instance, of Sianne Ngai's contention that the "ugly feelings" of which she writes have little political efficacy, a stance García Zarranz cites approvingly in relation to Hiromi Goto's writing, even though the balance of *TransCanadian Feminist Fictions* avers that affective border crossings hold potential for resistance through dissident affective corporeal performances.

The literary texts through which García Zarranz threads these meditations are twenty-first-century works by Dionne Brand, Hiromi Goto, and Emma Donoghue. García Zarranz constructs a "recursive" (to use her term) structure in this study, that is, returning to Brand, Goto, and Donoghue in each of the three main sections of the study, which are devoted to corporeality, biopolitics, and affects. Threaded through the meticulous academic analysis is a recurring concern plucked out of the daily news: at several points in the study, García Zarranz references the ongoing war in Syria and its refugee crisis. This is an erudite book of theoretically informed literary criticism whose commitments are embedded in the everyday politics of borders and bodies.

Tabatha Southey's *Collected Tarts*, on the other hand, would at first glance appear to be leagues removed from academic political theory. A collection of satirical columns that Southey wrote for *The Globe and Mail* and other publications, it embraces everyday humour (think: the September curse of too many zucchini). But a decisive thread running through Southey's columns is a biting, energetic, take-no-prisoners progressive political satire. She has a particular gift for exploding the ridiculousness of government measures that seek to curtail the full personhood of particular subjects. One particularly effective tactic Southey uses is the application of the language of a regressive policy to another situation, the better to highlight its ridiculousness or ethical impoverishment. One might call this the "Modest Proposal" strategy, and in Southey's hands, it stings most satisfyingly. In relation to gender politics, Southey rebukes Canadian politicians who want to deny sex workers a safe working space, Gamergate threats against women programmers, Ontarian prudishness about sexual education, and the media's consistent othering of transgender people. Southey has similarly called out the destructive wielding of privilege in the Canadian cultural realm; after several powerful media industry insiders took to Twitter to voice their support for Hal Niedzviecki's call for an "Appropriation Prize" to recognize the stealing of other communities' stories, Tabatha Southey tweeted back, "Oh. An 'Appropriation Prize.' You guys are so punk. Maybe spare the world white people complaining about being over-policed. Maybe listen." Southey's work is a popular contribution to feminist, anti-racist discourse, *and* it offers astute critical intervention. As feminists committed to an assemblage of social justice causes at a difficult time, we need all of these feminisms—fierce, funny, theoretical, activist, satirical, philosophical—to nourish and strengthen us.

Cultural (Re)production

Monica Gattinger
The Roots of Culture, the Power of Art: The First Sixty Years of the Canada Council for the Arts. McGill-Queen's UP $39.95

Alan Gordon
Time Travel: Tourism and the Rise of the Living History Museum in Mid-Twentieth-Century Canada. U of British Columbia P $34.95

Reviewed by Ryan Porter

Living history museums emerged in Canada in the mid-twentieth century to educate and entertain a public hungry for historical knowledge. As Alan Gordon argues in *Time Travel*, however, these museums are products of their time, "artifacts of history themselves." They may offer windows into the distant past, but crucial to Gordon's argument is that they reveal "the cultures of the past that constructed them." Living history museums' sense of realism emerges from their meticulously recreated spaces, but their sense of authenticity materializes because they align with people's expectations of imagined pasts. Gordon's research is meticulous and his writing exceptionally coherent. *Time Travel* is an excellent study of how priorities and preoccupations guide historical interpretation, and an important addition to the study of Canada's heritage industry.

The book is structured in three parts. Part 1, "Foundations," traces the philosophical underpinnings of museums in general and, subsequently, living history museums in Canada. Military installations were the first to be restored, and Gordon connects the development of these old forts to burgeoning tourism trends that demanded spectacle. These museums authenticated their versions of the past by "manufactur[ing] the material evidence that supported those understandings." Part 2, "Structures," charts the rise of the "pioneer village" in Canada in the 1960s. These facilities, despite their founders' preoccupation with historical accuracy, are fantasy reconstructions, a hodgepodge of buildings assembled, by necessity, from a variety of locales and eras. Furthermore, these installations portrayed a past that was consonant with the gender roles and commercial preoccupations of postwar Canada: "living history museums presented a conservative historical message that emphasized a gendered society rooted in the nuclear family of the post-war era." Their influence on the historical consciousness of a generation of Canadians is undeniable. Part 3, "Connections," looks at living history museums in BC and Alberta, and at the influence of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism on an evolving national consciousness and the resulting shift in living history museums' historical message. Part 3 also explores the changing role of Indigenous cultures in these museums, from marginal curiosities adjacent to the central grounds, to, in one case, a museum jointly managed by the 'Ksan Association and the BC government, which emphasized the continuity between cultural past and present. Gordon concludes that shifts in historical representations are a necessity in living history museums. While these installations may have fixed the "values of the mid-twentieth century . . . onto the landscape," the fluidity of historical interpretation ensures, thankfully, that those values have not been "fixed in Canadian identity."

In *The Roots of Culture, the Power of Art*, Monica Gattinger argues for the continued relevance of the Canada Council in an era when "any Canadian can write, compose, paint, sculpt, dance, or sing, and disseminate and promote their work" online. In its early days, the Canada Council was primarily concerned with ensuring supply by fostering artistic infrastructure. More recently, it has focused on the transformative power of art in Canadian society. This book marks the occasion of the Council's sixtieth birthday in 2017, and it also marks a crossroads for the Council, which recently instituted a new funding model that will define its future.

The critical tensions that the Council balanced in its first six decades serve as the book's organizing principle—for instance, aesthetic concerns and the social/cultural role of art, the Council's role as an arm's-length government funding agency, and its function to foster emerging artistic forms not readily categorized into established disciplines. While the book's focus remains on the Council as an evolving administration, the art that it has supported is also present in the form of numerous images. Gattinger fuses existing scholarship and primary interviews with some of the key Council directors and chairs of the last sixty years. While the writing is occasionally repetitive or reminiscent of the pleasantly vague rhetoric of large administrations (e.g., "leverage synergies"), Gattinger argues compellingly that the Council, through its funding priorities, has influenced the national discussion of social and cultural issues, particularly Indigenous reconciliation. The book celebrates the Council, not simply on the merit of its artistic priorities, but as an administration vital to Canada's cultural past and future. Because it funds work that "critique[s], dissent[s], and question[s] the status quo," the Council is, therefore, "an essential guardian of core democratic values." In our unsettling global political context, this is hardly hyperbole.

A Little Water

Carole Giangrande
All That Is Solid Melts Into Air. Inanna $22.95

Rick Hillis
A Place You'll Never Be. Coteau $21.95

Jennifer Spruit
A Handbook for Beautiful People. Inanna $22.95

Reviewed by Dorothy F. Lane

In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth responds to her husband's angst after killing the king with the simplistic phrase, "A little water clears us of this deed." Gavin in Jennifer Spruit's first novel, *A Handbook for Beautiful People*, ponders a similarly easy self-annihilation as he stands on Calgary's bridge:

> The Bow River below is glacial, rushing and wide, cutting into sandstone bedrock like it has for centuries. . . . This is when he should try to find grounds big enough to overcome what has been done, but he has no reason.

The multifarious image of water is threaded through the three novels reviewed here. However, water in these books does not "clear" the characters of their internal and external nightmares, but erodes, distorts, isolates, and reflects the horror. All three books focus on examples of human actions and relationships that are never resolved, and of systems that spread the stain.

Carol Giangrande's *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* immediately, for instance, confronts the futility of optimism despite its setting on a seemingly idyllic island of retreat for the primary character, Valerie. The title is a quotation from Marx's *Communist Manifesto* that refers to the contradictory and deceptive nature of economic and political systems: "All that is solid melts into air . . . and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real condition of life, and his relations with his kind." Gavin contemplating suicide in the Prologue of Spruit's novel is an echo of this compulsion to face "real conditions." Giangrande's book also shares its title with the 1970s critique of modernity and progress by Marshall Berman; Giangrande's narrative is grounded in the 2001 World Trade Center attacks, but similarly displays the human cost of political dogmatism.

Witnessing the destruction unfolding "live" through mass media from the apparent isolation of the island of St. Pierre off the coast of Canada—"A speck of France in the eye of the sea"—Valerie's planned retreat becomes nightmarish. Human interventions such as clocks become the recurrent sound image, a mechanical object that somehow continues to work despite the failure of other technologies like email and cellphones. Valerie attempts to reach her husband, Gerard, on assignment in New York, and her son and his partner who also live and work there. The ticking of clocks becomes an underlying noise, like water dripping, but rather than sweeping away the sins of the past, it reminds her of recurrence of partisan events and their tragic consequences.

The choice of the historical moment seems almost gratuitous since the book interweaves past and present through Valerie's perspective, and the intersections verge on implausibility. We learn that Gerard's former partner was killed in the Swissair bombing of 1970, and that he left Montreal during the height of the October Crisis. Valerie's own childhood friend is possibly on a flight that day. It is Giangrande's poetic voice that carries the narrative reflecting Valerie's internal dialogue. Near the beginning, for instance, Valerie notes that "*when the world starts to break, you break, too*" and "*there's no way out*"—a statement that mirrors her isolation on the island, and sense of vulnerability. At times, her voice approximates hallucination, as she envisions connections not rooted in geography, but with the fluidity of water: "*And while you're here in my head*, she said to James [her son's partner], *talk to me about Andre. You've been such a comfort for him. Keep him alive for me*."

A much more austere narrative set on water, Rick Hillis' posthumously published novel, *A Place You'll Never Be*, demonstrates the collapse of systems imposed on nature and humanity. His novel focuses on a six-day canoe trip through northern Saskatchewan, a plan to reintegrate penitentiary inmates into mainstream society. Hillis punctuates this grand project with the buzzing of mysterious insects—similar to Giangrande's clocks—that consume the wilderness. This candid, disturbingly dark novel was published three years after the writer's unexpected death; it draws on other dystopic river journeys, and intersects genres of magic and dirty realism. This indeed is a place the reader—Canadian, even Saskatchewanian—has never been, and would not willingly go, as magnificent as it initially sounds. Images of parasitical infestation, rocks, trees, rain are drawn in painful detail, intersecting with subtly sinister human tools such as the single gutting knife and camp axe, and the futility of the canoes carrying the group. The six people on the journey—five inmates and a naive guard—are joined by a woman and her son, and these "outsiders" to the group connect vividly to the "trustee," Quinn. The alliance is tenuous and complex, as the characters are neither sympathetic nor wholly repulsive, and we care about their backstories, as well as their fates.

As the journey unravels, with the ironic destination of the White Chapel at Mission Lake, the ghastly images of consumption, decay, and aggression increase incrementally, so that the reader is left wondering what further cruelty can emerge, sometimes literally, from the depths of the river. The use of water's destructive and erosive power—the gorge and rapids travellers must navigate—dismantles any easy optimism about how this project will unfold. There are rare moments of communion and connection, but as in Giangrande's book, these are often intangible and coincidental.

In Spruit's engaging *Handbook for Beautiful People*, hope becomes more evident, and is accompanied by a refreshing and quirky sense of humour mixed with pathos. All of Spruit's characters are somehow damaged by society's definitions, and have been chewed up by larger systems of social services, institutions, and networks. Marla, living with FASD, becomes pregnant by her distracted cellist-lover, Liam, and the medical professionals immediately presume she will terminate the pregnancy. Instead, she calls on her younger brother Gavin, the "deaf-mute" sibling now employed in a care home, who is struggling with anger, anxiety, and aggression issues. Gavin is also looking for the alcoholic mother who abandoned him. Marla's housemate, Dani, is an addict who resorts to prostitution to support her habit, but longs to be reunited with the son removed from her custody. It's an eccentric and potentially explosive combination of characters, and Spruit's narrative aptly alternates among them with the improbable title of her novel as an enigma. The "Handbook" refers to a notebook Gavin finds at a bus stop, completely empty, which he appropriates and begins to fill with his own observations. The notion of "beautiful people"—an ironic play on the adage that "beauty sells"—is set against this cast of apparently unattractive people. Even the notion of a "handbook" is treated ironically, since it draws on the ambiguity of our concepts of beauty, and the formulaic approach of the self-help genre.

Like Hillis' novel focusing on the correctional system, Spruit's book digs into the collateral damage of social services, foster care, and health care systems. Just as the river in Hillis' book takes us deeper into the messy business of mandated and chosen attachments, Spruit uses a recurring image of the Bow River as a "meeting place" where "people have been coming together . . . for centuries to share and build and make a living." The recurring themes of despair and disconnection culminate as we reach the climax of this novel, and yet there is humour and hope in that gathering. All three books, then, probe the unsettling element of water, a force that intertwines with these human characters and often underscores their entrapment within or damage by inhumane systems. With a variety of approaches, tones, and narrative strategies, all three expose the chaotic yet rewarding work of relationships.

A Sense of Community

Marlene Goldman
Forgotten: Narratives of Age-Related Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease in Canada.
McGill-Queen's UP $34.95

Laurie Kruk
Double-Voicing the Canadian Short Story.
U of Ottawa P $39.95

Reviewed by Christine Lorre-Johnston

Laurie Kruk's *Double-Voicing the Canadian Short Story* focuses on the short fiction of eight established Canadian writers. Kruk suggests that they exemplify the way Canadian literature speaks in "two voices," reflecting multiple selves. She loosely relates this notion of "double voice" to Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of polyphony and dialogic imagination, and considers it to be part of "a subordinate culture, whether such subordination is due to gender, race, class, sexuality, nationality, or any other position."

With an emphasis on focalization (or viewpoint), Kruk studies aspects of narrative that are related to "conflicting contexts" in order to explore "personal, cultural, and national identities." The writers she studies—Timothy Findley, Carol Shields, Alistair MacLeod, Jack Hodgins, Olive Senior, Sandra Birdsell, Thomas King, and Guy Vanderhaeghe—were chosen because they are Canadian and roughly contemporaries, but the analysis is guided by an aesthetic-formal concern that enables her to examine experimental aspects (such as magic realism or postmodern self-reflexivity) of what she sees as predominantly realistic fiction. Kruk thus explores what she calls the "age-old theme of identity" within a national framework. Her national(istic) concern is evident in the final part of the book, "L'Envoi," a piece of personal writing—Kruk is also the author of three collections of poetry—in which she tells about a bus trip "home" to Nipissing. Her conclusion reads like a celebration of both family and community, in all its variety, in a remote part of the country. And this is the main point of the book: to celebrate the achievements of short-story writers as well as the kind of national identity, based mainly on regional identification, that they helped to highlight. The presence of Olive Senior (originally from Jamaica) and Thomas King (Indigenous) points at the acknowledgement, should it still meet with skepticism, of the "multicultural" and "Indigenous" elements that are also part of this national identity.

Along with critics such as Amelia DeFalco and Sally Chivers, Marlene Goldman has recently helped to establish the field of age studies in Canada. In *Forgotten: Narratives of Age-Related Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease in Canada*, Goldman explores a new direction in age studies. The book brings together historical, biomedical, media, and literary narratives of Alzheimer's disease, demonstrating how across most types of discourse, the Gothic perspective of decline and loss predominates.

Over the course of nine chapters, Goldman deals with a range of literary works, including Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912), Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel* (1964), Mordecai Richler's "The Summer My Grandmother Was Supposed to Die" (1969), Jane Rule's *Memory Board* (1987), Michael Ignatieff's *Scar Tissue* (1993), Caroline Adderson's *A History of Forgetting* (1999), and a group of stories by Alice Munro ("Dance of the Happy Shades," "The

Peace of Utrecht," "The Bear Came Over the Mountain," and "In Sight of the Lake"). The reading of these texts is combined with a description of their historical context, such as the influence of John Locke's definition of the "idiot" in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), the anti-asylum movement of the 1960s, the founding of the Alzheimer Society of Canada in 1978 (the first of its kind in the world), or the growing shift from cure to care. Goldman simultaneously surveys the evolving biomedical perspective on the disease, from the Victorian theory of "waste and repair" to the naming of the disease after German psychiatrist Alois Alzheimer in the early twentieth century, and the shift from psychological to biomedical theories. She identifies literary modes of response to the disease, from elegiac consolation to Gothic apocalyptic vision, and to ironic doubt about the disease's actual nature, jokes that highlight the limitations of our understanding of dementia, and narratives of compassion rather than progress. Her goal is to shed light on how stories influence attempts to cope with dementia, both in families and at the state level, and change the personal experience of dementia. Her conclusion examines several more works that highlight "an awareness of multiple and sometimes contradictory narratives" of Alzheimer's. *Forgotten* offers no redemption for the loss caused by dementia—as Goldman acknowledges—but it does provide important alternative perspectives that emphasize a sense of community.

Struggles Over Land and Labour

Graphic History Collective with Paul Buhle, eds.

Drawn to Change: Graphic Histories of Working-Class Struggle. Between the Lines $29.95

Susan M. Hill

The Clay We Are Made Of: Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on the Grand River.
U of Manitoba P $27.95

Reviewed by Jeff Fedoruk

Susan Hill's *The Clay We Are Made Of* is a crucial intervention in the study of Indigenous land claims. It is at once a comprehensive account of the history of Haudenosaunee land tenure leading up to present-day Six Nations territory, and a rumination on Haudenosaunee relationships with the land based on traditional Indigenous Knowledge. Hill's book thus appeals to both Haudenosaunee peoples—"to reconsider their current direction and regain an understanding of our shared past"—and settler Canadians—to "reconsider the history they have previously been taught"—especially given the long-standing relationship between the Haudenosaunee and settlers as it manifests in the Two Row Wampum and the Covenant Chain.

This history of shared responsibility bridges the first and second parts of the book: the former introduces key concepts in Haudenosaunee knowledge, while the latter examines land treaties, movements, and struggles in detail. The "decolonizing lenses" that Hill applies in her careful appraisal of existing documentation and scholarly sources about treaty negotiations generates balanced accounts of the events; no single event dominates Hill's study, when it might have been easy to focus too heavily on one moment (such as Joseph Brant's contentious position within the Haudenosaunee nations). But the two chapters that make up the first part of Hill's book are particularly significant, as they assert the primary connections between Haudenosaunee peoples and the land. Hill draws on teachings about the land from Haudenosaunee knowledge, examining the significance of the Creation Story, the Four Ceremonies, the Great Law of Peace, and the Good Message of Handsome Lake, as well as the role of women in caring for and managing the land, offering readers a deeper understanding of what is at stake for the Haudenosaunee throughout the various treaty negotiations. In the progression of Hill's study, it becomes clear that colonial memory is poor. At the same time, *The Clay We Are Made Of* is a book to act upon, to take responsibility and honour relationships—between peoples and to the land.

Where Hill's book represents Indigenous struggles over land, the Graphic History Collective's *Drawn to Change* represents Canadian struggles over labour rights. This volume contains a series of comics telling the stories of various moments in Canadian labour activism, from the late-nineteenth century to the present. Part of the organizing principle behind the collection was to draw attention to lesser-known struggles, as well as those that were not necessarily successful but nonetheless show a trajectory of labour struggle within the nation. Events explored in the collection include the founding of the Knights of Labour, the "Battle of Ballantyne Pier" in Vancouver, the On-to-Ottawa movement (simultaneously following the life of activist Bill Williamson), alongside stories of the feminist efforts of Madeleine Parent, the work of the Service, Office, and Retail Workers Union, and the organizing of Filipina/o migrant workers in Canada.

Tania Willard's striking linocut comic is a standout, depicting the participation of Indigenous workers in labour formation around Vancouver in vivid relief. Nicole Marie Burton also utilizes the narrative possibilities of comic illustration to present the 1935 Corbin Miners' Strike through the eyes of a young woman, stressing the impact of labour struggles on entire communities. This kind of careful consideration towards labour struggles and social reproduction is evident throughout the collection, and Paul Buhle importantly notes in his preface that *Drawn to Change* features many Indigenous, POC, and women's voices, moving away from male whiteness as a basis for labour history. The Graphic History Collective have strived for accessibility, both in form and content, and this makes the collection useful for both research and teaching. As they mention in their introduction, "comics offer readers the opportunity to piece together the incomplete information in each panel/sequence to make meaning, and thus comics can be an active and empowering form of education." In any scenario, their hope is to spur discussions about tactics and strategies for new struggles, and to open up new possibilities for equity and social transformation.

Keeping Time

Daniel Grenier; Pablo Strauss, trans.
The Longest Year. Arachnide $22.95

Maggie Siggins
Scattered Bones. Coteau $21.95

Reviewed by Stephen Dunning

Scattered Bones, Maggie Siggins' first novel, evidently arises out of long-standing concerns characterizing her career "as a reporter, columnist, magazine writer and news editor." In 2005, she wrote *Bitter Embrace: White Society's Assault on the Woodland Cree*. In the novel, written twelve years later, she chronicles the deadly effects of the incursion of white Europeans into the lands of the Rock Cree living in and around Pelican Narrows, in what is now Saskatchewan. The structure of the book, however, suggests that she is equally interested in exploring the ways in which European chronology tragically disrupts the Cree's connection to nature's deep rhythms.

The novel's prologue recounts the brutal massacre of the Cree by the Sioux in the summer of 1730, a historical event that proves only loosely pertinent to the novel proper, which is organized temporally around the intrusive, though brief, visit of American author Sinclair Lewis to Pelican Narrows in July 1924. Drawing on various sources listed in the acknowledgements, Siggins cleverly structures the work in sections composed of several short chapters. Each section is narrated from a different character's point of view and focuses on some event linked to Lewis' visit, thereby providing a range of attitudes toward the First Nations, running from arrogant self-interest to penitent self-deprecation. Siggins also avoids potential charges of appropriation of voice by restricting her third-person limited narration to characters sharing (to varying degrees) a European heritage. Moreover, each section includes detailed backstories on the narrators, which cumulatively offer a fairly comprehensive historical perspective on the complex, agonistic world of Pelican Narrows.

And there is no doubt that the author's allegiances lie firmly on the side of the Cree, since the only fully sympathetic European characters repudiate their own culture (especially religious culture) to embrace Cree sensibilities. Siggins' capacity to enter imaginatively into the perspectives of all of her characters, however, may work against the text as a whole by eliciting qualified sympathy for those whose actions and attitudes the novel otherwise treats as reprehensible. Both the Anglican priest, Ernst Wentworth, and the trader, Arthur Jan, fall into this category. By generating sympathy for these characters, Siggins introduces a dissonance between the philosophical/political agenda of the work and its emotional centre of gravity. Despite this, the novel engagingly chronicles the perennially destructive effects of European culture on the Cree, and celebrates the capacity of Indigenous peoples to reassert their autonomy.

Daniel Grenier's *The Longest Year* explores some of the same themes as Siggins' work, beginning with its prologue's treatment of the Trail of Tears (1838) and ending with the epilogue's description of a drunken fight between two First Nations men in Montreal (2000). Grenier's interests, however, prove far more ambitious than such a bracketing would suggest. Indeed, this work attempts something approaching the scope of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. And it is to the credit of both Grenier and his superb translator, Pablo Strauss, that it largely succeeds.

The novel's central conceit is that certain persons born on February 29 age at only one quarter of the rate of "non-leapers," allowing one of the main characters' lives to span much of Quebec's history. As with Saleem Sinai in Rushdie's work, Aimé Bolduc's provenance reflects (what are apparently for Grenier) the political realities of Quebec's inception, Bolduc being the product of a vulnerable French waif and a viciously abusive British officer stationed in Quebec City.

But the novel does not trace Bolduc's life chronologically. Rather, ranging over many places in the Appalachians (and beyond), it ingeniously traces a dialectic between past and present, largely from the point of view of two of Bolduc's distant descendants, one of whom, Albert Langlois, becomes obsessed with determining the exact historical trajectory of his extraordinary ancestor. Langlois' son, Thomas, resists this obsession, however, perhaps because he does not share Bolduc's longevity, despite also being a "leaper." Although sympathetic to his father's quest to recover his ancestor, he chooses instead to work toward a future that depends on science rather than on a mystical past. Grenier may be offering a corrective to that strain of nationalist nostalgia in contemporary Quebec society captured by the rallying cry, "*Je me souviens*." Whether the global utopian dream Grenier offers here will prove more appealing than the parochial past he gently rejects will, of course, depend on a reader's political and philosophical allegiances. But even those skeptical of transhumanist promises to achieve immortality through human ingenuity must salute what Grenier attempts here. This is a deeply intelligent, well-researched, beautifully translated, and markedly ambitious work.

Canada's Lost Women

Allison Hargreaves

Violence Against Indigenous Women: Literature, Activism, Resistance. Wilfrid Laurier UP $29.99

Reviewed by Marcia Nardi

In her book *Violence Against Indigenous Women: Literature, Activism, Resistance,* Allison Hargreaves gives a voice to several missing Indigenous women who had theirs stripped away. Hargreaves, a professor at UBC's Okanagan campus in the Department of Critical Studies, self-identifies as an "allied settler scholar." Her book, which she started as a doctoral thesis, is split into six sections, with an informative introduction, four chapters, each with a different focus on texts that discuss violence against Indigenous women and the issue of gendered colonial violence, and a conclusion. Each chapter begins with information about a present-day awareness-raising campaign; she then goes into detail about the opportunities and restrictions of these initiatives through the lens of various Indigenous literary works. Hargreaves specifically uses the voices of female filmmakers, poets, writers, and storytellers to illustrate "gendered experiences of colonization and resistance." She admits that while there may be many qualified male Indigenous writers who could contribute to this issue, she wants to provide female Indigenous authors with a platform as they have been silenced in the past. Hargreaves argues that her book "is concerned with the social issue of violence against Indigenous women in Canada, and the politics of literary, policy, and activist forms of resistance." She separates her argument into three parts embedded within all six chapters: violence is systemic and colonial in nature, the significance of the issue of representation, and the importance of illuminating female Indigenous writers' voices and thoughts on colonial, gendered violence.

Hargreaves outlines that not only is the inaction towards murdered and missing Indigenous women (MMIW) problematic, but that government intervention is equally as harmful as it re-establishes the "colonial relations of power." Instead, she suggests that we should look towards Indigenous models of knowing, as represented in literature, as "modes of research, remembrance, and reclamation." Further, Hargreaves attempts to complicate the thought that the issue of MMIW is due to the fact that the stories are not publicized in the media. While this is definitely an issue, her book cautions that increased visibility will not exclusively solve this ongoing concern. She reveals the deeper layers of colonial, gendered violence as systemic in nature, and writes that it should not be the colonial system that established this violence that fixes it; rather, the remedy should come from the Indigenous peoples themselves and their ways of knowing. Instead of just increasing Indigenous peoples' visibility, there needs to be "Indigenous solutions to the problems continued colonialism creates." As a result of this, Hargreaves uses the voices of female Indigenous authors to discuss the relationship between "violence and representation, to explore literary contributions to anti-violence debate, and to foreground the work of Indigenous women writers in these conversations." She reads texts written by Indigenous women within the context in which they were written: a system with ongoing colonial violence and resistance.

Her analysis focuses on modern-day activism surrounding MMIW. One of her chapters focuses on the 2010 public commission of inquiry into the MMIW and she uses Métis filmmaker Christine Welsh's documentary film, *Finding Dawn,* as an opposition to this government inquiry. Another chapter critiques the "Sisters in Spirit" campaign launched in 2004, which Hargreaves states was to "'raise awareness' and to 'build political will to address this crisis.'" Hargreaves suggests that while there may be problematic issues with this oversimplified endeavor, poetry which explores themes of remembrance, such as Marilyn Dumont's poem "Helen Betty Osborne," can raise awareness and oppose violence in a much more impactful way. Her structure of presenting a social activist movement and a female literary response or critique of this movement is effective as it places agency back in the hands of Indigenous women and the gendered, colonial violence that their people have experienced.

This title is aimed towards an academic audience interested in Indigenous literature, colonialism, and the ongoing discussion of MMIW in Canada. Hargreaves' extensive research is evident as she integrates the works of several revered Indigenous scholars. The introductory chapter provides important information about the history of colonialism in Canada, how Indigenous women have been targeted by this gendered colonialism, and recent activist movements; while the general public might find this discussion useful and interesting, this book's accessibility to an everyday reader may be limited due to some dense specialist language that is sometimes difficult to follow. Overall, this book is a highly focused and important contribution to the research being done on the MMIW in Canada.

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Endangered Places

Trevor Herriot; Branimir Gjetvaj, photographer
Islands of Grass. Coteau $39.95

Theresa Kishkan
Euclid's Orchard & Other Essays.
Mother Tongue $22.95

David Pitt-Brooke
Crossing Home Ground: A Grassland Odyssey Through Southern Interior British Columbia.
Harbour $32.95

Reviewed by Heidi Tiedemann Darroch

A passion for western Canada unites these books; two focus on grasslands, and the third recounts family stories tied to place. David Pitt-Brooke's *Crossing Home Ground*, a follow-up to his well-received *Chasing Clayoquot*, portrays his peregrinations on foot across a thousand kilometres of grasslands in British Columbia's southern Interior. In *Islands of Grass*, Trevor Herriot's text is accompanied by Branimir Gjetvaj's stunning photographs of the Great Plains grasslands to "bear witness to the beauty of this all-but-forgotten archipelago of endangered ecology at the heart of the continent." Theresa Kishkan's lyrical and cerebral *Euclid's Geometry & Other Essays*, in turn, pays close attention to the author's parents and ancestors in their unique contexts, illuminating individual lives through social history and archival research.

The similarities of Pitt-Brooke's and Herriot's approaches include their consideration of how colonial and Indigenous peoples have interacted with the grasslands. Pitt-Brooke describes the Interior Salish nations as societies where "[o]rder was mostly maintained by force of tradition, honour, various forms of informal persuasion," rather than through strict hierarchies. He adds, "Everywhere those people went, on land at least, and everything they did, for thousands upon thousands of years . . . was all done on foot." His own quasi-pilgrimage is a tribute to these Indigenous nations' long-standing history as "a very low-impact culture of pedestrian hunters and gatherers."

Pitt-Brooke risks overgeneralization in his approach to complex political and legal orders. But there is a stubborn dignity in the way the author eschews other forms of travel throughout this effort to experience the grasslands over a period of seventy-five days, a set of trips that extended across more than a year. His journey is not easy, physically or emotionally. The degradation he witnesses, particularly in areas where bunchgrass has been destroyed, drives him to moments of despair. He occasionally wonders if there is merit in his approach to witnessing and describing this landscape. Confronted with campgrounds that cater more readily to fancy RVs than to backpackers, or with ostensibly protected areas that are rapidly degrading due to grazing or ATV incursions, Pitt-Brooke is a forceful advocate for enhanced protection of the grassland regions, if sometimes a rather tetchy critic. His observations, while always interesting, are not always closely connected to a strong narrative thread: his diary entries can seem both disconnected and somewhat repetitive. But he approaches the region with knowledge and passion.

Trevor Herriot's *Towards a Prairie Atonement* was an outstanding effort to understand the responsibilities inherited by the descendants of settlers. A similar spirit of self-conscious reconciliation infuses this new project by the Saskatchewan naturalist, *Islands of Grass*. Unlike Pitt-Brooke's book, which conveys the grassland ecosystem entirely in words, Herriot's text benefits from his collaboration with photographer Branimir Gjetvaj, illustrating with heartbreaking clarity the threatened grasslands that, on the Canadian side of the border, stretch across Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Herriot incorporates conversations with environmentalists and ranchers, among other stakeholders, into his narrative. Like Pitt-Brooke, who expresses indebtedness to John Muir, Herriot pays tribute to Wallace Stegner: these are works with a distinct and self-reflexive relationship to the genre of Western eco-literature.

Herriot's attention to the interrelationships between birds and herds, his insistence on a respectful approach to the multi-generational ranching families' grassland practices, offers more nuance than Pitt-Brooke's disapproval of the past several decades of land use and inadequate protection. Where Pitt-Brooke is nostalgic for the Okanagan of his childhood, Herriot is optimistic that the prairie grasslands can be renewed, that tussles over environmental regulation and species reintroduction can be resolved. And while Herriot writes about contemporary Indigenous involvement in prairie protection, Pitt-Brooke tends to prefer a vision of historic idyllic non-interference with the land, even critiquing recent archeological evidence suggesting that bulbs were cultivated, not merely harvested: "To me the genius of the thing was that, apart from a little incidental tillage, these people were *not* modifying the natural indigenous ecosystems to any great extent," but rather collecting "a harvestable excess." This is a problematic assertion, particularly in light of the strenuous efforts of Indigenous nations to document the continuity of their agricultural practices.

Kishkan, too, reflects on settler-Indigenous relationships, as well as relationships to the land, when she contemplates the unhappy fate of her European ancestors who aspired to homesteading, and ended up as squatters living in hunger and misery. These essays range in tone and content. The title essay, which appears last, is the most cerebral, describing the author's attempt to connect with her son's math aptitude through her quilt design. Other pieces also combine serious reflection and autobiography but feel more intimate, as in her moving account of her mother's life as a

Halifax foster child. Kishkan's visits to the London Foundling Hospital reveal the poignant detail that when children were left, a small item was provided: not as a keepsake, but so that the parent and child's relationship could be verified, if a future reunification of the family was possible. Kishkan meditates on objects associated with her mother's life, including a tweed coat, a bottle of perfume, a compilation of recipes, and a set of photographs. Similarly, in her reflection on her difficult relationship with her father, physical objects as well as memories illuminate the past. Recalling an old neighbourhood and her mother's stories, Kishkan reflects, "I wish I'd paid more attention." I'm reminded of Del Jordan, greedy in later life for all of the details of life in Jubilee, musing that "no list could hold what I wanted, for what I wanted was every last thing." A similar avidity—to gather up and understand details—infuses all three of these books.

Reduce Revere Transcend

Angela Hibbs
Control Suppress Delete. Palimpsest $18.95

Nikki Sheppy
Fail Safe. U of Calgary P $18.95

Lisa Robertson
3 Summers. Coach House $18.95

Reviewed by Carl Watts

Central to avant-garde dismissals of so-called mainstream poetry is a disinterest in lyric, that omnipresent yet increasingly blurry category. Recent books by Angela Hibbs, Nikki Sheppy, and Lisa Robertson address precisely this dynamic, in turn raising the question of whether pushing the boundaries of lyric using familiar methods is really experimental, or possible—or, perhaps, if those are the right questions at all.

On the surface, the texts have little in common. Hibbs' *Control Suppress Delete* is a series of short, free-verse vignettes. They differ from Hibbs' other work due mostly to their comparative formlessness; in a way, they reduce her previous books' longer swaths of lyric and experimental reference points to jotted questions about where such poems could have been going. Few make it past a page, and not many more approach its halfway point. The book reads like a series of false starts; the seven lines of "Raining Coins" end, "The cent is the only coin / stamped onto pre-made blanks. / Witness process."

Control Suppress Delete is at its best when its simplicity and brevity interrogate lyric poetry's common assumptions. "Free Verse" maxes out the potential of line breaks—

> Seasons' causes disinterest
> us. Attention drawn to drawing
> quarterly. Pencils drawn and paper distant.
> Drawing draws us to structure, references
> bones. Weigh probability
> of lead raised. Lazarus varies,
> makes wishes copper-real

—each line multiplying meaning, subverting anticipated syntax, or retroactively converting one part of speech to another. With little contemporary lyric poetry seeming sure about why its lines end where they do, the poem's subtle engagement with this seldom-acknowledged puzzle feels more than necessary.

Fragmentary works like these also give the impression of a poet warming up; this is perhaps the point, but it leaves something to be desired in terms of both rigour and exploration. Like its namesake's testimony before Congress, "Mark Zuckerberg" goes nowhere (even if lines like "More than his billion dollar ideas, / he thinks, it is his ability to put himself in / other people's shoes that makes him tall," with their slight disjunction of clichés, mirror the innocuously omnipresent social network). "Blue" enacts the simple wordplay one might expect from a short poem named for a primary colour, but lines like "Make blue blur bluer // Resist blue, spread blue, brighten blue, / make blue new, what did blue ever do / to you?" leave unclear what the exercise is achieving.

Fail Safe is Sheppy's debut collection, coming after 2014 chapbook *Grrrrlhood* and many years working in experimental poetry communities. The book's elaborate sequences explore some new ground without feeling much need to hide their indebtedness to Language-poetry traditions. Opener "How to Read" consists of diagrams surrounded by accompanying blocks of text. Isolated fragments like:

> cement spine
> steel-bound locket
> transiting incisive
> marrow with its
> saltwater cargo
> & tuft
> of hairy vellum

are interwoven with more logically connected pieces, and the arrangement at once aids readers in navigating the text and questions the path they've taken.

Many rewarding passages emerge from *Fail Safe*'s variety and visual sprawl. "Mitigation" explores several supposed fail-safe mechanisms, treating text as at once material and inherently separate from any ability to control our circumstances. "Trapped Key Interlocking," with its pileup of nested closing parentheses, expresses this paradox with playful irony: "{and also this final key / opens} opens] opens) opens} opens] opens) opens."

Still, *Fail Safe* sometimes feels constrained by its reverence for Language writing. "Mouthfeel" explores the rheological properties—"the consistency, flow, and feel of something . . . inside the mouth"—of "language itself." It's a complex and considered section, but its embrace of alphabetization, encyclopedic description, the bodily, the haptic, and the physicality of language makes it seem like an attempt to check every Language box imaginable. "Odour Thesaurus" is a funny, affect-obsessed variation on similar themes—the entry for "*IRASCID*" ends:

> In green glass the weedy
> *Jägermeisters* are blowing
> brackish. Hunted
> pearlescence, *digestif*

—yet it too stays close to the ABCs of the experimental.

Robertson's *3 Summers* also pushes boundaries while being reverent of experimental conventions. By inhabiting a range of radical subjectivities and their absence, however, it somehow manages to seem fragmented yet unified, singular yet distinctly the work of Robertson. Gone are the obtrusions of method and non-narrativity that sometimes marked her previous books as outwardly experimental. To parse Sina Queyras' well-known description of Robertson's work, it's easier to see the lyric than the conceptualism.

3 Summers consists of eleven sections that fade into one another, creating a swath of verse essay that is consistent even as it changes shape. "On Form" effortlessly plays regular-yet-arbitrary line breaks off the exuberance of the run-on sentence:

> You could say that form is learning
> you can see form take shape
> at the coronal suture's first arcade
> it's explaining it's appearing
> unestranged from enormity's
> prick of a spiny plant like a rose

Much of the collection moves this quickly, with Robertson's capacious aesthetic accommodating further variations on her previous work's syntheses of lyric and experimentation. "The Middle" is the book's longest section, and its most shapeless; lines like "Now I'm thinking only time is style, all / those leaves opening as bodies specific / to themselves" inscribe process as method, in turn drawing strength from the ill-defined aspects of lyric. The essayistic "Third Summer" seems at once arbitrary and systematic:

> What I want to know is
> what are anybody's elements? Or

> the base data of a lark? Or
> what if we've made the wrong use of the
> joy of our bodies? what if
> we're to be formal translators of bird cries
> in the aesthetics-politics binary
> and the material of poetry is also the
> immaterial movement of history
> from beak to beak
> in anyone's Latin.

Like Hibbs and Sheppy, Robertson depends on lyric just as she tampers with it until it's difficult to recognize. But instead of settling for the fragmentary or relying on the paradox of traditional experimentation, Robertson transcends such quagmires by twisting her lyric-conceptual aesthetic into still more compelling shapes.

H3R3 1 4M

Tomson Highway
From Oral to Written: A Celebration of Indigenous Literature in Canada, 1980-2010.
Talonbooks $29.95

Joshua Whitehead
full-metal indigiqueer. Talonbooks $18.95

Reviewed by Ryan J. Cox

Indigenous literatures pose a problem for Canadian literature as an institution. There is an increased interest from the reading public in writing by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis authors, and an acknowledged need and responsibility to engage these texts in Canada's educational institutions. However, Canadian literature hasn't historically provided readers or educators with a wealth of canonical texts by Indigenous authors to work with. A glance at the table of contents of most anthologies of Canadian literature in English intended for classroom use typically reveals a handful of Indigenous authors at most, with greater representation reserved for specialist anthologies with a tighter focus. The lack of work by Indigenous authors in these anthologies, and within the canon more broadly, reveals a significant structural fault within Canadian literature. Tomson Highway's *From Oral to Written* is an attempt to address this fault by offering readers a curated list of 176 texts by Indigenous authors produced in what is presently known as Canada. Highway's project is both to celebrate the emergence of Indigenous writing as "a genuine movement, a genuine wave, a genuine phenomenon" in the years since 1980, and to make that writing accessible—principally by introducing and summarizing each text he profiles in order to induce his reader to pursue that book.

Highway's profiles follow a pattern: he introduces the book, offers a synopsis, and closes with a paragraph that contextualizes it either aesthetically or politically, or both. This allows the reader—and Highway's introductory essay suggests that this reader is a settler rather than Indigenous—to understand both the thematic qualities of a given book and its potential use value. In the concluding paragraph of his entry on Jim Morris' play *Son of Ayash*, Highway writes:

> if a . . . definition [of myth], particularly useful for our purposes here, is 'that which defines the collective subconscious of a people, a culture,' then this story maps out, in the collective Cree-Ojibwe dream world, the epic voyage that we all start taking at birth.

This is the argument, essentially, that Highway gives for reading Morris' play: it provides the reader with an insight into the foundational myths of a people and thus constructs the epistemological structures that inform the cultural products and meanings which that particular people produce and exist within. This argument indicates that if readers are aesthetically interested in the type of text that involves a mythic hero's journey and engages cultural archetypes—like *Star Wars*, *The Lord of the Rings*, or *Beowulf*—then *Son of Ayash* will appeal to them, but it also asserts the use value of this text in a classroom setting. This is the central value of *From Oral to*

Written, though it occasionally limits the book as well. The entries are not meditative essays like those in Roger Ebert's *The Great Movies*, and, given the richness of Highway's language, that feels like a loss. However, as it establishes a past and a present, and anticipates a future, for Indigenous literatures in what is presently Canada, and makes those literatures accessible, the use value outweighs this concern.

If *From Oral to Written* makes a compelling argument for the "first wave" of Indigenous writing, the biopunk poetics of Joshua Whitehead's *full-metal indigiqueer* shows the explosive promise of the future. Whitehead writes through and about the character Zoa—a heavily hybridized queer trickster figure who inhabits, like a virus, cultural works as diverse as Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and Lana Del Rey's *Born to Die*, infecting them and reconfiguring them in an assertion of Zoa's own existence. Through Zoa, Whitehead is able to draw out the trickster elements latent in the Harawayan cyborg, using the contradictions latent therein to critique and elude settler-colonial power. Ultimately though, the crucial act of defiance that Zoa performs is not in the critique, but in the persistence of their existence as queer and Indigenous in the face of the dominant culture's desire to erase, to expunge those identities. *full-metal indigiqueer* recalls the best work of bpNichol and bill bissett while deploying the generic structures of cyberpunk and its descendants, and yet remains wholly its own. It is beautiful and challenging, closing on the line "wearesurvivingthrivingdyingtogetitright." This is Whitehead's first book of poems; there is no better reason to be excited about the future.

* * *

Reclaiming Identity

Robert Alexander Innes and
Kim Anderson, eds.
Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration. U of Manitoba P $27.95

Reviewed by Yusuf Varachia

"Who's Walking with our Brothers?" is both the title of the introduction to Robert Alexander Innes and Kim Anderson's edited collection *Indigenous Men and Masculinities: Legacies, Identities, Regeneration,* and the central question posed by the editors. The editors open by noting that while much-needed attention has been devoted to the murdered and missing Indigenous women, and the experiences of Indigenous women more broadly, there has been comparatively little attention paid to Indigenous men even though they also undergo experiences of violence and are murdered at a disproportionate rate. In drawing attention to this situation, Innes and Anderson ask us to reflect upon the lack of political will and scholarly attention devoted to Indigenous men and masculinity. They suggest that an intersectional lens that brings together race and gender is needed to understand the experiences and identities of Indigenous men given how they overlap in crucial ways with both those of Indigenous women and men of colour.

Indigenous Men and Masculinities provides readers with a much-needed entry point into the emerging dialogue around Indigenous masculinities. The book is a collection of sixteen essays written by prominent writers, scholars, artists, activists, and community practitioners that collectively explore Indigenous masculinities by providing historical context for these discussions, an overview of the central issues that shape the identities of Indigenous men, and insight into the current movement devoted to the "regeneration" of Indigenous men's identity and sense of self. The book is divided into four sections and the essays in each of these sections interconnect even as they take very different directions in order to explore their subtopics. The first section, titled "Theoretical Considerations," theorizes Indigenous masculinities by exploring the differences between colonial influences and Indigenous traditional knowledge and values, and how colonial and Indigenous knowledges impact Indigenous men. As Leah Sneider argues in her essay from this section, colonial pressures sought to unbalance the Indigenous traditions of gender equality and social balance. Sneider uses examples from Iroquoian cultures to bring attention to the fact that within Indigenous cultures, women have occupied positions of power and influence and that the relationship between men and women was seen in complementary rather than oppositional terms. This differs significantly from gender norms found within a Euro-Western patriarchy that has left a damaging impact on Indigenous cultural values.

"Representations in Art and Literature" is the book's second section, and it centres on the question of how Indigenous men and masculinities are portrayed in art and literature. The essays in this section engage with matters of self-representation, resistance, queer studies, and violence as they pertain to Indigenous men. Erin Sutherland's essay in this section examines the contribution of art and culture to analyses of Indigenous masculinity by showcasing valuable dialogue between Indigenous peoples and settlers about the constructions of Indigenous male identities that is generated in response to artistic performances. The essays in this section make compelling arguments about the power of art and literature to reconceptualize Indigenous identities.

The third section, "Living Indigenous Masculinities," examines Indigenous masculinities in lived contexts such as sports and prisons. The essays in this section challenge colonial structures by examining how Indigenous men define their own masculinity through programming in prisons or by defining their own futures. Philip Borell's essay "Patriotic Games: Boundaries and Masculinities in New Zealand Sport," for example, furthers this conversation in useful ways by addressing the

> 'decolonial' option for Maori athletes to reclaim their masculinity outside of the colonial boundaries established by the nation-state . . . from negative stereotypical imagery to representing the nation on the pitch.

"Indigenous Manhood and Conversations," the final section of the book, consists of conversations and interviews that have taken place between prominent scholars, activists, and former gang members. These dialogues develop the book's theoretical concepts by illustrating how Indigenous masculinity can play out within communities. These conversations represent a diverse range of voices, experiences, and approaches that help further examinations of Indigenous men and communities.

This volume should attract a diverse readership of Indigenous and settler readers, scholars, and activists. A major strength of the collection is that these interdisciplinary contributions provide multiple ways of understanding how Indigenous men are trapped within a violent and destructive colonial narrative that makes it difficult to attain balanced and positive lives. This book is a must-read and collectively, these essays help us to conceive of ways that the ideals and social structures that shape Indigenous masculinities can be transformed, individuals can be healed, and positive change can be enacted within communities.

Bearing and Scale

Canisia Lubrin
Voodoo Hypothesis. Wolsak & Wynn $18.00

Cecily Nicholson
Wayside Sang. Talonbooks $16.95

Reviewed by Ryan Fitzpatrick

In her debut collection, *Voodoo Hypothesis*, Toronto writer Canisia Lubrin adopts a dense lyrical voice that bends together the geographical and historical intimacies of life in the wake of the Atlantic slave trade. Her work collapses moments, events, spaces, and relations into a deft and difficult examination that opens at the planetary scale, imagining the first imperial steps of humankind onto the soon-to-be pulverized surface of Mars. Jumping from these "grander schemes," the long and ongoing histories running through *Voodoo Hypothesis* stretch from the *longue durée* of the Black Atlantic to this speculative future where imperial and colonial impulses beeline off-planet in the name of "Curiosity" (both the rover and the abstract concept).

In the face of these rampant and extractive structures, Lubrin writes against what she sees as the "mathematical" logic of anti-Blackness. Lubrin troubles colonial measure, mapmaking, and cataloguing, stacking her affectively charged lines against the "equations of hardness" that not only "speak into" the human, but that determine who or what even gets to be human. Her sentences resist easy interpretation even as they drag the "European imago" at the heart of North America:

> I sing its America, Caribbean, Canada.
> I fable a European imago cut off from the burial
> of its prolonged impulse. Who repairs this mise en scène of
> coiled centuries, interludes and opalescence
> 　　you congratulate
> 　　in a still of sunlight as this skeptic drags
> that entry sign still bound with bars and nets?

As her poem frets over the "repair" of the snares set at the figurative and literal borders of imperial nationhood that capture and imprison Black life, Lubrin examines over the course of her book the ways in which White supremacy winds together inherited pathology, corrective impulse, and "rapt mathematics." At the same time, the lines and poems in *Voodoo Hypothesis* seep Black life into the cracks of this structure not to cure it, but to crack its logics apart to make room here on Earth for transformed spaces without having to rocket our imperial desires off-planet for another spatial fix.

Similarly mapping the tense relationship between massive structures and intimate everydays, Vancouver writer Cecily Nicholson's third book, *Wayside Sang*, focuses on the car, working from production lines and traffic lanes as they connect to the uneven porosities of the borders in North America. Her previous books, *Triage* and *From the Poplars*, anchor themselves site-specifically, focusing on the Vancouver's Downtown Eastside neighbourhood and New Westminister's Poplar Island respectively. Her new book similarly sites itself in the cross-border auto industry between Windsor and Detroit. Nicholson takes this spatial frame to work at the expanded scale of car culture, opening her book with an extended survey of a landscape composed of factory long arms, displaced workers, contaminated groundwater, and the commodity call of the open road. At the same time, Nicholson dwells in the way highway romanticism tangles with the necessity of movement for migrant and itinerant workers. In pairing these, Nicholson is able to reflect simultaneously on both the retreat of capital from post-industrial spaces and the movement of human capital across the continent.

Nicholson's short and sonorous lines consider the value of spaces and lives made surplus, posing the way flowers sing from the roadside and relations shine at the way station. At the same time, spaces reflect tense struggles as the displacement, dispossession, violence, and carceral logics at the heart of capitalism and settler-colonialism make it difficult to build and rebuild forms of community for racialized and Indigenous communities. Nicholson marks a seeming contradiction in her Afterword when she argues that "[t]o realize profound mobility and belonging in black aesthetics is to build solidarity unrestrained by borders." She touches on the problem of escaping from a capitalized anti-Blackness when she asks "have I lost / lifted and moving / in multiple moments," posing movements as a pendulum swing from "escapements." Tangled here is the reality that movement can be structurally determined by policed borders and economic pressures, but transformative and fugitive forms of solidarity can reshape spatial possibilities for Black communities.

The Search for Freedom

Sara MacDonald and Barry Craig

Fate and Freedom in the Novels of David Adams Richards. Lexington US $95.00

Reviewed by Jason Rotstein

Freedom is a choice. This is the radical account that Sara MacDonald and Barry Craig present of the later novels of David Adams Richards. *The Friends of Meager Fortune*, *Mercy Among the Children*, *The Lost Highway*, and *Crimes Against My Brother* are novels, to the commentators, which describe a course toward freedom. Freedom is truly a state of being: it is a choice and an end point:

> It is simply not the case that the tragedies and pain that mark [Richards'] novels are the result simply of chance or socioeconomic structures or hostile cosmos. While all of those, and other external factors, play roles in what happens to his characters throughout his works, those external forces are not at the heart of his [Richards'] artistic vision. The real question of interest is what moral choices his characters make in the face of these external forces.

The book of commentary (rather than criticism) follows four of Richards' later novels, re-narrating and commenting on the plots. In Richards' schemes, what is bleak and hopeless can also preserve epiphanies of freedom. This book addresses objections that Richards' work is unkind to his characters, his plots booby-trapped with inescapable fates and prophecies that doom and debilitate. Events and characters are reframed in the commentators words as "studies of human resilience, and the triumphs of [Richards'] characters are the moments of their greatest freedom."

Freedom exists in the possibility of another account. If, according to Richards, "the only way a person can be free is through self-sacrifice," then freedom is to be cultivated and hunted; it is monastic. In Richards' paradigm, freedom cannot be finally captured. The authors describe a "practical freedom" and a freedom that is "achieved" from moral choices that often culminate in characters working to their "practical detriment." Without saying so, the authors repeatedly point out the contradictions inherent in Richards' works. Generally, freedom is portrayed as "freedom to" or "freedom from." Freedom in Richards' account is more akin to godly love and freedom through a hoped-for redemption. Does Richards, therefore, present a third category—"freedom as" or "freedom in between"?

MacDonald and Craig recast and contextualize the moments of violence in Richards' works as confrontations, as liminal moments. It is not so much that characters transcend their human nature through finding freedom, but that freedom is "enjoyed" in the mediation between the finite and the infinite. Access to the divine is had through finding freedom in godly sacrifice and love. For instance, of *The Lost Highway*, a novel that traffics in a highway of lost souls, the authors write: "Regardless of the outcome of Alex's natural life, the reader understands that by saving Amy, Alex's eternal good has been achieved." What is gained or added by calling this freedom? In fact, as MacDonald and Craig state, Richards does not differentiate between his characters in terms of their ability to overcome circumstances—unforgiving hard fates—with love and forgiveness.

On the face of it, Richards' schemes can seem overly simplistic. The authors quote Richards as saying "sin limits freedom." But what the authors show is that when Richards pushes his characters to their limits, freedom sometimes begins to ache out. (One is reminded of a demanding director.) Therefore, Richards' characters are controlled performances. Within Richards' works, freedom is true when it is infinite, and he uses minor characters to light on freedom as love. Freedom is infinite because, as Sydney tells Lyle and Autumn in *Mercy Among the Children*, we cannot run away from our lives' fates; suffering has meaning because it compels the characters in Richards' novels to seek after freedom and withstand the pressure of their choices. Sydney submits to the good by submitting to Christian and Dantean love. Hatred is finite and love is infinite; love is unbounded, persisting even after death.

MacDonald and Craig provide a sophisticated take on Richards' view of theodicy. Richards is not interested in the "problem of freedom." Freedom is choice. Even though

> external forces acting against human beings in these novels seem arbitrary, and, at best, indifferent to human life, Richards deliberately restricts the appearances of grace, or divine benevolence, so that when these moments appear they are all the more striking.

Considered another way, Richards' novels show the perpetual loss of freedom. Speaking of the character Annette in *Crimes Against My Brother*, the narrator says: "But now the show was over. Her freedom such as it was, was complete. And the articles in Cosmo moved onto other things." The title *The Lost Highway* also suggests a loss of the road, the road to freedom. As the authors explain, self-fulfillment in Richards is found, paradoxically, in acting freely through self-sacrificial love. Richards provides an antidote to the "regionalism" of the overlooked Miramichi region he describes, giving universality and accessibility to this world through an understanding of freedom.

Life/Lying Stories

Alison MacLeod
All the Beloved Ghosts. Penguin Canada $24.95

Diane Schoemperlen
First Things First: Early and Uncollected Stories. Biblioasis $19.95

Reviewed by Linda Morra

In Alison MacLeod's "The Heart of Denis Noble," Ella explains to the titular character how nothing "can be passive or static" and be part of a great story, because the "whole cannot be divided": "it has its own unity." So it is with *All the Beloved Ghosts*, a collection of fourteen stories by MacLeod, some of which are semi-autobiographical: each story gently reverberates against the others and lends to their meaning and affective power. Several stories identify political or cultural icons, such as Sylvia Plath, Tony Blair, Princess Diana, and Anton Chekhov, or draw upon MacLeod's own family history—the opening story, "The Thaw," being a most startling and evocative example. Straddling fiction and non-fiction, involving incidents and persons that are grounded in both the personal and the historical, the stories showcase MacLeod's ability to imagine in and around facts, and to challenge our own assumptions about and relationships to such facts.

The narratives also often hover at the crucial juncture between death and life, between mourning and celebration, exploring the vulnerabilities and mysteries of that moment, when one's life does not flash before one's eyes, but unfurls in vivid, melancholic, exquisite detail. In "Oscillate Wildly," for example, Liam recalls on his deathbed that he was "fifteen, lost and winded at the graveside" of his mother, when Abby, his lover, "came keening into the world"; although she could have

> recoil[ed] from the bite of him when he goes mad on the booze and the shame of what he hasn't become[,] [s]he doesn't turn and run from the rabid thing that curls in his gut and is turning, little by little, into the tumour they will cut from him years too late.

In this and other stories in the collection, MacLeod compassionately delineates human foibles and idiosyncrasies; indeed, her characters are beguiling, compelling readers to tarry at moments of emotional intensity, tenderness, and illumination.

By contrast, Diane Schoemperlen's collection of stories, *First Things First*, asserts perspectives that are, at turns, maladroit, severe, derisive, unyielding. The stories, often told from a female perspective that is unique, even eccentric, thus showcase the relentlessness of a singular assertion, of its implacability in relation to others' narratives and points of view. The characters are often disaffected and estranged from each other, and therefore challenge the potential to reconcile incommensurable perspectives. So it is in, for example, "An Evening in Two Voices," in which Estelle recounts her experience of an evening and of those who were present in ways that downright contradict the perspective of Doreen, who expostulates, "I was there. I know what really happened. You don't have to pretend with me." For these characters, however, pretending is often necessary for survival, to grapple with the cruelties of life and compensate for their vulnerability.

Moments of grace and insight are not the stuff of Schoemperlen's stories, which are nonetheless skilful and largely well wrought. In "Histories," for example, the narrator's insight and experience are *withheld*. Anne, a photographer, tries to conjure up the life of Effie MacKay; she focuses "far back into the trees" and thinks "*This is a photograph of you, woman.*" The distance and anonymity are reinforced later when, rather than convey her attempt to record this nineteenth-century woman's life to her husband over supper, she is ostensibly dismissive, claiming she did "nothing much" that day: "She will tell him eventually," she reflects, but he will conclude, incorrectly, that "the day had been too unimportant to mention at the time." Such withholding is, in some ways, a necessary tactic to undermine the power of narrative tropes and clichés that hold characters—and readers—in patterns of expectation that impede new possibilities. Stories such as "Love in the Time of Clichés," "None of the Above," "True or False," and especially "Life Sentences" demonstrate how readers might respond to narratives in stock ways, even as the formulaic structures Schoemperlen offers contradict or challenge those ways and make apparent that truth and experience cannot be so easily rendered. As the narrator of "She Wants to Tell Me" notes, "*Nobody wants to admit that truth, like time, can never stand still. It is always a becoming.*"

A Compact Compendium

Reingard M. Nischik

The English Short Story in Canada: From the Dawn of Modernism to the 2013 Nobel Prize.
McFarland $39.95

Reviewed by Claire Omhovère

With this new opus devoted to the rise of the short story in English Canada, Reingard Nischik has written another landmark study, her thirtieth book to date, one among her many contributions to North American literary studies in general and Canadian studies in particular. *The English Short Story* *in Canada* is vintage Nischik: to readers familiar with her work, the book is likely to give the sort of pleasure experienced when reuniting with a friend of long standing, whose conversation is sure to delight and enlighten in equal measure.

With the exception of chapters 5 and 8, which respectively discuss the sub-genre of the short story cycle and the theme of aging in relation to the genre's affinity with liminality, the other twelve chapters first appeared as separate essays in various venues, in Europe and in North America, which certainly accounts for the impression of pleasant familiarity made by the volume. These formerly disparate pieces had their mutual cohesion carefully reworked into the chapters of a single study that begins by throwing light on the historical circumstances of the early development of the short story in Canada and its flourishing during the literary boom brought about by the Centennial. Nischik then moves on to consider the thematic preoccupations and generic specificities distinguishing the Canadian short story from other national traditions. Frequent comparatist forays into the development of the Modernist short story in the United States are particularly valuable to assess the effects of the colonial lag on conservative tastes that prevailed in the Dominion from the nineteenth century well into the following century, or to discuss disparities with the United States as a result of the limitations of the publishing infrastructure and the precariousness of relationships between the artists and their audience over the same period. A third section opts for a closer approach to the texts themselves in four chapters that zoom in on the stories of an individual writer (Thomas King), on a single collection (Margaret Atwood's *The Tent*), or on a specific story, as with Alice Munro's "Boys and Girls" and John Metcalf's "The Strange Aberration of Mr. Ken Smythe." Each case study brings into sharper focus the analyses of the first and second part that revolved around the plasticity of the genre and its infinite capacity for renewal.

The volume forms a tightly-knit whole, packed with information about the antecedents of the genre, the circumstances that presided over its contrasted history on both sides of the border, and, finally, its unprecedented flourishing in the writings of Mavis Gallant, Margaret Atwood, and Alice Munro. All three writers arguably draw much of Nischik's attention—but how could it be otherwise on the part of a critic who has been immersed in their oeuvres since the early years of her writing life and whose insights have left an imprint on the way we understand these major writers? The study, however, far from being limited to the better-known practitioners of the genre, also argues passionately against the oblivion, or relative neglect, of Ethel Wilson, Hugh Garner, Joyce Marshall, or the first anthologist and founder of the line, Raymond Knister. If it were only for the light it sheds on their respective works, this volume well deserves our listening to what Reingard Nischik has to say.

Visitations and Visitors

Michael Redhill
Bellevue Square. Doubleday Canada $32.00

Jesse Ruddock
Shot-Blue. Coach House $19.95

Reviewed by Shazia Hafiz Ramji

How can outsiders bring us home? This question reverberates and surfaces in Michael Redhill's *Bellevue Square* and Jesse Ruddock's *Shot-Blue*. Both novels illustrate the disruption of the local and familiar with the arrival of visitations and visitors, respectively.

Redhill's novel is set in and around Bellevue Square, a well-loved park in Toronto's Kensington Market neighbourhood. The book is split into four sections told from the first-person perspective of Jean, a bookseller, wife, and mother of two, whose reality becomes questionable after she sees her doppelgänger, Ingrid/Inger, and develops routines to follow her obsessively. *Bellevue Square*'s exploration of the doppelgänger, said to presage death in many cultures, results in a sprawling and humorous story of the contemporary self under siege. Blending realist and speculative modes with ease, Redhill offers grounding storylines for Jean's unravelling as she experiences episodes of depression and psychosis while trying to fulfill her roles and stay happy. Peppering the novel with entertaining digressions on concepts in quantum physics such as the parallel universe theory, which posits that self-contained realities coexist with one's own reality, Redhill introduces reflexivity while retaining narrative linearity, breaking through the postmodern baggage of metafiction that is sometimes acrobatic and self-absorbed. Instead, the novel is extratextual; the doppelgänger shares a name and profession with Redhill's pseudonym, Inger Ash Wolfe, under which he has written a series of crime novels. The extratextual gesture moves us not only toward the construction of life as art and vice versa, but also along the arc of mortality toward a final homecoming.

Ruddock's debut novel offers a more literal version of the outsider who ushers in a homecoming. Split in two, *Shot-Blue* begins with the story of Rachel and Tristan, a mother and adolescent son who choose to live on a remote northern island. In Book Two, Tristan must fend for himself. This turn recasts the novel as a coming-of-age tale about a boy's initiation into himself by means of encounters with guests from far away who come to live and work on Tristan's homeland for the summer. Told by a third-person omniscient narrator, the intimate trials of a cast of characters garner an epic scope while simultaneously being humbled by the all-sensing omniscience, the presence of which masterfully hints at the agency of the land more than that of a higher power, for which it has traditionally been used. Despite a freshness of metaphor and image to convey the landscape, the characters' experiences are often relegated to serve a romanticized attitude of toughness in the face of the North. For example, when Tristan's nose breaks after a boy fights him, there are almost no descriptions of his pain or the reality of dealing with the injury. The overall effect is a glimpse of the characters' two-dimensionality, when otherwise they show depth and promise.

Both novels are driven by a curiosity about the outsider's role in ushering forms of knowledge that are difficult to simplify. Through defamiliarization, we are urged further into the heart of what matters, where there is a growing awareness of all our relations and a stirring love of life.

Two Channels, One Present

Jay Ritchie
Cheer Up, Jay Ritchie. Coach House $19.95

Kevin Shaw
Smaller Hours. icehouse $19.95

Reviewed by Neil Surkan

Both Kevin Shaw's debut poetry collection, *Smaller Hours,* and Jay Ritchie's latest, *Cheer Up, Jay Ritchie,* expand the boundaries of the Canadian lyric poem with hearteningly sensitive portrayals of masculinity in relation to desire, friendship, and community. However, while the two take up similar subject matter in their respective books, they present radically divergent approaches to form which, in turn, showcase different facets of the urgent conversations about gender, power, and perspective that have taken centre stage in Canadian literature this past year.

Smaller Hours highlights Kevin Shaw's love of persistent metres and symmetrical stanzas, but he renovates the book's more traditional approach to form by populating his poems with vivid vignettes of gay relationships and queer(ed) history. Meticulous and controlled, many poems in the collection read like verbal dioramas: disparate elements are brought into an evocative, bewildering harmony. A line from Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art" gets transplanted in "Throwback," into a meditation on baseball, aging, and father-son relationships; in the sonnet "Harris Park," lines from one of Andrew Marvell's Mower Poems mesh with "bottles, tampons, condoms, needles" to turn the park into an erotic palimpsest of past and present. Indeed, bars and parks appear frequently in *Smaller Hours*—important spots where queer desire hid in plain sight—but place and history often combine in less familiar ways at other points in the book. In "Occlusion Effect," for instance, the speaker's memory of trying on his mother's jewellery as a boy is counterpointed with a frank treatment of the serial killer Herb Baumeister, who preyed on young gay men until his own son "discovered the first skull in the woods." Set in Pinery Provincial Park—both a place the speaker visited when he was young and the place Baumeister fled to in order to commit suicide—the two foci, counterpointed, echo together across a pair of sweeping, heavily enjambed stanzas begun with the same haunting opening sentence: "I kept the memory of my body's discovery, a stone glassed against adolescence." As time zones blur in the poem, new, ominous chords reverberate.

In *Cheer Up, Jay Ritchie,* Jay Ritchie avoids consistent rhyme and rhythm to focus instead on breaking lines in the places that will elicit the most surprise. As a result, this collection blooms when read aloud. These poems zigzag down the page like sprinting through a corn maze—with pop culture paraphernalia and industrial appliances piled in the corners. Throughout the book, the speaker often doubles as a "promoter" and swims in currents of currency and "fluoridated tap water" in an opportunistic, "everlasting present." However, Ritchie underpins the punning, sleight-of-hand enjambments that energize these poems with unsettling observations and grave intimations, like "I am afraid / to know the bottom of a body / of water. Anybody." Thus, when the speakers stop eluding us and meditate, confess, or sneer with gut-wrenching frankness, the tone shifts from whimsical to mystical and reveals, at the core of this collection, a "fragile and heavy . . . hum." One of the most captivating poems in the book, "Upcycle," veers between the speaker's "surge[s] of love" and hopelessness "like an inner tube at a pool party / nostalgic for asphalt" before imagining the "palpable spectra" of Montreal going on without him in it. Linking "teenage" Taoism, fast food, futile job hunts, and anxious whispers, "Upcycle" captures the unpredictable sensory onslaught of our contemporary moment. It also affirms a poignant relationship between comedy and philosophy, tricks and truths.

Off on an Angle

Catriona Strang

Reveries of a Solitary Biker. Talonbooks $16.95

Sharon Thesen

The Receiver. New Star $19.00

Reviewed by Hilary Clark

Where do a poet's words come from? In Catriona Strang's *Reveries of a Solitary Biker* and Sharon Thesen's *The Receiver*, poetic intention is ghosted: poetry involves the arrangement of fragments gleaned from a reading life (Strang) and the reception or uncanny return of other voices and stories (Thesen).

In her afterword, Strang explains that Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* was her book's "starting point." Imitating Rousseau, who took long walks in the countryside and jotted notes on playing cards, Strang cycled around Vancouver, engaging in "a slow, non-deliberate thinking, an almost subconscious contemplation," stopping at points to write on cards. In the book, the finished poems are arranged into the four suits of cards. Strang meditates on large questions. "What is to be done?" How can we live within a "hyper-capitalist society" yet still live "counter to" it? One answer: the "saddled / subject" ("8♣") of ideology can get on a bike saddle and ride off, meditating and composing poetry, which can be a form of "sedition" ("Q♠") if it undermines poetic norms. Although unlikely to bring down the one per cent, poetic sedition resists the dominant model of an original (and aspirational) poetry feeding a competitive industry of literary prizes and "stars."

Full of wordplay ("bike my ride"), the poems are also densely intertextual. The weighty writings of Marx and Darwin (among others) have been snipped up and worked into the bicycle-notes. For example, in "8♥" Marx is heard in "great hostile camps" and "tree of industry" (*The Communist Manifesto*), while Darwin surfaces with "fine transitional forms" and "thick fossiliferous formation" (*On the Origin of Species*). Such formal diction clashes with the informal: "'*do you want Chinese, or chicken and beer?*'" Some of these borrowings are set off with quotation marks, others not. By contrast, in the sequence "On Not Looking into Chapman's Homer," Strang's sources are not Great Books but old cookbooks and history pamphlets scavenged from book exchanges around Vancouver. From their scraps, Strang has composed striking poems juxtaposing references to food and unvalued female labour: "[o]ut of puddings, aching limbs."

Thesen's title, *The Receiver*, seems ambiguous at first. In the first poem, "The Receiver," a Hollywood heroine lifts a telephone receiver and reacts with "pleading" and sobs. What does she hear? "I imagine the receiver holding / the whole story inside." What story? In "Daphne in the Headphones," Thesen touches on an uncanny poetics of reception, "an annunciation-like situation, intimate and magical." A poet's words may seem to be hers, but they are channelled from elsewhere: from stories of family, from other poets' letters (between Charles Olson and Frances Boldereff) and interviews (with Boldereff), from dreams and myths. In "Morning Walk by the Lake," the walker receives omens: a hawk "yellow-eyed & full of grace—," a dog's "face exactly halved black and white."

Stories of family form a good part of the book. Stories vary from teller to teller over time—ambiguities addressed most explicitly in "Auntie Eileen," which tells the story of Thesen's mother's aunt, who was abused by her husband and ran away to a new life, leaving her children behind. Her mother tells one version of this story; a relative tells another: "It will be awhile before everything / is sorted out, and this is why it's a story" ("The Receiver"). Thesen's stories from her own life have gaps as well. For instance, in "My Education as a Poet," a dream of her dead father leads to

> . . . my grandmother's coral brooch—
> Grandma: pianist, good-time girl, Rosicrucian—
> the brooch I lost one night at one of those parties
> it took days to recover from, beating myself up—
> the good lickins with wooden spoon . . .
> with belt with whatever was to hand & we were lucky[.]

Such skips and associations link poetry, dreams, and the unconscious. In "The Oddness of Elegy," the speaker refers to her mind as "the mind of me / who does not remember anniversaries"—as another who sabotages intentions but returns with gifts of inspiration.

Our Places

Kevin Van Tighem
Our Place: Changing the Nature of Alberta. Rocky Mountain Books $25.00

Jennifer Bowering Delisle
The Bosun Chair. NeWest $17.95

Reviewed by Suzanne James

Both of these works explore the nature of place, of home, and of identity, though in very different ways. Kevin Van Tighem, a conservationist and a former superintendent at Banff National Park, writes of the Alberta that was, of the changes that are potentially destroying it, and of the Alberta he hopes to preserve and safeguard. In contrast, Jennifer Bowering Delisle, also a native Albertan, writes of Newfoundland, of the home her parents left at twenty-three, and of attempts to recreate the lives and history of her grandparents and great-grandparents.

Van Tighem describes *Our Place: Changing the Nature of Alberta* as a "book of chronicles, reflections[,] and polemics." The collection touches upon animal and forest-fire management, fishing, mining, hunting, development, family history, religion, politics, and environmental concerns of all kinds. Although exploring ways in which Albertans, from the earlier colonists through contemporary corporations and land-hungry citizens, have changed the province's natural environment, Van Tighem focuses primarily on ways that "we" need to change to protect endangered ecosystems. He writes for an audience he assumes will share his values and concerns, positioning himself as a quintessential Albertan: an individual deeply rooted in the landscape, its natural beauty and its cultural history, yet passionately committed to reasoned dialogue and sustainable development in an environment at risk; an individual who declares, "[i]t's never too late to get it right. This place is worth it. So are we."

Van Tighem is fond of such short pithy statements; his prose is workmanlike and journalistic, and he often uses this style to express a controlled frustration. In a typical passage, he writes that a "meeting runs out of steam quickly. Outside it is nearly dark. Everyone wants to go home. An air of palpable cynicism has settled among the ranks of the wilderness contingent. They have been here 'before' . . ." The author, too, has clearly "been here before," which is the greatest disappointment of this collection. Many of the essays and articles seem too obviously revised and republished; the anecdotes and arguments feel rehearsed, rather than fresh. Van Tighem clearly feels strongly about the significant issues he explores, but his claims become predictable, and—sadly—I can't envision this work reaching the Albertans whose behaviours and beliefs he would like to change.

Jennifer Bowering Delisle's *The Bosun Chair* is a far gentler text, a poetic recreation of life in a bygone Newfoundland, that foreign place where her parents were raised. As she works to fit together scraps of family fact and fiction, Delisle conveys the multicultural nature of Canadian society in a way that we rarely use the term. She blends memoir, lyric poetry, interview transcripts, newspaper articles, historical letters, and the ballad of a shipwreck written by her great-grandfather into a loose historical recreation of the lives of the previous three generations of her family. She attempts to identify with, and to understand, a community that seems worlds away from the Edmonton in which she was raised. Delisle describes her anger at her parents for leaving their childhood home, as well as her sentimental teenage longing for heritage, a "rootedness, a kind of belonging" she associated with Newfoundland. Through reflections and lyric poems she explores this land she never knew, focusing on the turns of speech that convey the otherworldliness of her parents' childhood home. As she writes to her father, "The wharves, the boat, speech[,] and memories rolling fast now, calling it by Heartsease [Little Heart's Ease, the outport], run together in a single word with stress on the first syllable, and easy as the shaker of salt, you pass me your nostalgia."

The author closes with the story of the bosun chair of the title; supposedly, her sixteen-year-old great-grandmother saved the crew of the doomed *Duchess* as she "made a bosun chair, to lower the crew into the lifeboats sent from shore." And although she "could not find any descriptions in books on schooners or Newfoundland history, no pictures on the internet," she chooses this version of history: "I have nothing to prove that this is true. But of all the ways to remember her, I like this one, this story."

An obvious comparison is Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*, also a blend of poetry, recreated family history, and reportage, and although *The Bosun Chair* lacks the humour and energy of the former, it resonates with a subtle charm and quiet beauty, and the small outports of Newfoundland indeed become our imagined place, as well as Delisle's.

Neither Dead, Nor Alive

Kathleen Winter

Lost in September. Knopf Canada $29.95

Reviewed by Tracy O'Brien

Lost in September shares the story of Jimmy, a homeless thirty-something former soldier living in present-day Montreal who bears a striking resemblance to General James Wolfe, the British army officer whose victory on the Plains of Abraham in 1759 marked the beginning of British rule in Canada. Kathleen Winter brings these two characters together in a delicately crafted tale that sees Gen. Wolfe revived through Jimmy as both characters are given eleven days in September to confront shared traumas and what they've lost through war.

Jimmy shares a tent in Parc du Mont-Royal with his colourful though caustic companion, Sophie. She remarks one evening that he is "in a worse state of hauntology than ever" and accuses him of having "a problem with time." It is unclear, however, how Jimmy, or James, might solve this problem. He struggles to piece together decaying memories from the eighteenth century while suppressing obscure recollections of his twentieth- and twenty-first-century life. What we are left with appears to be a person in a fugue state, whose narration leads the reader to question what is dream and what is reality in this story.

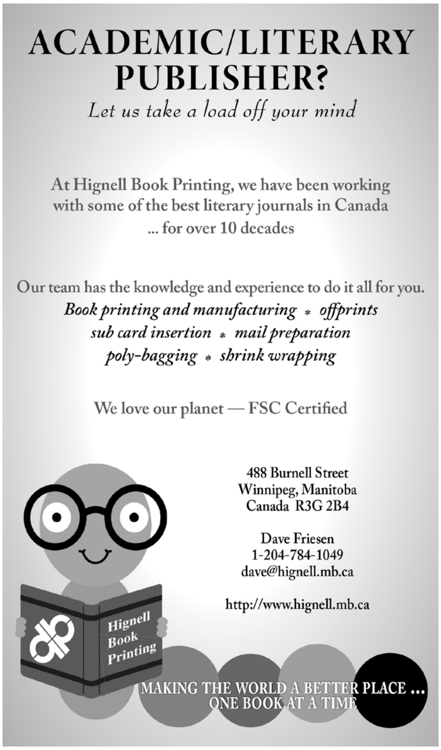
Winter weaves two strands of hauntology through the novel. One is what film scholar Mark Fisher has called "a virtuality," the traumatic "compulsion to repeat." James Wolfe no longer exists, nor does his war. What the reader sees through Jimmy, however, and what Jimmy sees through himself, is how war repeats; a particular battle ends, but the compulsion towards aggression survives. Early in the novel Jimmy meets historian Genevieve Waugh, who shares in a letter to him that she has read "another firsthand account of war that has impressed on me the truth that we are in all time at once, that history is now, that we are in an eternal struggle with power and aggression."

Letters are a motif Winter uses to situate Wolfe temporally and to collapse linear understandings of time. This second strand of hauntology is woven through letters conveying what Mark Fisher has called that which "has not yet happened, but which is already effective in the virtual." James remembers letters he wrote and received in the eighteenth century; he seeks and speaks of these letters in the present day. They are letters that took weeks to deliver, in effect slowing down time. They allow the present to be recorded on paper to be read in the future, and then, upon delivery, continue to bring the reader to the past. The world that was General James Wolfe's lived experience is juxtaposed with a twenty-first-century Montreal in which communication is governed by instant and immediate gratification and in which Jimmy struggles to piece together his past, Wolfe's past, and to find a listener.

Winter's writing is precise and heartbreaking. Jimmy describes his friend's lips as "cut plums, bruised against his white teeth." She balances this fragility with piercing wit: Sophie, Wolfe tells us, "often claims to possess all sorts of attributes far more interesting than I've been able to discern." He is no gentler in his opinion of twenty-first-century Montreal, which is not the future he'd envisioned after Britain's victory in 1759. Of it he says, "I don't see how any soldier returning here could want to do anything except slit his own throat." Wolfe finds the city "ostentatious yet unreal" and we do not learn why until he visits Quebec City, a place where "nothing British thrives." Here, he identifies the root of his disdain for contemporary Montreal to be the "British influence" there, which he has been trying all his "born days to outrun."

Winter is careful to balance mythologized portrayals of Wolfe as a hero with the brutal realities and traumas of a war where "redcoats scalped any Canadian they pleased: Indian, habitant, woman or babe." Jimmy and General Wolfe, no matter the nature of their existence, are trying to come to terms with the gruesome and unforgiving realities of war, realities that transcend time in a way that the landscape and technology have not.

Post-traumatic stress disorder morphs Jimmy's identity into that of a historically remembered war hero, someone without whom, he tells his companion Harold, he "would continue to be just another ruined soldier trying to find his way back home." Rather than label Jimmy's eleven Septembers a delusion, however, Harold tells him that his rationale is "the heaviest possible dose of reality."



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Italian-Canadian Connections at 33

Joseph Pivato

In 1985 *Canadian Literature* devoted Issue 106 to "Italian-Canadian Connections." Since then, the major contribution that Italian-Canadian writers have made to Canadian letters is with the promotion of ethnic minority writing as an integral part of Canadian literature. Italian-Canadian writers publish in English, French, and Italian, a phenomenon that could only happen because of a general acceptance of both the big "M" Multiculturalism of government policies and the small "m" multiculturalism of many ethnic communities across Canada.

One important early element that contributed to the flourishing of Italian-Canadian writing came in 1978 when Antonio D'Alfonso founded Guernica Editions as a trilingual press in Montreal. Over the years, Guernica has published many writers of diverse backgrounds in addition to Italian-Canadian authors using English or French. Guernica also engaged with over fifty Quebec writers and published many in English translation. Shortly after Guernica was created, in 1983, Quebec poet Fulvio Caccia established *Vice Versa,* a trilingual literature and culture magazine, which was published regularly until 1996. Some of the most significant moments in the development of Italian-Canadian writing came in 1991, when Nino Ricci won the Governor General's Award for English-language fiction for his first novel, *Lives of the Saints*, and in 1994, when Fulvio Caccia won the Governor General's Award for French-language poetry with *Aknos*. Further, Mary di Michele won a number of literary awards, including the Arc Confederation Poets Award in 1996.

Since 1985, more than twenty PhD dissertations have been devoted to Italian-Canadian authors. Before Italian-Canadian authors began to achieve some recognition and critical success, they had to overcome many barriers. The first barrier that these young Italian-Canadians had to overcome was the working-class attitude to education. In particular, there was very little support for young women to go to university in the Italian-Canadian communities. The fact that we have an active group of Italian-Canadian women writers such as Mary di Michele, Caterina Edwards, Mary Melfi, Genni Gunn, Marisa De Franceschi, Dôre Michelut, and Gianna Patriarca is a small miracle. The generally lower social-economic level of Italian-Canadian women is reflected in the early work by some of these women writers; see, for example, Patriarca's *Italian Women and Other Tragedies* (1994) and *Daughters for Sale* (1997), and Mary di Michele's poem "How To Kill Your Father" in *Bread and Chocolate* (1980).

Related to the question of class was that of the negative social perception of Italians in North America. The negative image of Italians as criminals was epitomized by Mario Puzo's novel *The Godfather* (1969). The book and the three subsequent film adaptations, *The Godfather I, II,* and *III,* and later HBO's popular series *The Sopranos* (1999-2007), were hugely successful. They helped link Italians with the Mafia in the popular imagination. Such stereotypes affected Italians writing in Canada, since readers and editors seemed to expect Italian-Canadian writers to produce more books about the Mafia. Italian-Canadian writers strongly resisted this expectation and instead focused on realistic depictions of immigrant experiences and family conflicts. In his ten novels, for instance, Frank Paci deliberately wrote against the Mafia image by depicting ordinary heroes who struggled to make a contribution to society. Of the approximately one hundred active Italian-Canadian authors working in Canada over the last three decades, not one has produced a work on organized crime. We could confidently make this claim until May 2015, when Edmonton novelist Caterina Edwards published *The Sicilian Wife,* the story of an Italian woman who escapes her Mafia family by coming to Canada. I wonder if it is possible that Edwards feels confident that, because of the literary achievements of Italian-Canadian writers, we no longer need to worry about the negative effects of the Mafia stigma? Or, perhaps she is strategically capitalizing on the popularity of the the genre in order to subvert stereotypes.

Another barrier for Italian-Canadian writers was the language problem: the divisions amongst them created by writing in three separate languages. Those in Quebec wrote in French, in the rest of Canada in English, and the older generation wrote in Italian. Mirroring the two solitudes, there was very little contact between the Italian writers in Montreal and those in Toronto. Their common Italian background and common immigrant experiences were not enough in themselves to unify them at the beginning. Over time, however, their powerful need to write about these experiences ultimately drew them together. Further, it was helpful that a number of Quebec authors—Antonio D'Alfonso, Lisa Carducci, Giovanni Costa, Filippo Salvatore, and Marco Micone—were bilingual. Whether they work in English or in French, the influence of the Italian language is often present. Many of these writers are also involved in translation from one language to another as part of their writing. Through this activity they have been able to turn a problem into a creative practice and have presented another positive example to other ethnic minority authors with similar language interference issues (Pivato, "Language Escapes").

In September 1986, three BC authors, Genni Gunn, C. D. Minni, and Anna Foschi, organized a large conference of Italian-Canadian writers in Vancouver. Writers from across the country came to give papers, panel presentations, and readings in English, French, and Italian. Micone's French play *Gens du silence* (1982) premiered in English as *Voiceless People*. Here a group of writers decided to establish The Association of Italian-Canadian Writers. Since 1986 this trilingual association has been holding biannual conferences in different Canadian cities and producing collections of essays that have critically examined the publications of these authors in the context of Canadian literature (Canton).

Since Issue 106 of *Canadian Literature* was devoted to Italian-Canadian connections, only a few articles on Italian-Canadian authors have appeared in Canadian literary journals, with the exception of a small number of book reviews. In order to assert the existence and the validity of the work by Italian-Canadian authors, I was approached by Antonio D'Alfonso to edit a book of criticism. Guernica Editions brought out an anthology of critical essays, *Contrasts: Comparative Essays on Italian-Canadian Writing*, in 1985, the same year as the issue of *Canadian Literature*. The anthology became an important book in the study of ethnic minority writing in Canada. In her study of first-generation Canadian authors originating from Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, and the Maghreb, *Voices of Exile in Contemporary Canadian Francophone Literature*, for example, F. Elizabeth Dahab cites *Contrasts* as a positive example (34). Similarly, in a 1996 article, George Elliott Clarke cites it as a "a useful model for scholars of other minority or ethnic Canadian communities who seek to affirm and reconceptualize these literatures" (107). The South Asian writers in Toronto also followed these examples. In 1993 *The Toronto South Asian Review* (TSAR) became *The Toronto Review of Contemporary Writing Abroad*. The editors, M. G. Vassanji and Nurjehan Aziz, also established the press TSAR Publications in 1985 to promote the work of ethnic minority authors in Canada. In 1996 this South Asian group held a joint writers' conference in Toronto with Italian-Canadian writers, and dedicated an issue of *The Toronto Review* (vol. 16, no. 3) to Italian-Canadian authors. In 1998, Italian-Canadian writers had a joint conference in Vancouver with authors from the Asian Canadian Writers' Workshop Society, which publishes the literary arts magazine *Ricepaper*, founded in 1994. From a contemporary vantage point, we can see the significant Italian-Canadian contributions to the coalitional and relational labour of ethnic minority cultural workers in the literary field.

Italian-Canadian writers over the past three decades have tended to write in the realist tradition. Core questions for novelists such as Frank Paci, Marisa De Franceschi, Nino Ricci, Michael Mirolla, Genni Gunn, and Caterina Edwards concern appropriation of voice, dual identity, postcolonial problems in national narratives, translation and language interference, intertextuality, dialogic writing, diaspora writing, life writing, and feminist theory. These writers have had to confront the expectations of postmodern experimentation over conventional realism and a critical appetite to go beyond realism. When French theorist Roland Barthes declared "The Death of the Author" in 1967, it did not help ethnic minority writers who were just beginning to get some recognition for their work, just finding their voices and reconstructing their lost and fragmented stories. These abstract philosophical pronouncements from Paris indicated little understanding of the trauma of being up-rooted, and the resulting need to re-establish an identity through writing the narrative of the individual and the group. The markers of ethnic identity are the author's name, family ties, and his or her links to a history, culture, and language.

When Italian-Canadian writers first started publishing novels and short stories, they were dismissed as too autobiographical, too sociological. Italian-Canadian women writers Mary di Michele and Dôre Michelut began to publish in feminist journals and anthologies. Michelut published her seminal and frequently reprinted essay, "Coming to Terms with the Mother Tongue," in *Tessera* in 1989. Such publications helped to highlight the work of feminist writers and academics and to recognize that their search for identity extended beyond ethnic minority considerations to encompass other outsiders to the mainstream as well (Godard 259). The studies of life writing in all its various forms were particularly useful. Shirley Neuman's work on the double bind of women's autobiography had particular resonance with Italian-Canadian writers. Neuman raised questions about how a woman can achieve agency rather than self-silencing in her autobiography. How can she speak to her culture from the margins? Italian-Canadian writers and other ethnic minority writers found themselves in a similar double bind. The immigrant has little access to public discourse. Nevertheless, from the margins they broke their silence and began to find ways to express their agency. Marlene Kadar's work on the poetics of life writing as a feminist way of reading personal narratives also helped ethnic writers approach personal narratives about immigrant experiences with renewed critical attention. With the help of feminist theory, Italian-Canadian writers were able to establish relations with many other ethnic minority groups and writers.

I began this reflection by making the claim that the major contribution of Italian-Canadian writers to Canadian letters has been the recognition of ethnic minority writing. The term *ethnic minority writing* was introduced in 1987 by Enoch Padolsky of Carleton University, who used the three words to distinguish ethnic minority authors from ethnic majority Canadians of French or British backgrounds. When Pier Giorgio Di Cicco edited the first anthology of Italian-Canadian poetry, *Roman Candles* (1978), he became a model for other minorities to follow: the poet as editor, translator, promoter. The importance of *Roman Candles* was later highlighted by George Elliott Clarke in his *Directions Home* (2012) when he compares Di Cicco's *Roman Candles* to Harold Head's *Canada in Us Now: The First Anthology of Black Poetry and Prose in Canada* (1976). Another significant publication to come along in the mid-'80s was *A Meeting of Streams: South Asian Canadian Literature* (1985), edited by M. G. Vassanji. In 1990, Italian-Canadian critic Linda Hutcheon joined Marion Richmond to co-edit the anthology *Other Solitudes: Canadian Multicultural Fictions*, which became a popular text in literature and ethnic studies courses across Canada, and included Frank Paci's fiction and a reference to *Contrasts* (229). In 1996 Smaro Kamboureli published the anthology *Making a Difference: Canadian Multicultural Literature*, which included five Italian-Canadian writers and two references to *Contrasts* (540, 543). Kamboureli expanded the scope of Hutcheon's and Richmond's earlier multicultural anthology with more fiction, poetry, essays, and dramatic scenes. The general success of *Making a Difference* led to a second revised edition in 2007. Further outstanding examples of edited collections that reflect critical attention to ethnicity and minority literatures in Canada include: *Literary Pluralities* (1998), edited by Christl Verduyn; *Adjacencies: Minority Writing in Canada* (2004), edited by Lianne Moyes, Licia Canton, and Domenic Beneventi; and *Translation Effects: The Shaping of Modern Canadian Culture* (2014), edited by Kathy Mezei, Sherry Simon, and Luise von Flotow.

The study of Canadian letters has changed since the "Italian-Canadian Connections" issue of *Canadian Literature* was published in 1985. We no longer compose reading lists for Canadian courses based on authors with British and French backgrounds. (Why then does Anansi keep reprinting Atwood's *Survival* from 1972?) The publications of Italian-Canadian writers have been a major force in bringing about these changes.[1]

NOTE

[1] For more detailed information about Italian-Canadian authors visit Canadian Writers website at Athabasca University (canadian-writers.athabascau.ca). There you will find profiles and bibliographies for Antonio D'Alfonso, Pier Giorgio Di Cicco, Mary di Michele, Frank Paci, Nino Ricci, Caterina Edwards, Genni Gunn, Peter Oliva, Gianna Patriarca, Pasquale Verdicchio, Maria Ardizzi, Dôre Michelut, Marco Micone, Fulvio Caccia, Marisa De Franceschi, Lisa Carducci, and many of the ethnic minority authors mentioned above.

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Alice Munro's Victoria

Robert Thacker

While many critics have spent a good deal of effort arguing that Alice Munro's most essential place throughout her work has been Huron County, Ontario, I want here to take up another place which appears there: the legacy presence of British Columbia, particularly Victoria, in some of her stories. Doing so, a remark made by Joseph Brodsky as he began his detailed explication of W. H. Auden's "September 1, 1939" is relevant: "Because every work of art, be it a poem or a cupola, is understandably a self-portrait of its author, we won't strain ourselves too hard trying to distinguish between the author's persona and the poem's lyrical hero" (304). So Auden, so Munro: just as readers may often infer relation between her personae in Huron County and her own experience as a person there, so too might she be seen in British Columbia, in Victoria, and at Munro's Books on Yates Street there in "Differently" (1989) and "The Albanian Virgin" (1994).

West Coast images run through Munro's stories. Her "Material" (1973) offers a caustic sense of the preening egotisms of the male writer; set in Vancouver, it does so in part by featuring the insistent presence of that city's rain as a plot element. In *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968) there are two stories—"The Office" (1962) and "The Shining Houses" (1968)—which feature Vancouver settings, and in *The Moons of Jupiter* (1982), that city figures both in the title story and in "Chaddeleys and Flemings: 1. Connection." Descriptions of it are to be found, briefly, in other stories: "Miles City, Montana" (1985), "Jakarta" (1998), and "Cortes Island" (1998). Munro never much liked Vancouver when she lived there (1952-1963)—the family lived most of their time in West Vancouver in a house surrounded by high shrubs. Two of their daughters were born there. During those years Munro was deep in childcare; as well, that time was her most difficult period as an artist: she was trying continually to write a novel, not succeeding, and often depressed. But in 1963 the family moved to Victoria to establish Munro's Books. This smaller city proved to be a great improvement for her. Most of the Munros' energies went into establishing themselves and surviving in this new place. She wrote less then and has said that, because of their shared goals, the first years in Victoria were the best years of her marriage (see Thacker 170-81).

This first store was located at 753 Yates Street. The family rented a house across from Beacon Hill Park, close enough to walk to work. After cleaning, painting, and preparing the store, Alice and Jim opened in September 1963. At that time, paperbacks were in transition—there was a difference between "quality paperbacks" (Penguin, Vintage, New Directions) and cheap paperbacks. The Munros stocked mostly Penguins and Pelicans. Both of them worked in the store, Alice in the afternoons and evenings, taking time away for childcare and housework. Both have recalled the struggles of those first years and of having made something very real, and also of having become a part of the community in ways that had not occurred in Vancouver. Speaking to interviewers in the early 1990s, Alice Munro once said that "going to Victoria and opening a bookstore was the most wonderful thing that ever happened. It was great because all the crazy people in town came into the bookstore and talked to us" (qtd. in McCulloch and Simpson 253).

Victoria as a place and Munro's use of the store as setting appear first in two stories in Munro's third collection, *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You* (1974). One of these, "Walking on Water" (1974), appears to have been partially inspired by a publicity stunt the comedian Pat Paulsen did in Victoria in November 1966 just before he vaulted to fame through the Smothers Brothers television show (Paulson).[1] Even so, the story illuminates Munro's perspective on the decade she spent in Victoria, a place very much a part of its times then, one caught up in the tumult of the 1960s. Alice and Jim disagreed over contemporary issues, for she was fundamentally liberal while he was more conservative. They began drifting apart. Thus just as *Dance* was coming together, and Munro's career was about to be really launched, the Munros' marriage had begun to unravel.

Given these facts, it is not incidental that among Munro's first stories to treat adultery is the second Victoria story in *Something*, "Tell Me Yes or No" (1973). Its effect is one of indeterminacy—in many ways it is not possible to tell exactly just what happens, the narrator claiming to have made everything up—but its plot centres on a confrontation between the narrator, who is the lover of a married man, and his wife, a woman who runs a bookstore. Casting her narrator as one of those people who came into the store, Munro created the wife's character by remembering herself in the bookstore on Yates Street, there and often alone at night, awaiting those who came in, awaiting the human connections they brought. She imagined herself as she was then, making those memories of her presence in the store during those years part of the fabric of some stories.

She did this emphatically in the two particular stories in which Victoria and the Yates Street store most figure, "Differently" and "The Albanian Virgin." In each there is no mistaking the biographical connection and, more than that, each shows both a depth and precision of analysis and remembrance. In "Differently," the narrator's day-long return to Victoria for a visit from Ontario frames an extended reminiscence; Georgia had been a young mother there, then married to Ben, a naval officer. They met and befriended Raymond and Maya, a couple who live in a house which is clearly based on the Munros' there, and in which Raymond still lives with another wife during Georgia's visit. Maya is dead. Georgia now visits Raymond there in the story's frame.

Munro recreates 1960s Victoria here in considerable detail, focusing on Georgia and Maya's friendship. They "became friends on two levels. On the first level, they were friends as wives; on the second as themselves" (226). With their husbands, the four "talked about movies, politics, public personalities, places they had travelled to or wanted to travel to. Maya and Georgia could join in then" (226). Together, the two women "talked in a headlong fashion about their lives, childhoods, problems, husbands" (227). Maya confides to Georgia that she has been having affairs; she got pregnant by one man and had an abortion; she ran off with another, her "true and desperate love" (229), and Raymond went to get her and took her back. She's still seeing a mutual friend, Harvey, for "Exercise," Maya says (229).

Georgia, her own husband away on his yearly summer cruise with the navy, "got a part-time job in a bookstore, working several evenings a week" (229). It was hot, so she "combed her hair out and stopped using most of her makeup and bought a couple of short halter dresses" (229). Here Munro recreates herself in Victoria, still in her thirties:

> Sitting on her stool at the front of the store, showing her bare brown shoulders and sturdy brown legs, she looked like a college girl—clever but full of energy and bold opinions. The people who came into the store liked the look of a girl—a woman—like Georgia. They liked to talk to her. Most of them came in alone. (229)

But more than just recreating herself then, Munro elaborates just how being in the store made her feel, and why being there was important to her:

> Georgia took the store seriously. She had a serious, secret liking for it that she could not explain. It was a long, narrow store with an old-fashioned funnelled entryway between two angled display windows. From her stool behind the desk Georgia was able to see the reflections in one window reflected in the other. (230)

So Munro felt then, and she writes this in a reversal of her longtime former practice of remembering and writing about Huron County from British Columbia. There is a precision and a surety here that recreate the details and feel of 1960s Victoria: "At times the store was empty, and she felt an abundant calm. It was not even the books that mattered then. She sat on the stool and watched the street—patient, expectant, by herself, in a finely balanced and suspended state" (231).

Returned to her visit with Raymond in the story's present, Georgia takes her leave of him to walk through Victoria back to her bus, to catch the last ferry to the mainland. He offers a ride, but "She says no, no, she really wants to walk. It's only a couple of miles. The late afternoon is so lovely, Victoria is so lovely. I had forgotten, she says" (242). Raymond thanks her for coming. Georgia leaves, and as she does Munro ends the story with an evocation of Victoria as place, her younger self within it:

> She doesn't think about [their parting kiss] as she walks back to town through the yellow-leafed streets with their autumn smells and silences. Past Clover Point, the cliffs crowned with broombushes, the mountains across the water. The mountains of the Olympic Peninsula, assembled like a blatant backdrop, a cutout of rainbow tissue paper. She doesn't think about Raymond, or Miles, or Maya, or even Ben.
>
> She thinks about sitting in the store in the evenings. The light in the street, the complicated reflections in the windows. The accidental clarity. (243)

Munro leaves her character here, less with Georgia's regret than with her acceptance of being, of life as it is. There in Victoria noting the place's vaunted scenery but more especially sitting on that stool appreciating its "accidental clarity." That clarity is a moment in time, a moment in a place, a moment in a life: the complexity brought and borne by the reflections of those two angled panes of glass that Munro—and Georgia—looked through, all those years ago, onto Yates Street.

Munro drew upon that store again in "The Albanian Virgin," one of the *Open Secrets* stories. When she comes to describe Victoria there, the perspective is both distant and intimately knowing—structurally, the city stands as an opposite pole to Albania within the story, where much of it takes place. Its narrator is a woman fleeing the complications of her former life in London, Ontario, a woman who moves to Victoria in March 1964 and opens a bookstore. Describing it, she says "I had painted the walls of my bookstore a clear, light yellow. Yellow stands for intellectual curiosity" (104). So Munro creates another young woman coming to Victoria at about the same time she herself did, though shorn of a husband and children. But this story's focus is on the woman who had been the Albanian virgin. Though a first-person narrative, that fact is not evident until well into the story—before that, readers see this woman in Albania by way of what seems a third-person omniscient narrative, a reminiscence placed in the mind of the narrator.

When the narrator appears and accounts for herself and her bookstore and Victoria, she is like Alice Munro in Victoria: a bookstore owner whose interest is piqued by an odd couple who come into the store. Thus she writes,

> Charlotte and Gjurdhi must have come into the store together, but I did not understand that they were a couple until it was time for them to leave. Charlotte was a heavy, shapeless, but quick-moving woman, with a pink face, bright blue eyes, and a lot of glistening white hair, worn like a girl's, waving down over her shoulders. (115)

Her husband is "just one of a number of shabby, utterly uncommunicative old men who belong to the city somewhat as the pigeons do, moving restlessly all day within a limited area, never looking into people's faces" (117). These two are among "the crazy people" Munro described who came into the store. Equally, Munro details other regular customers as well as the casual but knowing society that develops through the store—she describes just what owning the Yates Street store felt like to her day-to-day.

Yet, and though Munro never states it as so, Charlotte and Gjurdhi are also the former Albanian virgin and the priest she meets in Albania, the priest who helps her escape the bandits and, evidently, runs away with her—to Victoria, ultimately. The narrator spots them, gets to know them some, wonders over their histories and stories, and loses them. They disappear. When she looks for them, she cannot find the nearby apartment building where they lived and she once had dinner with them: "The change in the apartment building seemed to have some message for me. It was about vanishing. I knew that Charlotte and Gjurdhi had not actually vanished—they were somewhere, living or dead. But for me they had vanished" (126). Considering what this means to her, the narrator is affected, offering a passage that should reasonably be seen as a coda for late Munro:

> My connection was in danger—that was all. Sometimes our connection is frayed, it is in danger, it seems almost lost. Views and streets deny knowledge of us, the air grows thin. Wouldn't we rather have a destiny to submit to, then, something that claims us, anything, instead of such flimsy choices, arbitrary days? (127)

This woman, writing this, is just about to be claimed again by Nelson, the lover she left behind in London. This was just as Charlotte probably was claimed, years ago as she fled her bandits and found the priest—probably Gjurdhi—"waiting on the dock" (128) for her in Trieste. A bit crazy, but real life in Munro's hands.

Altogether, Munro's Victoria stories reveal her elaborating her own decade there from 1963-1973. She remembers the time spent alone in the Yates Street store, its physicality, its views, and she recreates her younger self sitting on a stool there, revisiting her feelings, her connections, her being, the shapes of her understandings. She recreates "the accidental clarity" of those years, as "Differently" shows. With "The Albanian Virgin," she folds those experiences into a larger story that ranges far beyond Canada to bring Albania to Victoria, but to see it as a place like any other, where humans live, perceive, delight, and wonder.

NOTE

[1] This article in the University of Victoria newspaper announces Paulsen's return visit to campus as part of his 1968 spoof presidential campaign, noting that he "launched into national fame in Victoria after his 1966 campus appearance when he strode through the crowd of 200 gathered on the Causeway to watch him walk on the water. He raised his arms for silence, stepped off the wharf and promptly sank out of sight" (3). I wish to thank Tracy Ware (Queen's University) for bringing the Paulsen connection to my attention.

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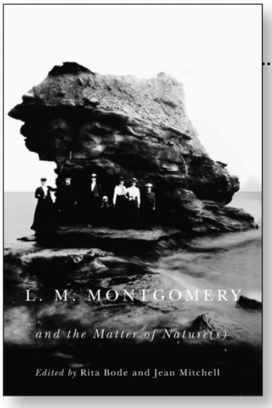
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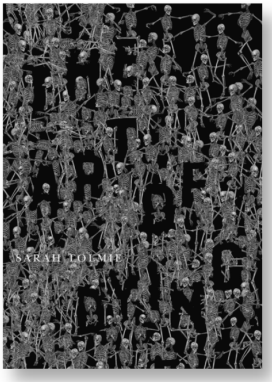

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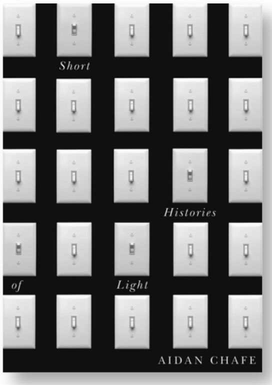

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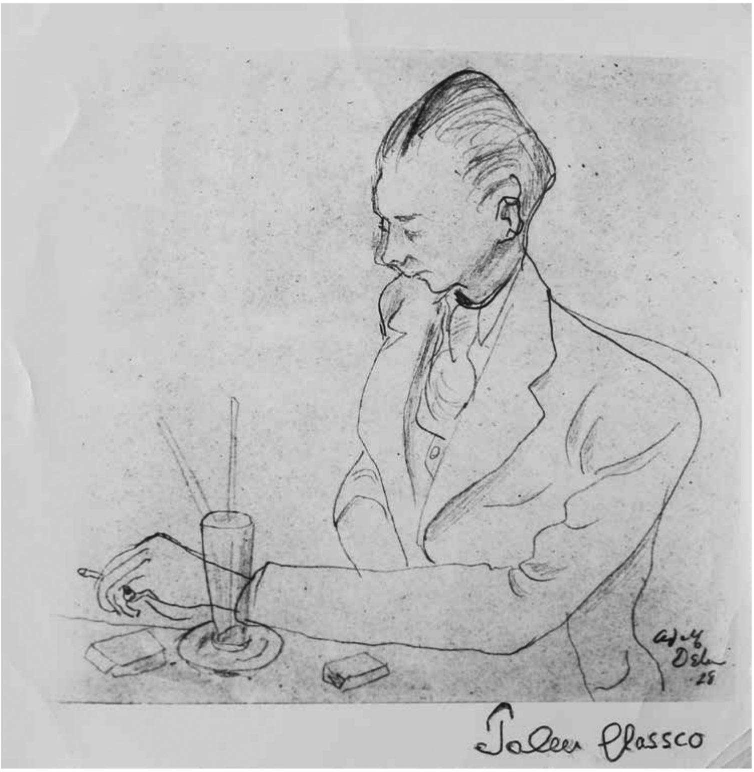

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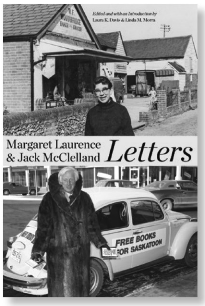
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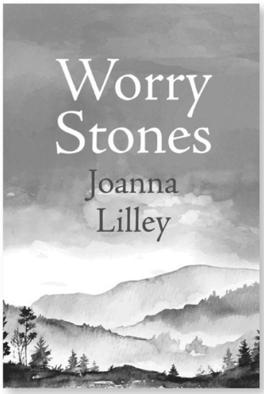

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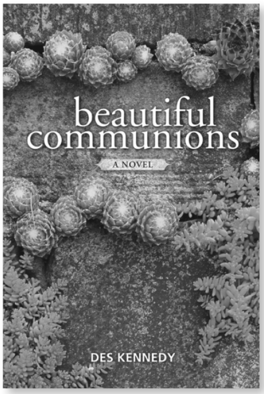

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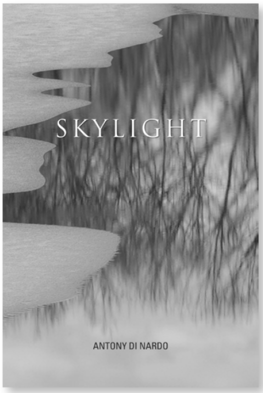

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