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

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Canada Reads

Laura Moss

Between April 15 and April 23, 2002 CBC Radio hosted a series of five half-hour panel discussions called Canada Reads. It was a game, as host Mary Walsh called it, to find the book that all of Canada *should* read. Five prominent Canadians each championed a single title. Former Prime Minister Kim Campbell chose Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* because of the "good sex"; Stephen Page, of the Barenaked Ladies, championed Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* as a "beautiful book about the immigrant experience"; Winnipeg writer Leon Rooke selected Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel* because Hagar Shipley is still "the reigning queen of Canadian literature"; science fiction writer Nalo Hopkinson nominated George Elliot Clarke's *Whylah Falls*, describing it as a passionate and celebratory love poem; and actor Megan Follows favoured Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, an "extraordinary novel about four people in India."

Over the course of the week, the panelists "voted off"—to use the language of the reality TV show *Survivor*—one short-listed book per day, leaving a final showdown between *Whylah Falls* and *In the Skin of a Lion* at the end of the week. In the end, Canada's National Librarian Roch Carrier announced the victory of Michael Ondaatje's novel as the "Canada Reads Champion." The contest was so popular that *In the Skin of a Lion* is said to have sold approximately eighty thousand copies more in 2002 than in 2001.

Canada Reads has become an annual literary event with three subsequent versions of the contest—two in English Canada on CBC, Radio One (now also broadcast on Newsworld television), and one in Quebec on Radio Canada ("Le Combat des Livres").¹ There have also been three interactive "People's Choice" contests on the CBC website.² The goal of Canada Reads is to choose one book that Canadians could read together in book clubs or

classrooms, in Starbucks or Tim Hortons. According to a CBC press release, “Canada Reads is a program that embodies the CBC tradition of developing radio programming that enlightens, reflects and connects Canadians.” While promoting literacy, as a government-funded program also called “Canada Reads” has done since 1988, the game has had far greater economic, social, and cultural impact than anyone could have imagined at its inception.

Why is it imperative that we, those who work on and in Canadian literature, take this game seriously? As a public presentation of a literature that is depicted as coming of age, Canada Reads has helped to open up Canadian literary works to a large market. Over the three years, it has brought eighteen writers’ names into prominence in the public domain. (Margaret Atwood and Yann Martel are listed twice.) It has become an important indicator of public support of the literary arts in Canada. Executive Producer Talin Vartanian comments that “Canada Reads has made a big splash across the country in three short years, and librarians and publishers have told us this program has had an impressive impact on people’s interest in Canadian fiction.” Certainly, the Canada Reads contest has helped to solidify a popular understanding of the quantity and quality of works of Canadian literature. The contest has tapped into the increasing recognition of Canadian literature locally and the growing popularity of Canadian literature globally.

Canada Reads showcases Canadian writing, promotes Canadian writers, encourages literacy, and supports the publishing industry in Canada. So, why am I a bit uneasy about the game? Part of the answer lies in the disjuncture between the program’s nation-building rhetoric and its depoliticization of the literary works. Part of it lies with the immense cultural responsibility placed on the celebrity panelists. Canada Reads has become a new instrument of culture formation. It is intent on drawing Canadians together by creating a shared cultural background. The winning titles reinforce certain popular notions of Canadianness. *In the Skin of a Lion* appeals to a sense of a multicultural Canada. *Next Episode* enacts the tension of Quebec in Canada. *The Last Crossing* is an epic of Western history. The Radio Canada winner, *Un dimanche à la piscine à Kigali*, places Quebec and Canada on a world stage shouldering the responsibilities of peacekeeping and global citizenship. Host Bill Richardson termed the Canada Reads debates a “search for nationhood.” Although he was referring directly to the 2003 finalists, *Colony of Unrequited Dreams* and *Next Episode*, Richardson clearly conveyed the enduring preoccupation of the game.

Canada Reads is quickly becoming one of the most important prizes in

Canadian literature. It may not be high on prestige, but the economic and cultural spin-off is enormous. Discussing Derek Walcott's winning of the Nobel Prize, Paula Burnett notes that "literary prizes are, of course, both products and transmitters of cultural value systems with obvious canonical implications." She goes on to discuss the postcolonial implications of a Caribbean poet winning such a prize and in the process creating a sense of national pride in St. Lucia. By linking national pride with the process of canonization through prize-giving, Burnett makes a potent claim for the power of the literary award as a purveyor of cultural values.

What distinguishes Canada Reads from other Canadian literary prizes such as the Giller Prize or the Governor General's Award is that the judges are not experts. They are celebrities. Their fame in and of itself does not mean that they cannot be astute readers. However, the level of discussion rarely goes beyond character development, plot, or emotional response to the texts. Canada Reads is primarily a "game" where the entertainment value of the discussion takes precedence. Guy Vanderhaeghe, whose historical epic swept the 2004 Canada Reads contest and the People's Choice contest, enthused that "it was a great pleasure to have the books debated in such a passionate, intelligent, and decidedly *not* sombre fashion."

Such a thinly-veiled dig at academic discourse leads to another concern I have with Canada Reads. It celebrates the shortlisted novels rather than engaging critically with them. Or it damns them on spurious grounds. The novels are pawns in a game. With the watered-down aestheticism of the readings, most often it has been the politics of the novels that is lost in the commentary on the texts. The depoliticized discussions have effectively joined the "aesthetic / humanist and the national" ideologies that Frank Davey argues divert readers, critics, and writers from the political dimensions of literature.

The championing of *Sarah Binks* ignored historical context: for example, no mention was made of the derogatory depiction of vanishing "Indians" with gin bottles. *Green Grass, Running Water* was called "Native Lite" by panelist Zsuzsi Gartner, diverting attention from the strategic use of Cherokee or the relevance of King's rescripting Western movies. There was a notable dearth of discussion about First Nations peoples in *Last Crossing*. The cautionary feminist apocalypse of *A Handmaid's Tale* was sidelined by titillating discussions of sexuality. *A Fine Balance* was dismissed by panelists, who admitted to not having finished it, because of the flashbacks to pre-Emergency India. *Whydah Falls* was fashioned as a universal love story with little mention of its

Africadian context. Contrary to Aquin's own positioning as a radical Quebec separatist, *Prochain Épisode* was rather ironically reconfigured as a "bridge between the literary solitudes of French and English Canadian literature." The commentary on Ondaatje's book focused either on the beauty of its prose or its characters' representative Canadianness. Beyond Leon Rooke's comment that *In the Skin of A Lion* is "Michael's blue collar novel," there was little mention of the implications of Ondaatje's historical revisionism.

The following exchange took place on the opening day of the first program.

Stephen Page [SP]: I was looking for a book that had resonance with Canadians, by or about Canada. If we are looking for one book, we are looking for a "uniquely Canadian experience in our reading."

Megan Follows [MF]: My book is not set in Canada but is by a Canadian author who emigrated from India.

SP: That's part of the Canadian experience.

MF: What is so wonderful about Canada is the diversity that we have, so many people coming from different countries who bring different cultures and their experiences and that's what makes Canada truly a multicultural place. I was really impressed with the list of books and the diversity . . .

SP: One of our greatest strengths as Canadians is our ability to view the world in ways other nations don't, particularly Americans . . .

MF: Absolutely.

SP: Although we share similar culture we have a different perspective and a different point of view [than] the rest of the world.

Kim Campbell: This range of books reflects the range of Canadians . . . each book represents one facet of a multifaceted [nation].

(My transcription)

It is no wonder, after this discussion, that *In the Skin of a Lion* won the inaugural Canada Reads. In the popular imagination, *In the Skin of a Lion* quintessentially depicts the growth of Canada as a multicultural nation. Page's representation of Ondaatje as a marginal writer who links us all in our immigrant status is at odds with the cultural capital that Ondaatje actually holds as a member of Canada's literary elite (with a speaking fee of \$12,500 US, for example). Before Canada Reads, Ondaatje held a central position in the Canadian canon. After it, his position is unassailable.

In the validation, recognition, and support it has focused on a few works, Canada Reads stands beside the 1978 Calgary Conference and the 1994 Writing Thru Race Conference as a recognizable point in Canadian literary history. It has expanded public readership and recirculated works of Canadian literature to a wider audience. The Canada Reads canon is an eclectic mixture of books from an eclectic mixture of writers. It does not replicate past canons. Discussions of canon formation tend to oscillate

between privileging texts based on representativeness or artistic merit. In Canada Reads, the choice is not whether a novel best represents a region/ author/ era/ ethnic group/ subject, or whether it is qualitatively superior, but whether it is the most durable depiction of Canada and whether it is championed by a persuasive and popular advocate.

When it organizes a contest to pick one book all of Canada should read, is the CBC really any more culpable than when I pick a book that all of my class should read? It is a truism to say that we are always creating and recreating canons. But while we must make choices, it is always necessary to remember what informs us and how political those choices are. The Canada Reads project needs to recognize that although the program may be “just a game” as senior producer Talin Vartanian told me, it is a game played with cultural, social, and economic consequences.

The fact that George Elliot Clarke’s *Whylah Falls* was runner-up in the first Canada Reads contest signals the prominence of Clarke as a Canadian writer and cultural commentator. The Africadian context of the prose poem, absent from Canada Reads, is addressed in this issue of *Canadian Literature* beside meditations on orality and orature, politics, influence, and citizenship. Some of the matters elided in the Canada Reads contest are highlighted in the issue at hand as the contributors engage critically with work by black writers in Canada.

NOTES

- 1 The 2003 short list is *Next Episode (Prochain Épisode)* by Hubert Aquin, translated by Sheila Fischman, chosen by Denise Bombardier (winner); *Sarah Binks* by Paul Hiebert, chosen by Will Ferguson; *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel, chosen by Nancy Lee; *The Lost Garden*, by Helen Humphreys, chosen by Mag Ruffman; *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, by Wayne Johnston chosen by Justin Trudeau.
 The 2004 short list is *The Last Crossing* by Guy Vanderhaeghe, chosen by Jim Cuddy (winner); *Le coeur est un muscle involontaire (The Heart is an Involuntary Muscle)* by Monique Proulx, translated by David Homel and Fred A. Reed, chosen by Francine Pelletier; *Barney’s Version* by Mordecai Richler, chosen by Zsuzsi Gartner; *Green Grass, Running Water* by Thomas King, chosen by Glen Murray; *The Love of a Good Woman* by Alice Munro, chosen by Measha Brueggergosman.
 - 2 Le Combat des Livres 2004 short list is *Un dimanche à la piscine à Kigali* by Gil Courtemanche, chosen by Laure Waridel (winner); *L’histoire de Pi* by Yann Martel, chosen by Louise Forestier; *La petite fille qui aimait trop les allumettes* by Gaétan Soucy, chosen by Micheline Lanctôt; *Une histoire américaine* by Jacques Godbout, chosen by Gérald Larose; *La servante écarlate* by Margaret Atwood, chosen by Julius Grey.
- 2 The winners were Rohinton Mistry’s *A Fine Balance* in 2002, Wayne Johnson’s *Colony of Unrequited Dreams* in 2003, and Guy Vanderhaeghe’s *Last Crossing* in 2004.

Hummingbird

Even when quiet, her long beak like a snake's
tongue, almost quivering, she blazes.
Day so throbs her single passion. Now
the tiger-lily takes her, next
the shaking umbels of the phlox.
Aggressive, sure, she mines the fragrant corridors,
and drives her twin, her neighbour off,
focused, aflame.

While I
who try each day to learn again
to damp my tame opinions down
or wait to learn what neighbours know,
am never sure.
If in the red shags of the day
(as if burrowing into the bergamot)
I feel their presence like a cat's,
my sharp-nosed face
may seem a kind of angry mask.
What *do* I know?
You smile. I almost hear you say:
"She does, she does exaggerate!"

Mapping the Door of No Return

Deterritorialization and the Work of Dionne Brand

In her recent memoir *A Map to the Door of No Return* (2001), Dionne Brand makes a provocative contribution to the debate about Canadian identity:

Too much has been made of origins. . . . Here at home, in Canada, we are all implicated in this sense of origins. It is manufactured origin nevertheless, playing to our need for home, however tyrannical. This country, in the main a country of immigrants, is always redefining origins, jockeying and smarming for degrees of belonging. (64)

Brand goes on to insist: “Belonging does not interest me. I had once thought that it did. Until I examined the underpinnings. One is misled when one looks at the sails and majesty of tall ships instead of their cargo” (85). Rather than clinging to concepts of home and nation, Brand’s recent fictions, specifically her novel *At The Full and Change of the Moon* (1999) and her memoirs, *A Map to the Door of No Return*, outline an alternative possibility namely, “drifting”—and adopt the figure of the ship at sea as a metaphor for the continuing impact of the Black Diaspora.

In Brand’s writing, the notion of drifting offers an alternative to the boundedness of home and the nation-state. Indeed, by emphasizing drifting she underscores the inadequacies of the nation-state, particularly in its response to demands for social justice in a global era and in its long-standing practices of exclusion. Although claims to nationhood can be seen as contributing to projects of decolonization, Brand nevertheless promotes drifting as an equally legitimate resistant practice. She offers a cautionary warning to consider “the cargo” rather than “the majesty of tall ships”—in essence, to recognize the exclusionary foundations and ongoing limitations of nationalism.

Brand's emphasis on drifting and her refusal of a singular origin signal not so much an abandonment of history as a recognition of multiple histories based on shared experiences of class, race, gender, and sexuality. In contrast to writers who portray people and homes as linked by supposedly natural qualities based on biology and geography—what Edward Said terms “filiation” (20)—Brand's fiction demonstrates that the links between people and homes are social creations, discourses of “affiliation” which are learned, created, recalled, and sometimes forgotten (see George 16–17). Viewed in this light, her fiction can be read as a meditation on the politics and aesthetics of crafting affiliations. Ultimately, the concept of drifting invites readers to re-theorize home as a constellation of multiple sites—a series of somewheres that cannot be captured under any one place name. Drifting is particularly suited to a reconsideration of the Black Diaspora. Unlike the Jewish Diaspora, which critics have used to generate an ideal type, the Black Diaspora has not always been associated with a single origin, a specific place of return, or a nation to build.

As Rinaldo Walcott observes, Brand's texts map the “in-between space of what the black British cultural theorist Paul Gilroy calls the ‘[c]ritical space/time cartography of the diaspora’” (Walcott 42). The cartography of the Diaspora, according to Gilroy, can illuminate “the unforeseen detours and circuits which mark the new journeys and new arrivals that, in turn, release new political and cultural possibilities” (qtd. in Walcott 42). In a related attempt to actualize these “new political and cultural possibilities,” Brand's writing engages with spectres from the past: the victims and agents of the slave trade and the transatlantic journeys it initiated. Although her texts turn to the past, on the whole they demonstrate the futility of adopting a nostalgic response to lost origins and unknown destinations—a response that typically entails championing notions of belonging, home, and nation. By tracing the wandering paths and the solitary spaces familiar to those who have been dislocated, Brand's texts offer a politically-charged alternative to the desire for belonging and possession.

At the Full and Change of the Moon (1999) ranges from the 1800s to the end of the twentieth century and traces the lives of over a dozen people. The narrative begins on the day in 1824 that a renegade slave, Marie Ursule, supervises the mass suicide of her fellow workers on an estate in Trinidad. Before distributing the deadly poison, Marie Ursule sends her four-year-old daughter, Bola, to safety. Carried on the back of her mother's trusted friend, Kamena, and directed by Marie Ursule's dream of a destination, Bola

arrives at Culebra Bay, the former home of two Ursuline nuns who continue to haunt the estate. The novel repeatedly underscores the clash between those who embraced the so-called civilizing mission of Western European culture—a Eurocentric mission rooted in the Enlightenment’s faith in quantification, map-making, and its linear view of historical progress—and those “others” who found themselves in the space of in-betweenness epitomized by the Middle Passage. This latter space is characterized less by accumulation and linear progression than by drifting from “a lost origin to a forced destination,” a movement from “home to hell” (Raynaud 71).

The space of in-betweenness poses a radical challenge to conventional notions of chronology, geography, and subjectivity. As the editors of *Black Imagination and the Middle Passage* write:

[H]ow do you spell “I am” when you are deprived of home, of place, of your sense of direction? How do you spell “I am” when the seamless web defining the self is torn? How do you spell “I am” when you are branded, when you are stacked away in the claustrophobic hell below the deck of a slave ship, when you are discarded because a commodity is damaged? How do you spell “I am” on water without boundaries? (*Black* 17)

In *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand comments on this space: “Our inheritance in the Diaspora is to live in this inexplicable space. That space is the measure of our ancestors’ step through the door toward the ship. One is caught in the few feet in between” (*Map* 20).

Her texts repeatedly highlight the challenge of living in this “inexplicable space” and the difficulty of locating a sense of self on “water without boundaries.” Brand presents both the negative and, where possible, the positive aspects of erasure and drifting—the former connected to the trauma of the Middle Passage and the latter to those “unforeseen detours and circuits” that Gilroy believes can “release new political and cultural possibilities” (86).

A vivid example of an encounter with this space of in-betweenness is found in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* in the description of Kamena’s journey to Terre Bouillante, the secret Maroon camp. As the narrator explains, when Kamena first made his way to the camp, he had not so much plotted a course as “dreamed it, and been so lost he’d found it” (26). The first and only time Kamena found Terre Bouillante was during the rainy season. After fleeing Mon Chagrin, the estate where he and Marie Ursule were enslaved, he wandered through the rain for days on end and slept “covered in whole sheets of rain, so steady, so blistering, *he felt himself drown far from any ocean . . .*” (28; my emphasis). Gradually, Kamena lost all sense of direction and volition: “The days had spun him around, and the slaking rain beat him

so hard he lay down in surrender and opened his mouth” (29). Eventually, Kamena grew so weak, he “crawled along the horizon . . . room enough as under a bed” (29–30). Finally, nearly dead, Kamena felt somebody tying a rope around his belly and dragging him through the forest: “Tangled in the rope and in the trees, he gave up any control, his body becoming porous and falling apart like rotted meat He was sure he was what the forest leaves, what a shark leaves . . .” (30). Cared for by the other half-starved escapees at Terre Bouillante, a place of quiet peace, free from slavery, Kamena feels joy for the first time; it was like finding “his childhood” (34).

Kamena’s journey from Mon Chagrin to Terre Bouillante not only traverses a space of in-betweenness—the space where one is deprived of “home, of place, of . . . one’s sense of direction”—it also uncannily echoes the transport of African captives to the Americas. Images of disorientation, drowning, claustrophobia, loss of control, death, and decomposition allude to the horrific experience of the Middle Passage.¹

Eventually, however, Kamena must leave the sanctuary of Terre Bouillante to fulfil his promise to Marie Ursule and rescue Bola. While escorting the child through the forest, Kamena recognizes that he may never find his way to the Maroon camp again: “What had happened to him before had become sacred to him and unimaginable and perhaps something he could do only once. If he had to follow every step he made the last time, then he was likely lost. It was a another season and a different place” (32). Ten years pass, and Kamena has still “not found Terre Bouillante or given up his search even if it only took him farther into his own mind” (54). In the end, he dies searching for Terre Bouillante. Brand insists that Kamena’s “search is his destination.” She goes on to explain that “there is a sort of Africanist position about going back to that place before . . . before the great disaster. He cannot find it . . . [but] his descriptions of how to get there are his gift, because he moves from the realm of the physical into a completely different realm—into thought. From flesh into thought” (qtd. in Abbas 5).

A key question posed by all of Brand’s recent texts concerns the course that individuals should plot in the aftermath of “the great disaster.” As Brand’s comments suggest, she does not support the “Africanist position,” the nostalgic dream of returning to a prelapsarian home. But if she does not support the dream of returning home or, alternatively, of belonging to a new home, then what does she imagine are the psychological and political ramifications for descendants of the Black Diaspora? And what, if anything, does she posit as an alternative to nostalgia?

Initially it appears as if Brand offers no alternative other than unmitigated despair. Toward the end of the novel, in a letter to her dead mother, Bola's great grand-daughter, Eula, describes the irrevocable damage caused by the slave trade and expresses a longing for what has been lost:

I would like one single line of ancestry, Mama. One line from you to me and farther back, but a line that I can trace. . . . I would like one line full of people who have no reason to forget anything, or forgetting would not help them or matter because the line would be constant, unchangeable. A line that I can reach for in my brain when I feel off kilter. Something to pull me back. . . . I would like a village where I would remain and not a village I would leave. (246–47)²

The direct descendant of Marie Ursule and Bola, Eula feels as if she has nothing to hold on to, nothing to afford her a sense of wholeness or community. She feels “as if we had been scattered out with a violent randomness” (258).³

As the novel repeatedly demonstrates, Marie Ursule's gesture of launching her daughter into the future does not lead to a utopian outcome of health, wholeness, or community. In fact, this outcome is impossible, according to Brand, because one can never entirely transcend the hauntings of history. Referring to Marie Ursule in an interview, Brand acknowledged that her hand “is deep in some horror” and that we are “corrupted by what we live, and what we have to do to get out of how we live” (qtd. in Sanders 6). According to Rinaldo Walcott, a number of critics read black women's work within what might be called “‘the mammy tradition’—[the expectation] that black women should make all things right or at least smooth them over” (49). This is precisely the consoling gesture that Brand refuses to offer. Virtually all of Brand's characters are denied, or wilfully refuse, the solace of home and the experience of belonging, compelled, as they are, to navigate the flux and change instigated by the Middle Passage.

Brand is of course not alone in attempting to chart the space of in-betweenness. As one critic explains, writers who try to map this space often find themselves charting “the watery paths that have no signposts and that resist any return” (Garvey 255). Although Kamena's quest for *Terre Bouillante* vividly portrays this type of journey, the majority of the contemporary characters in *At the Full and Change of the Moon* do not find that the watery paths lead to an actual place of refuge or an escape from abjection. As Brand contends: “escape does not necessarily lead to rescue . . . the new place is not necessarily better, and . . . for somebody with a history of oppression there might not be any ‘better’” (qtd. in Martin 3).⁴

The psychological repercussions of the space of in-betweenness are forcibly conveyed by Eula's cousin, Adrian, who at one point finds himself

wandering through Amsterdam. His description of his surroundings emphasizes the plight of the descendants of the Black Diaspora:

The blocks from Dam Square to the station were littered with men like him—men from everywhere. . . . A debris of men selling anything, anything they could get their hands on. Dam Square seemed haunted, though it was bustling, haunted by these scores of men changing into other men, who looked the same. Haunted shifts of them from Curacao, Surinam, Africa. . . . Here he was like Kamena trying to find a destination. (180)

In describing these men, Brand drew on her own trip to Amsterdam in 1992. While readers might understandably focus on the negative aspects of the men's behaviour, interpreting Adrian's description of ghosts haunting a "damned" square as a case-study of abjection, Brand refuses to disparage the men's choices. Instead, she marvels at their deftness and ability to survive. In an interview, she has asserted that she was inspired by men's journeys: "I [. . .] [thought] about how to write those things down, how to write passages. How to write what looks like journeys across water, across mind, space, and how people are always able to adapt, to fit, to figure out how to do this hustle which life has presented us with" (qtd. in Sanders 3).

Referring to a man whom she watched in Dam Square, Brand states:

[I]t would have taken that man on the Amsterdam street a leap, some trajectory through his imagination to arrive on the street. I was more interested in that kind of passage, a kind of opening. That all of those people would have had to have the most magnificent of imaginations to envision themselves where they had landed. . . . They arrive on the street on imagination because nothing real would tell them to be there. . . . *It would have to be this kind of flood to arrive there.* (qtd. in Sanders 3; my emphasis)

Yet Brand is clearly ambivalent about the impact of the Diaspora. Although in interviews she celebrates the men's fundamental ability to adapt and to survive, she also acknowledges the overwhelming sadness of lives lived in isolation and exile. In her memoirs she writes: "He was in a kind of despair I have never experienced and experienced then only through his *drifting* into the street. . . . His *drifting* into the street, his slight hesitation—this was beauty. I saw that young man drop into the square like a drop of water into an ocean" (194; my emphasis).

In *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, the flood that brings Adrian to Amsterdam is not portrayed as a life-giving force. After surveying Dam Square, Adrian returns home, feverish with drugs, and lies on the kitchen floor, which in his imagination has become the ocean: "He felt himself convulse as if he were spewing up an ocean and he imagined sea turtles and sea cockroaches coming out of his mouth. His head was dipped in water, in

big blue water. . . . And his mouth was open, spitting an endless stream of shells and bitten bone and small white sea insects. He never wants to see the world again” (204–205). Unlike other characters, most obviously Eula’s brother Carlyle, who relishes the challenge of surviving on the street and could “change a passport from male to female and back, use it three times over, multiply it and subdivide it . . . bobbing and weaving . . . dipping and diving,” (167) Adrian ultimately drowns.

Later in *Map*, Brand revises her initial description of Amsterdam and her discovery of her character Adrian, confessing that his despair mirrors her own:

I am sad on Dam Square. All the way here, all the way here to look so dry faced on Dam Square. I feel like sitting there and crying. I feel bereft. I feel abandoned by Marie Ursule to city squares [. . .]. I am *adrift, spilled out*, with Adrian [. . .] at the end of this century in any city all over with world with nothing as certain as Marie Ursule coming. We are all abandoned, all scattered in Marie Ursule’s hopelessness and her skill. (*Map* 211; my emphasis)

As the recurring phrases “adrift” and “spilled out” remind us, Brand repeatedly invokes water imagery to express the after-effects of the Diaspora. As Johanna Garvey points out, the sea often serves as a “repository for memories of the Middle Passage” (267). In her memoirs, Brand confirms this link: “Derek Walcott wrote, ‘the sea is history.’ I knew that before I knew it was history I was looking at” (12).

Watery imagery likewise plays an important role in Eula’s despairing letter to her dead mother. Like her cousin Adrian, Eula cannot dissociate herself from the abject; all she can do is vent her fear and hatred of the sodden debris of history scattered all around her (240). In the case of Eula and Adrian, the overwhelming evidence of the “great disaster” and their own sense of abjection preclude any celebration of the ability to survive or of the power of the imagination. In her letter, Eula makes a veiled reference to this unspeakable disaster: “Perhaps I took it that accidents of great proportion could not happen, that one day in the middle of the street that everyone would be wrecked. Wreckage, Mama, that is all we look like, pure wreckage. The street is full of human wreckage, breakage and ruin” (240–41).

While such passages emphasize the negative implications of drifting, Brand nonetheless also reveals the positive imaginative and political possibilities of the diasporic space of in-betweenness. To a limited extent, readers glimpse these possibilities in the text’s acknowledgment of Kamena’s and Carlyle’s powerful imaginations and their mobility. A legacy of the space of in-betweenness, these attributes, which ensured the slaves’ survival, are perhaps most vividly embodied by Marie Ursule’s daughter, Bola.

When Bola arrives with Kamena at Culebra Bay, she is initially confronted by the ruins of the Ursulines' estate. On the one hand, by portraying Bola's flight to the ghostly estate, the text illustrates her intimate connection with the forces that ruined her mother's life. On the other hand, Bola, who was too young to have memories of slavery, experiences a freedom that Marie Ursule and even Kamena never attain—a freedom repeatedly linked to positive images of the sea.

Even before Marie Ursule executes her deadly plan, she glimpses the sea in her daughter's eyes (45). In contrast to Adrian's and Eula's experiences, this watery space is unequivocally a life-giving force for Bola. After she sets eyes on the ocean for the first time at Culebra Bay, its positive possibilities become apparent: "walking into a house was like walking into a wall, a barrier to the open, because this is what Marie Ursule had seen in her child's eyes, the sea, and a journey" (44). Bola soon discovers that the malevolent, ghostly nuns cannot cross water; she escapes from their presence by swimming far out to sea, until she "is alone in the water *like a boat and a shipwreck*" (61; my emphasis). The allusion to "a boat and a shipwreck," in keeping with the references to drowning, death, and decay, suggests memories of the Middle Passage. Whereas Kamena battles against fluidity and searches for Terre Bouillante until his death, Bola concludes that "searching is useless" (65). She accepts that the "sea is always changing and so is the sky," and never tires "of drowning in both" (61).

Bola's acceptance of flux and change can be viewed as a rejection of accumulation and possession—fixations that motivate both the slave owners and, in many cases, their victims. As if to lend credence to Bola's philosophy, the novel ends with a chapter dedicated to her with her children. As the narrator explains, Bola's happiness springs from her acceptance both of the ever-changing ocean and of her ever-shifting desires, her "great appetite for anything" (294). For instance, when she takes a new lover, and her children, all fathered by different men, clamour around her asking, "Is he mine, Mama? Is he mine?" Bola tells them sternly: "No one is anyone's. How much time I must tell you" (298). Bola's contentment seemingly lies in choosing the ocean over the estate, flux over stasis. She revels in her own physicality: "Like some endangered tree she bloomed, devoured, fell into all her senses" (295).

Bola's ability to embrace her body and fall "into all her senses" functions, in part, as a marker of her freedom from both slavery and sexism. Early on, Marie Ursule comments on the extent to which slavery curtailed bodily

expression and enjoyment: “Breathing in sleep was the only time you owned movement of your chest” (4). At least two female descendants of Marie Ursule follow Bola’s lead, championing the ownership and enjoyment of their own bodies. For instance, in her fiftieth year, after attaining a respectable middle-class life, Bola’s granddaughter, Cordelia, realizes that she is no longer satisfied with her possessions. Like Bola, Cordelia is suddenly “greedy for everything she had not had,” and what she had not had “was the enjoyment of her body clear and free” (121). We are told that

[s]he needed to break her own body open and wring its water out toward the ends of the room so that she was not in a room and not riding Emmanuel Greaves [her husband] but riding the ocean’s waves, her flesh coming off like warm bread in her fingers and floating out to sea. . . . It was the only time she did not have order and her legs wide and liquid carried her to another shore. (107-108)

Like Bola, Cordelia rejects the master’s notion of order; she selects lovers arbitrarily, choosing one because he had “caught her when her body was deciding to listen to its own logic and all the objects in range of her senses would now be their outcome” (123).

Again, references to water and the body, particularly the description of Cordelia’s “flesh coming off like warm bread,” allude to the decay and wreckage associated with the Middle passage and echo Eula’s sense of having been “scattered out with a violent randomness” (258). In Cordelia’s case, however, the imagery points to a very different and far more positive shattering of the self, a death of sorts (*le petit mort*) brought about by an absolute surrender to sensual pleasure.

Unlike Bola and Cordelia, who take lovers, Adrian’s sister, Maya, another of Bola’s pleasure-seeking granddaughters, devotes all of her attention to her own body:

She made herself strong and liquid. Her menses made her euphoric. After the initial gravity into which each period sank her, after the day of feeling the world as it was, hopeless and suicidal, after watching her body swell with water, she felt euphoric at the warm feel of her blood gushing uncontrollably as if a breath was let out, as if rightly she could give birth to the world and wouldn’t, giddy and spinning, anything possible, and an energy so powerful she felt that she could spring above time, and wondered why she hadn’t. (221)

References in this passage to the release of breath (“as if a breath was let out”) again recall the commodification of the slave’s body, when “[b]reathing in sleep was the only time you owned movement of your chest.” The emphasis on menstruation in the passage reminds us further that female slaves were particularly prized for their ability to reproduce valuable

“commodities.” This may explain why Maya, who feels as if she could give birth to the world, initially chooses not to procreate.⁵

Bola’s and her granddaughters’ celebration of physical pleasure emphasize that, although no one emerges unscathed, individuals respond quite differently to their ancestors’ passage through “The Door of No Return.” To varying degrees these women challenge the legacy of the Enlightenment’s obsession with quantification by embracing what I term the aesthetics and politics of drifting.⁶ We are told, for instance, that occasionally Maya glimpses the life she wants and the term she repeatedly uses to describe this life is “drift.” As the narrator states: “She only wanted to drift down streets or drift out into the country . . . She wanted to be nowhere on time and she wanted incidents of music in cafes and clubs when she drifted into music as if she were music itself. . . . Drift. She liked the word, suggesting streams of her appearing and dissipating in air” (215).⁷ To further highlight the allure of drifting, the novel concludes with Bola’s warning to her children to be quiet or she will “go back in the sea” (299).

The emphasis in *At the Full* on women’s experience of drifting represents an important contribution to diaspora studies, complementing and extending foundational investigations that inadvertently normalized male experience such as Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993). As Gilroy himself acknowledges, his study presents a reading of “masculinist” diasporism, focusing, as it does, on practices of travel and cultural production “that have, with important exceptions, not been open to women” (qtd. in Clifford 319–20). Brand’s novel also engages with feminist implications of post-structuralist accounts of identity and difference. Brand’s images of women adrift sexually prompt readers to consider sexual difference not simply in terms of male and female, but in terms of all those “anomalous sliding positions ever in process, in between, which opens up the continent of sexuality to increasing points of disturbance” (Hall 50).

In *At the Full*, the connection between the impact of the Middle Passage and the politics and aesthetics of drifting remains implicit. In her recent memoirs, however, it emerges as a central theme. As the narrator states: “We have no ancestry except the black water and the Door of No Return. They signify space and not land” (*Map* 61). Later, she asserts, “Our ancestors were bewildered because they had a sense of origins—some country, some village, some family where they belonged and from which they were rent. We, on the other hand, have no such immediate sense of belonging, *only of drift*” (118; my emphasis). In discussing her work with reviewers,

Brand has been forthright about her intention to plot a text that drifts poetically and functions as an alternative to the colonizer's map:

The form, the sketches and ruminations, as early maps were, allowed me the freedom to pick up an idea and examine it in many different ways. The way it traveled was in some ways the way a poem travels. I could reach out and follow an idea. I could drop one thread and the pick up another. The form allowed the book itself to become a map to my journey for a new kind of identity and existence. (qtd. in Mavjee 28–29)

After noting that the age of map-making coincided with the slave trade, Brand explains that she wanted to fashion another sort of map: some maps “are made to places you don't know even exist—to a new place. I wanted to lift that idea of map-making. I want to live in another kind of world. In a sense, that is the map I am writing” (qtd. in Mavjee 28).

In keeping with her view that her “book is a map” (hence the title, *A Map to the Door of No Return*), Brand pays careful attention to the organization of her words on the page. Narratives, like maps, engage in tasks of spatial ordering, naming, dividing, and enclosing. The trick, for Brand, was to design a text that performs these tasks in ways that challenge rather than reinstall the maps that supported and continue to support oppressive institutions. It is no coincidence, then, that the structure of Brand's memoirs undermines any sense of a linear journey with a tangible origin and destination. For one, the text, which lacks a table of contents, offers a seemingly random collection of observations categorized under more than forty italicized headings, at least half of which are “Maps.” As it turns out, these fragments are organized on the basis of idiosyncratic associative links rather than an overarching teleological structure. As the narrator explains, “I've collected these fragments . . . disparate and sometimes only related by sound or intuition, vision, or aesthetic. I have not visited the Door of No Return, but by relying on random shards of history and unwritten memoir of descendants of those who passed through it, including me, I am constructing a map of the region” (19).

Aesthetically and politically, it is significant that both her characters and her texts are given to drifting. As she says, they “deliberately misplace directions and misread observations. They can take north for south, west for east. They can in the end impugn the whole theory of directions” (203). Even before Brand published her memoirs, a reviewer for *Quill and Quire* remarked on the tendency in her writing, particularly in the novel *In Another Place, Not Here*, to invite readers to suspend their desires for a linear narrative and “instead float with characters” (“In Another” 26). When

Joseph Clifton heard Brand read from her earlier novel, he, too, found himself spellbound by a text that, as he says, was “truly poetic in its fluidity and its mixture of politics and aesthetic” (Martin 5).

Because of its overt political engagement with plotting “a new kind of identity and existence,” Brand’s latest work makes an important contribution to the debate about belonging, nationalism, and the constitution of Canadian identity. Against the dominant Canadian narrative of home and belonging,⁸ Brand’s text focuses relentlessly on the Door of No Return, which “opens all nationalisms to their void” (49). It reflects her profound skepticism of what James Clifford terms the “old localizing strategies—by bounded community, by organic culture, by region, by center and periphery” (303).

Signalling, as it does, important shifts in debates about identity and belonging in the current transnational moment, Brand’s exploration of the aesthetics and politics of drifting raises a host of questions. Some of the most pressing questions relate to the politics of drifting, particularly, the valorization of drifting as a strategy to counter what Brand views as the unsavoury politics of belonging. Shortly after *At the Full and Change of the Moon* was published, a reviewer enquired about the novel’s celebration of Bola’s freedom, specifically how this freedom, which she characterized as “one of desire and appetite, and even childlike greed, work [s] alongside the world of politics which can be one of moral strictures, and works toward community” (Abbas 6). Arguing in defense of her character, Brand replied:

I guess I am advocating for a different sense of politics . . . not only the freedom from harm, or the freedom to control. Ultimately, politics is about pleasure I think Eros is ultimately what we have been fighting for. To express ourselves in the most lustful and pleasurable ways. When you’re fighting for or organizing towards a society that you would want to live in, it surely would be a society which is not just about making rules, but about making life pleasurable, and opening spaces. (qtd. in Abbas 6)

Brand’s argument is certainly compelling, and there is validity to the claim that her sensual and erotic writing about women is a “political act” because she writes “directly to women, not as symbols of male pleasure, but as sexual beings claiming their own pleasure” (Martin 5). Nevertheless, advocating the pursuit of pleasure and drifting as political strategies strikes me as somewhat limited, representing a compromised reaction to both slavery and sexism.

At every turn, Brand’s fictions express a longing for and, ultimately, a rejection of origins, belonging, and possession, including the potentially beneficial forms of origin, belonging, and possession associated with being part of a family and, by extension, a community. But, since, as we know, the

institution of slavery purposefully set out to destroy the bonds of family and community, then how does embracing “a politics of pleasure” that continues to minimize the claims of community and to valorize “desire and appetite, and even childlike greed,” contribute to the amelioration of black people’s lives who, to borrow Eula’s words, were “scattered with a violent randomness”? Furthermore, as Walcott observes, the estrangement of daughters from mothers is a central issue in Brand’s fiction—an issue that “sits at the heart of the question of community” (48). As we have seen, the repeated rejection of daughters by mothers functions as a marker of the devastating effect of the Middle Passage. If one of the corrosive legacies of slavery and sexism is their impact on inter-generational bonds between women, then once again it is unclear how this tragic inheritance is addressed by the fight to express oneself in “the most lustful and pleasurable ways.” Put somewhat differently, to what extent is Bola’s loss of Marie Ursule—a loss mirrored by Eula’s abandonment of her daughter over a century later (not to mention Brand’s own sense of feeling “abandoned by Marie Ursule”)—addressed by championing the politics of pleasure and embracing one’s ever-shifting desires?

One answer is that Brand’s portrait of women championing their desires breaks with the stereotypical portrayal of the mammy role, in which Black women are expected to take care of everyone else—including their own children—before taking care of themselves. Read in this way, the female characters’ pursuit of pleasure ensures that oppressive gendered and sexualized codes of behaviour are unlearned so that those who come after—the next generations—are liberated from the practices that contribute to the racial and sexual subjugation of both middle- and working-class women. This answer, however, strikes me as limited simply because Brand’s characters escape the mammy stereotype only at the cost of subscribing to the equally oppressive stereotype of the sexually promiscuous female.

In essence, Brand’s portrayals of female desire signal how individuals are positioned within particular ideological systems even as they demonstrate how these systems are exceeded by spatial, temporal, and libidinal flows and relations. Indeed, as critics observe, although Brand herself, owing to her repeated rejection of belonging, ostensibly embraces the politics of drifting, she nevertheless remains somewhat anchored as a Canadian writer. Recently, Peter Dickinson claimed that “Brand’s race, gender, and sexuality necessarily preclude full participation in national citizenship, and thus prevent her from ever ‘being’ a Canadian writer” (161). Yet, as Jason Wiens

points out, although Brand “clearly sets herself in opposition and antagonism to the Canadian cultural dominant . . . she has largely articulated this antagonism . . . through the nation’s established network of institutions, including Coach House Press, the National Film Board of Canada, and writer-in residence appointments at large, influential universities [. . .]” (3–4).

Brand, of course, would be the first to acknowledge that there is no utopian position outside societal institutions, and that, to borrow her words, we are all “corrupted by what we live, and what we have to do to get out of how we live” (qtd. in Sanders 6). Nevertheless, Brand’s insistence on tracing complex identities beyond the nation-state reflects the limitations of what Clifford terms “the old localizing strategies.” As Clifford argues, “articulations of diaspora identity reach outside the normative territory and temporality (myth/history) of the nation-state” (307). As a writer, Brand speaks from a specific place, even while she stresses what Rinaldo Walcott terms “outer-national” identifications, illustrating that each place is part of a much larger diasporic network of spatial and temporal affiliations.

Brand’s diasporic narratives reject both the model of the Euro-American modernist exile, whose desires for belonging are typically nostalgic and directed toward a lost origin—and the model of the immigrant—whose desires are reoriented toward a new home and a new national community. In effect, her drifting subjects reconfigure the trajectory and objects of the desire for belonging by forging decentered, transnational connections that are not necessarily based on the concept of a homeland or the “teleology of origin/return” (see Clifford 306). Ultimately, however, her texts do not entirely reject the notion of belonging. Although her characters remain scattered and disoriented in the wake of the Diaspora, readers are witnesses to and implicated in its legacy. In the wake of the Diaspora, a community of witnesses is formed through an act of imagination: to borrow Brand’s words, readers move “from flesh into thought.”

Just as Bola and her descendants are abandoned yet saved by Marie Ursule, the forces of rejection and expulsion associated with the Diaspora are countered by the drive “to retain, to salvage, to keep, and to pass on.” In the end, for instance, we are told that Kamena recounted his history “like a psalm,” offering this gift to Bola before “it slipped his memory” (296). Later, the narrator explains that “Bola has her own hymn, ‘Life will continue,’ she tells the children, ‘no matter what it seems, and even after that someone will remember you’” (298). As the quasi-religious references to “psalm” and “hymn” suggest, Brand’s novel implicitly retains notions of communion and community. But the self-conscious references to story-telling, memory, and

narration underscore that the community Brand has in mind is not predicated on an essentialized past. Her diasporan subjects bear traces of a past, but, as Stuart Hall reminds us, the past “is not waiting for us back there to recoup our identities against. It is always retold, rediscovered, reinvented. It has to be narrativized. We go to our own pasts through history, through memory, through desire, not as a literal fact” (58). Furnished with Brand’s fluid textual maps, readers are thus encouraged, in the literal and figurative sense, to remember and re-map complicated transnational diasporic communities—communities whose broken histories and transnational connections repeatedly challenge the bounded, progressivist narratives of nation-states.

NOTES

- 1 For instance, the description of Kamena crawling “along the horizon . . . room enough as under a bed” recalls the claustrophobia of the slave ships. As critics have noted, one of “the most striking images of the Middle Passage . . . is the tight-packing of the slave ships, an illustration often used in history textbooks and anthologies on the African American experience. . . . The injustice and brutality of tight-packing is unquestionable, the suffering and horror experienced by the slaves unimaginable” (*Black* 6).
- 2 In her memoirs, Brand speaks of her own grandfather who came “from a people whose name he could not remember.” As she says: “His forgetting was understandable; after all, when he was born the Door of No Return was hardly closed, forgetting was urgent” (223).
- 3 Eula’s nostalgic account of the absent ancestral line recalls a comment that Brand once made about her own experience. “When you grow up black anywhere in the western world,” Brand stated, “there is an uneasiness . . . an anxiety of place. It is as if there is nothing behind you” (qtd. in Zackodnick 13).
- 4 In her memoirs, Brand comments on this type of interminable journey and explicitly states that Kamena’s “unending and, as history will confirm, inevitably futile search for a homeland is the mirror of the book’s later generations—their dispersal, their scatterings to the extreme and remote corners of the world: Amsterdam, New York, Toronto. Their distraction and flights resound in him and back to him. It is their condition of being” (202–03).
- 5 In her memoirs, Brand contends that “the Black body is one of the most regulated bodies in the Diaspora. Perhaps the most regulated body is the female body, any female body. . . . By regulated I mean that there are specific societal functions which it is put to, quite outside of its own agency—functions which in fact deny and resist its agency” (37). She goes on to insist that to reclaim “the Black body from that domesticated, captive . . . space is the creative project always underway” (43).
- 6 The link established here between female bodies and water recalls the “oceanic” water imagery associated with *écriture féminine* and, in particular, the writings of Hélène Cixous. In the “Laugh of the Medusa,” for instance, Cixous writes: “We are ourselves sea, sand, coral, sea-week beaches tides, swimmers, children, waves” (260). As critics note, water, for Cixous, is “the feminine element *par excellence*,” reflecting the “comforting security of the mother’s womb” and “the endless pleasures of the polymorphously perverse child” (Moi 116–17). As in Brand’s novel, in Cixous’ writing it is “within this space that . . . [the] speaking subject is free to move from one subject position to another, or to merge oceanically with the world” (Moi 117).

- 7 Even though it promotes the fluid possibilities associated with the cartography of the Diaspora, the novel never wholly supports fantasies of transcendence. Maya, for instance, works as a prostitute. As a result, she remains complicit with the commodification of women's bodies.
- 8 The notions of home and belonging are underscored in the opening lines of Canada's national anthem: "O Canada!// Our home and native land!"
- 9 Claudine Reynaud p. 75. This tension also surfaces in Morrison's novel *Beloved*, as Reynaud observes.

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Small Furies

Beware silence
distrust stillness
things that lie beneath the surface
do not seem

Death leaps up sudden
like trout from quiet water
snatching flies mid-air
or a car over-leaping the banks
of a sidewalk
pedestrians scattered
mid-stream

“May I See Some Identification?”

Race, Borders, and Identities in *Any Known Blood*

Race isn't about skin colour. It's about social categorization.

—LAWRENCE HILL

. . . every identity is actually an identification come to light.

—DIANA FUSS

1

Our most post-identitarian moments and movements notwithstanding, identities are hardly a matter of the past. New constructions of identities and post-identities are continually wrought by historical subjects, the agents who invent or choose them, and who modify, resist, or discard them. “Unused” identities continue to exist as possible scripts, as virtual and often virulent realities until human actors put them into play, and through identification use them in practice and performance. One of the important ways of crossing borders of identity is travel, a movement I explore here with respect to “Crossing Cultures,” “Frontiers of North American Identity,”¹ and identities ascribed or self-ascribed through “race.” Identification, a transformative displacement or transposition and a form of cognitive travel, signals the crossing of borders of who we think we are, or who others think or say we are. Under the sign of “race,” however, identity, identification, and travel have worked in particularly “arresting” constellations. Through race, identity and identification were tied to pseudo-scientific laws of biology, abetting the enforced displacements and the end of free personal movement in the middle passage and in slavery, and the impeded mobility across social and economic lines ever after.

Lawrence Hill continues to devise, from a Canadian vantage point, intriguing laboratories for the study of the intricate relations between identification, identity, and race. Hill is an expert on the crossings of (borders of) identities and cultures with respect to race and language, and on the

changing processes of ascription and self-ascription that he calls “the endless dance of adjusting how we see others, how we want to be seen, and how we see ourselves” (*Black Berry* 5). In his first novel, *Some Great Thing* (1992), a black reporter with an interestingly allusive first name, Mahatma Grafton,² explores the borders of race together with divisions of language and the state of French in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Hill’s second novel, *Any Known Blood* (1997), crosses borders of racial identity and identification by travelling in time and geography across generations and the Canada-United States border. I will concentrate here on this text, together with his *Black Berry, Sweet Juice: On Being Black and White in Canada* (2001), which is partly “memoir, an examination of my own life through the prism of mixed race,” but also “includes comments and observations from the many people I interviewed of black and white ancestry” (*Black Berry* 13). Not surprisingly, one of its sections is entitled “Crossing Borders.”³

2

Identification is an act of recognition with both positive and insidious possibilities, ranging from acceptance and fame to stereotypes and defamation. Identification works from the inside as reflexive self-relation. In Diana Fuss’s words, “Identification is the psychical mechanism that produces self-recognition. . . . It operates as a mark of self-difference, opening up a space for the self to relate to itself as a self, a self that is perpetually other” (Fuss 2). Yet this phenomenological and psychological algorithm of cathexis describes but the formal side of variable binding. If “identification is the detour through the other that defines a self,” it does not “travel outside history and culture. Identification names the entry of history and culture into the subject, a subject that must bear the traces of each and every encounter with the external world” (Fuss 2–3).

Literary texts have time and again thematized one such “entry of history and culture into the subject,” the moment of racial identification. The entry into race has often been rendered, for instance, from the perspective of a child in biographical or seemingly biographical texts. It appears thus at the beginning of Du Bois’ *The Souls of Black Folk*, in the shock of recognition experienced by James Weldon Johnson’s young protagonist in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, or when Zora Neale Hurston’s Janie as a child does not recognize her photographic likeness in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Another limit of racial identification and recognition is thematized through racial passing, as, for example, again in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored*

Man, in Nella Larsen's *Passing*, Faulkner's *Light in August*, Philip Roth's *The Human Stain*, or Henry Louis Gates's portrayal of a longtime *New York Times* literary critic, "The Passing of Anatole Broyard."⁴ Passing highlights "race" as social convention—epitomized in the arbitrariness of the one-drop rule—which here leads to disidentification from unwanted ascriptions. In Anthony Appiah's words: "It is because ascription of racial identities—the process of applying the label to people, including ourselves—is based on more than intentional identification that there can be a gap between what a person ascriptively is and the racial identity he performs: it is this gap that makes passing possible" (*Color Conscious* 79).

Appiah reviews extensive evidence against the existence of factual "race" in the first part of his long essay "Race, Culture, Identity: Misunderstood Connections," entitled "Analysis: Against Races." In the second part of the essay, however, entitled "Synthesis: For Racial Identities," he observes that "the label works despite the absence of an essence. . . . In fact, we might argue that racial identities could persist even if nobody believed in racial essences, provided both ascription and identification continue" (*Color Conscious* 81–82). He quotes in this context W.E.B. Du Bois' reflection in his 1940 autobiography *Dusk of Dawn*:

But the physical bond is least and the badge of color relatively unimportant save as badge; the real essence of this kinship is its social heritage of slavery; the discrimination and insult; and this heritage binds together not simply the children of Africa, but extends through yellow Asia and into the South Seas. It is this unity that draws me to Africa. (qtd. Appiah 75)

Racial labels for Appiah are socially constructed signifiers that lack an essence yet possess reality in that they have social and psychological effects. With Ian Hacking, Appiah refers to this reality as "dynamic nominalism": "numerous kinds of human beings and human acts come into being hand in hand with our invention of the categories labelling them" (Hacking, "Making Up People," qtd. in Appiah 78). As Appiah suggests, such labels can be ascribed from the outside, but also motivate psychological self-identification.

[They] shape the ways people conceive of themselves and their projects. In particular, the labels can operate to shape . . . "identification": the process through which an individual intentionally shapes her projects—including her plans for her own life and her conception of the good—by reference to available labels, available identities. (78)

Lawrence Hill lays out a similar position in *Black Berry, Sweet Juice*, where he refers, like Appiah, to scientific accounts of genetic variation to conclude that there "is no biological difference between black people and white people. One cannot use genetics to explain race" (201).⁵ Despite this affirma-

tion, however, again like Appiah, he does not negate racial self-identification in response to socially constructed racial realities:

You can have a white parent and still be considered black, but you can never have a black parent and be considered white. Unless you are so light-skinned and devoid of black facial features that you can pass for white, you don't get to be white in this society if you have black parents. It ain't allowed. You'll be reminded of your "otherness" more times than you can shake a stick at. This is one of the reasons why I self-identify as black. Attempts at pleasant symmetry, as in "half white, half black," trivialize to my eye the meaning of being black. (41–42)

Yet in addition, Hill, who is born in Canada but whose parents immigrated from the United States in the 1950s, also notes in particular certain differences in this respect between Canada and the United States:

Canadians are quick to point out what we of mixed race are not—we are not White, and we are not Black—but they don't tell us what we are. This is the quintessential Canada: the True North, Proud, and Vague. What interests me is that, in recent years, it has become possible to define oneself in one's own terms. . . . Growing up, I was aware that Canada provided me with a little maneuvering space that my American cousins did not have. For example, I didn't have the weight of a legally sanctioned United States school system telling me that I had to attend this particular school because I was black. Unlike my cousins, I had at least some room to concoct my own identity, declare it, test it out, see how it flew out there in my world. This, I think, is what still defines Canada today for a mixed-race person. There is some wiggle room. (228–29)

Lawrence Hill's *Any Known Blood* (1997) unfolds identification, in Appiah's sense, in considerable complexity, using and transforming to some extent materials and incidents from his own family history. Hill's protagonist, Langston Cane V, tries to work out how to conceive of himself, his projects, and indeed his conception of the good, in relation to available labels of race and identity. His identifications at first travel and pass across lines of racial identity; since "passing over" his identity delivers only the ambivalent downside of double consciousness without its potential multiple affirmation, he travels across geographical borders that separate different mappings of available identities, partially in order to disambiguate his identifications. In addition, *Any Known Blood* also explores how identification crosses lines of identity both as ascription of identity by others and as self-identification (or disidentification) from the inside.

3

Any Known Blood engages issues of racial identification and "mixed race"⁶ from the title and the epigraphs on. Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* provides the first epigraph: "Everybody having a known trace of

Negro blood in his veins—no matter how far back it was acquired—is classified as a Negro. No amount of white ancestry, except one hundred percent, will permit entrance to the white race.” The second epigraph sounds Langston’s name and filiation by citing Langston Hughes’s poem, “Cross”:

My old man died in a fine big house
My ma died in a shack
I wonder where I’m gonna die,
Being neither white nor black?

Whether the cross of *Being Neither Black nor White yet Both* (as Werner Sollors’s title puts it by reversing Hughes’s sequence) means crucifixion or distinction remains a complex question in Hill’s novel. Langston’s surname evokes Jean Toomer’s *Cane*—co-opted against Toomer’s race-ambivalent will by Alain Locke for the signature Harlem Renaissance anthology *The New Negro* (see Lindberg), and calls up Toomer’s own pun or misspelling *Cane / Cain* (Toomer 145). Hill decides to have none other than Frederick Douglass employ this pun when he meets the protagonist’s forebear, Langston Cane I (475). Yet the novel’s first chapter, which opens with the theme of passing and various conflicted or ambivalent identifications from within and without, also sounds a different note: “I have the rare distinction—a distinction that weighs like a wet life jacket, but that I sometimes float to great advantage—of not appearing to belong to any race, but of seeming like a contender for many” (1). A spirit rebellious both against his black father and against prejudice, Langston Cane V has been playing a “game of multiple racial identities” by identifying himself to others as “part anything people were running down” (2), be it Jewish, Cree, or Zulu. When he does settle on one identity in his application for a Government speech-writer position for which “Only racial minorities need apply,” he successfully claims the position as Algerian.

Among his motivations seem to be certain joys of passing (that can exist despite the anxieties of discovery),⁷ his interest in Canadian officialdom’s increasing reliance on racial self-identification, and finally a severe dose of disidentification. Hill’s protagonist begins his narrative by relating with a certain relish several episodes in which he passes by self-identifying as member of another minority, including the already mentioned job application in which he wants “to test my theory that nobody would challenge my claim to racial identity” (2).⁸ His interest in expanding his freedom of self-definition and self-identification seems particularly motivated, however, by the constraining expectations of his domineering father. He has thus

relegated to some psychic limbo a black identity that Langston Cane IV has repeatedly impressed upon him with a long list of family achievements. The pressure is clearly registered: “It has been said that I have come down in the world. Down from an unbroken quartet of forebears, all, like me, named Langston Cane. A most precipitous descent, my father mumbled, when he heard about my latest job” (3). In contrast to his unprincipled speech-writing for a politician whom he despises, “Conviction ruled the lives of my ancestors. They all became doctors, or church ministers. By my age—thirty-eight—they already had their accomplishments noted in the *Afro-American*, the *Oakville Standard*, the *Toronto Times*, or the *Baltimore Sun*” (3).

Passing is for Langston V also a form of resistance to this kind of internalized threat of other-determined identification, a threat that would seem to preclude his own freedom of assent. His reasons for testing this freedom in crossing lines of identification, and his pursuit of the potentials for creative subversion implicit in these crossings, exceed classical motivations. Instead of seeking avoidance of racial oppression outside the family, *misidentification* is driven here by *disidentification*⁹ in response to family dynamics: an aversion, in this case, not to racial identity, but to his father’s control over his identity through the insistence on racial identity.¹⁰

This disidentification reveals itself as such at a critical limit that will precipitate its demise. After a particularly painful reminder of the disappointments his strategies cause an old friend, Langston finds himself almost “unintentionally” leaking a government proposal to abolish human rights legislation in Ontario. While he swears upon the memory of the first Langston Cane (14) that his sudden action was neither planned nor the “courageous blow” (15) reported in the papers, he gets both himself and his minister fired with a doctored speech. Despite the fact that he seeks to downplay the importance of his deed and does not seem interested in taking any credit for an act that, for once, would garner the approval of his father, he certainly *has* written the speech. The moment reveals a decisive identification from within that suddenly destabilizes and then derails his habitual disidentification and previous playful passing. Indeed, in the logic of identification we have seen Appiah explore with respect to racial labels, the moment changes all shapes and shapings of his future projects.

In response to his conflicted (dis)identifications, similarly conflicted “recognitions” mark his last day at the office. A surprise visit by his father creates a double outing: the father learns of his passing, and his boss of his dissimulated race. At the same time, the puzzled minister receives a standing

ovation from the Canadian Association of Black Journalists, for a passage in the doctored speech he delivers but fails to understand (17). Langston Cane V thus receives, incognito, recognition for “his” speech and the identification it reveals. At such borders of identity, he decides to travel.

4

Langston Cane V understands his sacking as chance and challenge. Involuntarily freed from writing speeches for others, he now becomes a writer in search of his own identity and family history. In the process, like all other Langston Cane before him, he crosses the boundary between Canada and the United States.¹¹ His geographical and generational boundary crossing into the “four family legends” (4) of his namesake ancestors also takes him across different mappings of “mixed race” in Canada and the United States. In this respect, Langston Cane V’s experiences resemble very much those in Hill’s self-portraiture in *Black Berry, Sweet Juice: On Being Black and White in Canada*:¹²

my own experience of race, including my concept of my own racial identity, is shaded quite differently from that of my parents. They were both born and raised in the United States, and their racial identities were clearly delineated all their lives. The America of their youth and early adulthood was replete with laws that banned interracial marriages and upheld segregation in every domain of public life. . . . In the United States, there was never any doubt that my father was first and foremost a black man. Or that my mother was a white woman. And there is no question that, had my siblings and I been raised in the United States, we would have been identified—in school, on the street, in community centers, among friends—as black.

But my parents threw their unborn children a curve ball. They came to Toronto right after they married. . . .

Learning that I wasn’t white, however, wasn’t the same as learning that I was black. Indeed, for the longest time I didn’t learn what I was—only what I wasn’t. In this strange and unique society that was Canada, I was allowed to grow up in a sort of racial limbo. People knew what I wasn’t—white or black—but they sure couldn’t say what I was. (*Black Berry* 4–5)

This borderland of possible identifications is what Langston Cane V also sets out to explore, heading south in search of family roots in Baltimore, where his aunt lives and two previous Langston Cane were ministers of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Juxtaposed with his trip south are flashbacks of his father’s crossing north after being an American soldier in World War II, which “he later said was enough to make any black soldier hate America” (*Any Known Blood* 62). Canada-United States difference with respect to racial difference features

prominently in these opposite trajectories of father and son. One of the father's often-told stories concerns a rent refusal that launched his civil rights career in Canada. From a landlord's reaction to the mixed race couple at the door, "Langston instantly knew that they would not get the flat . . . but Langston sensed that it would come in a distinct way. This wasn't the United States. Nobody would swear at him, or wave a gun. Langston waited for the refusal, Canadian-style" (35). Indeed, racism here comes packaged in (initially) polite formality.

By contrast, while his father had travelled north into politeness and ambiguity, his son's trip south moves into disambiguation. Describing his first experiences in Baltimore, several episodes at the beginning of Chapter 7 mirror in reverse some of his father's experiences upon arrival in Toronto. Whereas his father failed to find a black neighbourhood in Toronto, Langston Cane V's perception registers immediately segregated geography in Baltimore: "The street switched as quickly as a TV channel" (93). In his apartment search, racism is as prominent as in his father's story, but here it is open (94); and while his father confidently discounts the probability of a threatening gun in Toronto, his son expects one from the first squeegee-at-red-traffic-light-moment in Baltimore; he promptly does walk into a drive-by shooting, and is mugged to boot. While the shooting is not aimed at Langston Cane V or directly caused by his race, Hill here clearly marks a different scene.

In his orchestration of these cross-border stories, Hill comments in interesting ways on a pervasive African Canadian theme, the importance of African American culture north of the border. In his essay "Borrowed Blackness," André Alexis discusses the presumption of an archetypality of African American experience, evinced in an interlocutor's opinion that "no experience I might have in Canada could bring me closer to an understanding of real Black experience, that black Canadians were not Black enough" (17). George Elliott Clarke, in his by now canonical essay "Contesting a Model Blackness," is as critical of any notion of a "model blackness" as Alexis, although the impact of African American culture on African Canadian realities seems as ubiquitous as that of the United States in general on Canada. Clarke quotes Diane Jacobs's "On Becoming Black Canadian," a poem that both contests the ideology of an insignificant African Canadian experience and confirms some of the catalytic potential of border crossing: "Strangely it was in the U.S.A./ that I truly became a black Canadian./ In an attempt to rebut American Blacks' assumption/ that being Canadian was an aberration./That Canadian Blacks had no history" (71-72,

qtd. in Clarke 41). In Hill's novel, Langston Cane V's disidentified self at first seems to have taken the advice given to Alexis, "that in order to discover my 'Black self' I should move to the United States" (Alexis).¹³ Yet Hill's novel as a whole turns in quite different directions. Hill's text, an example of historiographic metafiction that delivers cross-cultural experiences through the writer Langston Cane V (who works on the novel we read) and uses or mentions writings by Langston Canes I–IV, is packed with both actual and imagined aspects of Black Canadian history. Searching for his cross-border family roots, Hill's protagonist certainly also presents African American history, and encounters those positive qualities of African American culture that Clarke describes as prominent in African Canadian perceptions: "For African Canadians, *African America* signifies resistance, vitality, joy, 'nation,' community, grace, art, pride, clout, spirituality, and *soul*" (Clarke, "Contesting" 39). Yet Hill does not romanticize any such thing as *African America*; his engagement with aspects of African American culture is creative rather than imitative, and includes, as we will see, some playful Canadian re-appropriation of history as well as negative aspects of *African America*. Significantly, in one incident he has his Canadian border-crossing protagonist, in search of family history and perhaps of a model blackness, become a model himself. Because of his behaviour in the shooting incident, the congregation of the Baltimore African Methodist Episcopal Church perceives him as exemplary, model community member—an identification so desired by his father, and worthy perhaps of his ancestor Baltimore church ministers, Langston Cane II and III. Yet the narrator finds not only documents about their achievements, but also a manuscript by the first Langston Cane, a much more ambiguous figure and questionable candidate for identification than the subsequent three Langston Canes, as Langston V has already learned from documents. This multiple border-crosser is surrounded by family history rumours: "The link between my ancestor and John Brown" says the narrator, "seemed farfetched, but it had always fascinated me" (11).

5

With the fictive manuscript of Langston Cane I (429–94), Hill invents a fugitive slave narrative that is reminiscent in some episodes of the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself* (1845). Like Douglass, for instance, Langston Cane I thanks his owner for instructing him by interdiction about the forbidden pleasures and activities he will now make sure and seek out (435–36); more importantly, as we will see,

Hill also incorporates some lines from *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1882) in which Douglass recounts his meeting with Brown shortly before Harpers Ferry. Yet as border-crossing account, the narrative of the first Langston Cane echoes in particular some of those in Benjamin Drew's *The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*.

Travelling the Underground Railroad in 1850, Langston Cane I crosses boundaries of legalized racial ascription, first between the Southern United States and the North; here, however, he remains under the threat of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act (443). His further journey takes him across Lake Ontario and into the freedom of "Canaan" (436)/ Canada West, hidden in the boat of Oakville Captain Robert Wilson, an actual Underground Railroad conductor re-envisioned by Hill. Yet in a move that perplexes his descendant Langston Cane V, he then doubles back to turn south again: "To escape as he did . . . getting into Canada only to turn around nine years later and go back. Why? Could he possibly have joined John Brown's Raid? It was hard to imagine a fugitive slave settling comfortably in Oakville and then turning around and heading right back south into slave territory" (62). One of the reasons for his leaving Oakville, it turns out, is an accusation of bigamy against him. Yet his crossing back into Southern slave territory also finds an explanation as a raid on "race." In this border-crossing, he travels across boundaries of geographical and legal difference to change the meaning of race not only in his own life, but once and for all in North America: he is seen last on a wagon with John Brown, shortly before the raid on Harpers Ferry.

Without diminishing the historical importance of Brown's actions, Hill's fictive portrayal also echoes less positive contemporary accounts of Brown. When he appears on a fictive recruitment trip in Oakville,¹⁴ Captain Robert Wilson throws him out of his house: "Spittle flew from Brown's lips. . . . He scared the wits out of my friend, Paul. . . . Captain Wilson spoke first. . . . You're living in a fantasy, and you don't even know it. I believe you are mad" (472). The John Brown portrayed by Hill proves also particularly insensitive to important United States-Canada differences¹⁵ (Hill thus seems to extend the critique of a model blackness to a critique of a white model resistance to slavery and racism): "'The bondage of men. It is a blight upon our great nation.' 'Your great nation,' Captain Wilson said." Reminded by Brown of past slavery in Canada,¹⁶ Wilson asks him "not to patronize me in my own country and in my own house" (471). Langston Cane I initially follows Brown nonetheless. He remains even undeterred when Frederick Douglass shows himself as skeptical as the Canadian Captain about the outcome of

Brown's plans, and denials—like the historical Douglass—Brown's famous request (which Hill takes from Douglass's *Life and Times* [Part 2, Ch. X]): "When I strike, the bees will begin to swarm, and I shall want you to help hive them" (*Any Known Blood* 476). And while Langston Cane I joins John Brown during the preparations at the Kennedy Farm and then in the raid on Harpers Ferry, he will, at the last possible moment, decide like Douglass. He escapes before it is too late what Douglass once called the "perfect steel-trap" of Harpers Ferry.¹⁷

Hill's plot decision is hardly motivated by the need to have the founder of his family saga survive for it to continue: the founder has fathered, at this point in the novel, not one but three Langston Canes II (465). Yet his survival and escape allow for his tale to be told with the effect of heightened authenticity that comes with a first person point of view. Such authenticity was one of the most sought-after qualities in the slave narratives that attested, for predominantly white, northern abolitionist audiences, to the horrors of slavery and, in their written form, to the former slaves' capacity of authorship and literacy that in many arguments about slavery stood as the litmus test even of humanity (Gates, *Figures* 21, *Signifying* 129–30). In addition, Hill's decision was also suggested by available sources. Fittingly, he draws for the details of the raid on the manuscript of the Pennsylvania-born black Canadian Osborne Perry Anderson, who survived, like Langston Cane I, the "trap" of Harpers Ferry.¹⁸ With the entire "masterful" (Clarke, *Odysseys* 312) journal and slave narrative of Langston Cane I, Hill thus adds a particularly significant genre to this also genre-wise border crossing, historiographic novel (that includes long epistolary passages and newspaper accounts), which links it intertextually to the primordial black tradition I have already referenced.¹⁹

Another significant reason for Hill's choices at this point of the novel, however, surfaces in his review of a work that appears one year after *Any Known Blood*, Russell Banks' *Cloudsplitter* (1998). Banks' novel is a portrayal of John Brown written from the point of view of Brown's son, Owen, who also escaped Harpers Ferry. Both narrators initially follow Brown, yet leave the scene at crucial moments (*Cloudsplitter* 744–46, *Any Known Blood* 491) and live to tell the tale. While Hill's narrator, like the historical Osborne Anderson, comes to his own conclusions and makes his own decision (Du Bois 200; in the case of Langston Cane I it comes earlier than in Anderson's case, and as a consequence of a clear rejection of one of Brown's decisions [*Any Known Blood* 489]); the Owen Brown conceived by Russell Banks remains caught to the end in the trap, not of Harpers Ferry, but of his

father's will. Ordered to guard an abandoned school house outside Harpers Ferry to arm insurgent slaves that he knows won't come, he finally acts against one of his father's instructions: to keep silent about Douglass's refusal to mobilize support for the raid (741–42). When his companions decide to disclose this information to the other raiders, Owen neither stops nor joins them. He obeys what he is convinced is his father's will, who "does not want me to save him" (744). Where Hill's *Langston Cane* moves quickly across boundaries of definition and decision, Banks's Owen Brown remains locked: "For a long while, as if I could not, I did not move" (745). Although he feels for a moment "unexpectedly—free" after having cast aside "the heavy steel manacles and chains" of his father's will, he ponders the freedom of his will and subsequent actions with abiding ambivalence: "But were my actions from then on those of a free man? I cannot say" (746).

Hill's review of *Cloudsplitter* focuses from the beginning on the question of point of view. Comparing Banks's choice to that of Faulkner in "Barn Burning," Hill observes that Banks has "chosen to tell the story from the vantage point of the main character's son, Owen," which "brings the reader within intimate reach of . . . the gap between a man's public victories and private failures" ("Gory"). And within this question of literary technique emerges for Hill the issue that we have seen to loom large in *Langston Cane* V's predicaments of identity: the issue of generational position and identification. "What emerges from Owen's first-person account," Hill asserts, "is a sad memoir of how he was unable to create a life for himself under the shadow of a domineering, charismatic father." While Owen Brown has escaped Harpers Ferry, his identity remains strangely shackled to the internalized will and law of the father. "And what a will John Brown had," Hill writes. He concludes his review: "*Cloudsplitter* . . . illustrates that people of great accomplishments are not necessarily great people. Banks deftly dramatizes John Brown's commitment to unshackling African-Americans, and at the same time laments that, in the process, he destroyed the lives of those around him."

The consequences of "race" and slavery control the life of Owen Brown as they have controlled that of his father (and of an entire nation headed for civil war). Yet Hill's *Langston Cane* I, although his identity and freedom would seem to be circumscribed even tighter because he is black, negotiates a certain freedom nonetheless, despite the realities of racial ascription that dictate many aspects of his life. He not only succeeds in crossing boundaries drawn by North American political and racial geography, but also defies the

“paternal” authority of John Brown, and an identification that would ascribe him the role of victim in the very process of resistance to victimization and American slavery.

6

Langston Cane V, reading the manuscript while in search of his own identity, ponders his affinity with this crosser of multiple borders. He notes a certain identification, motivated by what seems to be the indeterminate status of his ancestor with respect to identities and boundaries. If he feels “strangely connected to Langston I,” it is because he loves “the fact that he didn’t fit in. I love him for his mixture of weakness and dignity” (497). His aunt Millicent (Mill) Cane, however, seems conversant with the pitfalls of romanticizing models: “Don’t make a hero out of him” (497). Yet she agrees with Langston Cane V’s self-identification: “you are right about him not fitting in. If you ask me, the man had a loose chromosome that skipped a few generations and turned up in you.’ She had a point” (497).

Langston Cane V’s “not fitting in”—his relationship to boundaries of identity—is intimately connected with the strange “bondage and freedom” of his disidentification. He lives with both a certain freedom and a paternal trap. “My father,” he says “has placed so many demands on me—get a doctorate, get a job, hold on to your wife, have children—that I have subconsciously arranged to fail at every one of them” (331). One more of these demands concerns racial identification, which he sabotages by passing, a choice made possible by his being “neither white nor black,” to quote Langston Hughes’ words again from Hill’s epigraph. With his protagonist’s later self-identification as “zebra incorporated” (400), however, Hill reverses the double negative of this phrase.

In his 1994 essay “Zebra: Growing up Black and White in Canada,” Hill reveals that his own father used to call him “zebra” (44). While “Zebra sounds faintly ridiculous,” says Hill, he prefers it by far to a term like mulatto, which “reduces me to half-status—neither Black nor White” (47).²⁰ Instead of this double negative, Hill arrives at a double affirmation in this essay, after an itinerary across different cultures and with several twists and turns of identification. In a passage later transformed into an episode in his first novel, *Some Great Thing*, he relates his desire during a visit in Niger to distance himself from his white Québécois friends: “Their presence made me feel White. And that summer, with an intensity that I had never anticipated, I wanted to be Black. Welcomed and loved as a brother” (“Zebra”

46). People in Niger, however, “appeared to see me as White”; and his Québécois friends remain by his side when he is ill. He leaves the hospital, as he says, “a changed man”: “I discovered that bringing my White friends into conversation with Africans was more rewarding than hoarding new friendships to the exclusion of the Quebecers. I knew what I was, and I felt it frankly. I was both Black and White, and this was irrevocable, whether other people noticed my colours or not. Years have since passed, but I still feel that way. I’m a man of two races” (47).

Hill relates the possibility of this identification here to his Canadian upbringing: “I didn’t grow up under apartheid, or slavery, or racial segregation. I grew up in a country in which I had a say in what I would be. That meant periods of ambiguity. It meant confusion. It meant anxiety. But it also meant the opportunity to come full circle and to decide, years after my father first poked me in the ribs and teasingly called me a zebra, that I truly was both Black and White” (“Zebra” 47). We have also seen, however, that Hill self-identifies as black in his later *Black Berry, Sweet Juice: On Being Black and White in Canada* (41–2). “When you are black and white, negotiating racial identity is like going through a revolving door” (41), he writes, and concludes the book with an emphatic re-affirmation of his black self-identification: “I am black because I say so, because I feel it, and own it. It is not the only thing I am. . . . But having seen issues of race and identity raise their heads in North America, I know that when the census form comes around, I’ll mark myself down as black” (239).²¹ That identification, however, will not limit his explorations. These last words of the conclusion come after an “Introduction” in which Hill summarizes the project in *Black Berry* and suggests that his narratives will continue to travel across boundaries and contexts of identity: “Nevertheless, I think the sands of identity are shifting once again in my own heart” (12). Motivated by his mother’s family pictures, he announces another “journey,” this time to the white side of his family, which would again take him south into the United States. If Hill explores a number of boundaries of identity in *Black Berry*, clearly there are more to come.

Any Known Blood also ends with another crossing of the border. Langston Cane V’s return trip home to Canada, his car full of people of different complexion, provokes the “customary” question: “May I see some identification?” (504). The Canadian guard, requesting and receiving border declarations of identity, eventually waves them through with the last words of the novel: “Have a safe trip home, folks” (505). The identifications and voyages

of this *nostos*, however, are all complex border crossings. For Langston's American lover Annette, who passes the border without having to show identification, this "would be a trial visit" (504). For Yoyo, the black refugee reporter from Cameroon who had satirized Canadian mores in *Some Great Thing*, and in this novel goes to work on the United States, it is also an undocumented trip. He crosses the border to reconnect with his love interest introduced also in the previous novel, H el ene Savoie.²² Langston's aunt Millicent (Mill) Cane returns to Canada to rejoin her childhood friend Aberdeen and her own brother, re-crossing a line she had drawn with respect to Langston Cane IV's mixed race marriage.²³ At the border, she (re)claims not only her actual Canadian citizenship, but also all other travellers in the car as her family.²⁴ Her act—in which necessity proves yet again the mother of invention—symbolically and practically has more integrative power than the laws of a country whose official she thus deceives at the border. Her "conducting" on this (rail)road trip permits Annette and Yoyo to cross into Canada, and is achieved by her identification of, and with, a "family" that appears of many stripes and colours in Hill's description of Mill's earlier, first "adoption" of this family: "There was Yoyo, who was as dark as dark got, and a good deal darker than Mill. There was Annette, who was of a medium complexion, and then there was me—Zebra Incorporated" (400).

Yet while Hill ends this novel with a border official wishing this group "a safe trip home," he makes it also clear that there is no unproblematic Canadian "national" family (or model) available for homecoming. In an article entitled "Black Like Us," he writes: "Canada is not nearly as integrated as we like to think." Instead, as he demonstrates in virtually all of his writings, there are stories about black Canadian history and lives to tell. The summary of "Black Like Us" states emphatically: "Let's celebrate our own stories during Black History Month, says Canadian novelist Lawrence Hill, not those from south of the border."²⁵ Hill himself hardly objects to "American content" *per se* in the films he discusses here, but among other things to the way they are received by Canadian audiences; reiterating a familiar problematic, Hill worries "that Canadians often develop a second-hand, borrowed impression about what it means to be black in Canada from the American experience."

In Hill's own stories, as we have seen, identity and identification certainly involve "crossing cultures, travel, and the frontiers of North American identity." Partially because he draws on his own experience and family history, these stories also speak about the United States. This does not

mean, however, that they are not Canadian stories, or imitate a “model blackness.” They are centrally concerned with important versions of African Canadian experience, whether they deal with Canadian-born characters like Langston Cane V or immigrant experiences like those of previous generations.²⁶ The story of Harpers Ferry revisited is a prime example. It shows Langston Cane V in the process of searching and writing part of a family history—certainly an integral part of one’s identity—that has much in common with that of Lawrence Hill. In the process, Hill uses a perspective on Harpers Ferry that owes much to the account of the Canadian Osborne Perry Anderson, which has otherwise been routinely relied upon to tell the story as American only, with often nary a note for Canada. Hill reappropriates it as an African Canadian narrative in his multi-storied imagining of one major strand of Black Canadian history. If Harpers Ferry affords Hill a crossing, he has return fare in his pocket.

NOTES

- 1 This article developed from a paper presented at the conference “Crossing Cultures: Travel and the Frontiers of North American Identity” at the Institute for North American Studies, University of Gröningen, Netherlands, May 19–21, 2003.
- 2 Mahatma barely avoids “Euripides Homer,” proposed by his father, who sees him obviously destined for “some great thing,” yet objected to by his mother, whose veto extends to both Greek and “Negro pride names” but fails to include other great race leaders (*Some Great Thing* 49–50).
- 3 Hill’s other books to date are *Trials and Triumphs: The Story of African Canadians* (1993) and *Women of Vision: The Story of the Canadian Women’s Association, 1951–76* (1996).
- 4 For a wide-ranging discussion see Sollors, and in particular the chapter “Passing; or, Sacrificing a *Parvenu*” (246–84).
- 5 See Appiah, “Uncompleted Argument,” and *Color Conscious* 69; Hill quotes comments by the French geneticist Albert Jacquard about the concept of race: “The reason why the concept is not valid is well known. If a genetic inheritance is to acquire a certain originality, if it is to distinguish itself significantly from that of neighbouring groups, it has to remain in complete isolation for a very long period That kind of isolation can exist in the case of animals, but is barely conceivable for a species as nomadic and as keenly curious as ours The proportion of the total genetic diversity of the human species that can be put down to differences between the four traditional ‘races’ is only 7–8 per cent. In the case of differences between nations within these races, it is also only 7–8 per cent, while the remaining 85 per cent is due to differences between groups belonging to the same nation. In other words, the essential differences are not between groups, but contained within them. The concept of race consequently has so little content that the word becomes meaningless and should be eradicated from our vocabulary” (qtd. in Hill, *Black Berry* 202). See also Rotman or Cooper et al. for scientific discussions that take the recent mapping of the human genome into account.

- 6 Subsequent to his discussion of “race” in *Black Berry, Sweet Juice*, Hill extends his comments there also to “mixed race,” which thus is also under erasure: “If ‘race’ is in itself a meaningless term, then so is ‘mixed race.’ I have used the term ‘mixed race’ all my life, but now see it as an utter absurdity, even as I use it in this book” (202).
- 7 Passing may evoke that “feeling of elation and exultation” Sollors ascribes to “an experience of living as a spy who crosses a significant boundary and sees the world anew from a changed vantage point, heightened by the double consciousness of his subterfuge. Thus persons who pass may enjoy their roles as tricksters who play, as does [James Weldon Johnson’s] ‘ex-colored man,’ a ‘capital joke’ on society” (253; cf. 268).
- 8 Langston’s job, advertised by a fictional “Ontario Ministry of Wellness” to “promote employment equity in the public service” (*Any Known Blood* 2), seems modelled on the actual Ontario *Employment Equity Act*, introduced in the early 1990s under Premier Bob Rae. Hill asks in *Black Berry*: “And just how would a person qualify to be considered, say, black? Self-definition” (209). Hill also observes about the definition of an “African Nova Scotian elector,” introduced in 2000 under the amended *Nova Scotia Education Act*: “Self-definition is emerging as a key way to define one’s identity. . . . In speaking with . . . a senior official with the Nova Scotia Department of Education, I noted that the government had basically concluded a black person was any person who calls himself or herself a black person, and I asked whether anyone had considered advancing a more specific definition of blackness. ‘We weren’t going to go down that road,’ he said wryly” (*Black Berry* 210). Hill cites a 2001 court decision to similar effect with respect to Métis self-identification, and comments on the “absurdity of rigid racial categorization” that defined the legal Indian status of women by that of their husband under the federal Indian Act until 1985. Native women thus lost their legal status when marrying a non-Indian; and since status Indians could not vote in federal elections until 1960, “any non-Indian woman who married an Indian lost the right to vote” (*Black Berry* 204–5).
- 9 Fuss speaks of disidentification with reference to what Judith Butler calls disavowed identities: “What at first may appear to be refused identification, Butler proposes, might in some cases more accurately be termed a disavowed one—an identification that has already been made and denied in the unconscious. A disidentification, in other words, may actually represent ‘an identification that one fears to make only because one has already made it’” (Fuss 7, quoting Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 112). Butler also refers to such disavowed identities as abject, although I find Julia Kristeva’s different understanding of the abject particularly useful. In *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Kristeva discusses the abject as something that cannot be permitted to be constituted as object, which then could be negated and pushed into the unconscious; rather, the abject is physically refused by the body before it crosses the threshold of thetic constitution (1–7). In this sense, Langston’s disidentification is a disavowed identity floating between consciousness and the unconscious, but not abjection.
- 10 Relations between father and son suffer from similar pressures in Hill’s *Some Great Thing*: “By the time he is a teenager, Mahatma tunes Ben out. Despite the lectures about discrimination on the railway, the struggle to unionize porters, black pride, Martin Luther King and Mohandas K. Gandhi, Mahatma learns little more of these things than how to shut them out” (*Some Great Thing* 46).
- 11 Hill’s decision to write a multigenerational novel in search of identity or, perhaps better, the possibilities of identification, ranges his work alongside other recent Canadian novels that chronicle diasporic displacements over several generations and conceive of the unwritten stories of lives lived “elsewhere.” One might think for instance of Dionne Brand’s stunning *At the Full and Change of the Moon* (1999), or Alistair MacLeod’s *No Great Mischiefs* (1999).

- 12 There are many similarities but also significant differences between the Lawrence Hill of *Black Berry* and Langston Cane V. Hill's father, "Daniel Grafton Hill III . . . son of a minister of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, American soldier during the Second World War, sociologist . . . human rights pioneer . . ." (*Black Berry* 37–38) shares, apart from the profession, all of these qualities with Langston Cane IV. The differing generational numbering may be the result of Hill's decision to invent the additional—and as we will see, crucial—Langston Cane I. Yet it also points to a different generational situation that Hill explores in his novel with respect to passing. Langston Cane V's options and predicaments vis-à-vis passing would be closer to those of Hill's children than to his own; in *Black Berry*, he writes: "Passing for white would never have tempted my father, even if his skin had been light enough for him to try. I might have been able to get away with it here and there, but I could never have pulled it off completely. And like my dad [but unlike Langston Cane V], I've never been tempted, either. My children, however, won't have to be tempted. They're going to have a hard enough time asserting their blackness and getting people to believe it" (*Black Berry* 39). In the novel, it is indeed not generation IV, but Langston Cane of generation V who wants his "race clearly marked" on his trip in the United States, and who has to contend with comments like "You're pushing white, son. Pushing awful hard (*Any Known Blood* 123)" and "Ain't there enough white churches where you all come from?" (125).
- 13 Alexis also refers to one of the most cited exchanges on the question of race and nation when he remarks parenthetically: "Of course, the question whether 'black experience tout court' exists at all is the question. The disagreements between Leopold Senghor and Richard Wright at the first conference on Negritude are a challenge to the idea that a shared race is enough to overcome differences of language, culture and history." See for example Fanon's "On National Culture" (*Wretched*, especially 215–16).
- 14 In 1858, Brown went to stay with Harriet Tubman at St. Catherines, and then to Ingersoll, Hamilton, Chatham, and Toronto (Du Bois 148–49), and returned briefly in 1859. At the 1858 Chatham meeting, a constitution was read and adopted (Du Bois 154); the *Provisional Constitution and Ordinances for the People of the United States* was printed later that year in Hamilton (Winks 268n77).
- 15 There are factual antecedents for this portrayal. Du Bois quotes (via Martin R. Delany) a member of the 1858 Chatham convention: "One Evening the question came up as to what flag should be used; our English subjects, who had been naturalized, said they would never think of fighting under the hated 'Stars and Stripes.' . . . But Brown said the old flag was good enough for him. . . . He declared emphatically that he would not give up the Stars and Stripes" (Du Bois 152; see also 154).
- 16 Under John Graves Simcoe, Upper Canada adopted legislation to abolish slavery gradually, although it did not free any slaves. Slavery remained legal in British North America until the emancipation of slaves in the British Empire, legislated in 1833 and effective August 1, 1834 (See Winks, *The Blacks in Canada* 96–113).
- 17 Douglass writes in *Life and Times*: "I told him [Brown], and these were my words, that all his arguments, and all his descriptions of the place, convinced me that he was going into a perfect steel-trap, and that once in he would never get out alive; that he would be surrounded at once and escape would be impossible" (Part 2, Ch. VIII).
- 18 Du Bois calls Anderson's *A Voice from Harpers Ferry* "The best account of the raid by a participant" (239); for Hill it is "most important of all" the books he relied upon for Harpers Ferry ("A Word About History," *Any Known Blood* 508).
- 19 See also Cuder-Domínguez for a discussion of other recent African Canadian writing in this context; the article focuses on Hill, George Elliott Clarke's *Beatrice Chancy*, and

Dionne Brand's *At the Full and Change of the Moon*. Austin Clarke's Giller Prize-winning *The Polished Hoe* was published in 2002.

- 20 For discussions of the figure and implications of the "mulatta/o," see for instance Clarke's "Canadian Biraciality and Its 'Zebra' Poetics" (*Odysseys Home* 211–37), Sollors' "Excursus on the 'Tragic Mulatto'; or, the Fate of a Stereotype" (*Neither Black Nor White Yet Both* 220–45 and passim), Spillers' "Notes on an Alternative Model—Neither/Nor" (*Black, White, and in Color* 301–18).
- 21 Excerpts of his book appeared in *Maclean's* under the title: "Black + White . . . Equals Black" (Hill, "Black + White"). Decisions about identification influence census results crucially. Clarke reports that "43 per cent of African Canadians did not identify themselves as 'Black' in the 1991 Canadian census." According to one source he cites, some Haitians for instance identified themselves as French and some Jamaicans as British (*Odysseys* 41).
- 22 Yoyo passes under assumed identities since leaving his home country, while Hélène initially changes her name to Helen to conceal her French Canadian identity in Winnipeg, which she reveals to Yoyo in a code-switching passage (*Some Great Thing* 67–68).
- 23 One of the main reasons is a Ku Klux Klan incident (based on an actual event in Oakville in 1930 [512]) in which Aberdeen is attacked because he wishes to marry a white woman; after this incident, he leaves Oakville. Mill is left heartbroken and "convinced that she had lost her best friend because he had been seeing a white woman, and nobody could change her mind" (326). Her nephew's presence and project in Baltimore thus meets an initially cold reception on her part. In *Black Berry*, Hill has devoted a chapter to the "emotionally charged issue of black men loving white women" (115–49).
- 24 Walcott points out that Mill's role is central because from a certain point on she provides her support and much of the family documentation; it is thus "through her that Cane V is able to complete his investigation." Walcott sees her decision as the result of having worked through the traumatic experience of the Ku Klux Klan incident and the loss of Aberdeen (69–70).
- 25 Hill's title is part of an intertextual web that also includes John Howard's *Black Like Me* (1961), Rinaldo Walcott's *Black Like Who?* (1997/2003), and Hill's review of it, "Black Like Us, Eh?" Hill addresses here again the relationship between African Canadian and African American experience and identifies as one of Walcott's main arguments that "part of what makes African-Canadian society unique is the way it plays off black cultures in other countries." Hill comments on the title: "It seems ironic but fitting that Rinaldo Walcott's collection of essays about black culture in Canada features cover art and a title taken from the American experience. *Black Like Who?*, which emphasizes the distinctiveness of the black Canadian experience and urges black artists in this country to celebrate their identities more profoundly, draws its title from the American classic *Black Like Me*. Written by the late John Howard Griffin and published in 1961, *Black Like Me* was a best-selling autobiographical account of a white American who underwent a series of medical treatments to change his skin colour temporarily in order to write a first-person account about American racism. Borrowing from Griffin's book to create the title *Black Like Who?* seems to be Walcott's playful way of saying that room remains for new definitions of the black experience in Canada." Walcott discusses other responses to his book, in particular that of George Elliott Clarke, in his "Introduction to the Second Edition" (*Black Like Who?* 11–23).
- 26 The author identification at the end of "Black Like Us" thus describes *Any Known Blood* as "a historical novel about five generations of a black family in Canada."

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Towards a Geography of Three Mile Plains, N.S.

Times are bad and the poet is broke, but around him is that permanent world of Beauty. . . .

—WILHELM

Remember the well and its water encrusted by ice
And rusted by piss, the bull that stank as rankly as a bull,
And your Bible's leather binding, black, that seemed to bleed.
The pear tree was made for lightning strikes (three strikes),
While the Ten Commandments commissioned the stoning
Of windows in abandoned, dead-minister-owned houses,
Whose forgotten pianos sprouted juicy, gangrenous weeds.
Up Green Street, in gold-rancid dusks, two gold-coloured
Cowboys could saunter, leading miniature, tan ponies
Into the gold-sunflower sun coining their faces. Coppery,
They were anthropologically black, psychologically black,
Despite a white war-bride-mama ex-"De Ol' Country."
The apples shaken from trees were monstrous blossoms
Showering upon burial plots blurring into potato patch.
The hay you tumbled in, covered with kisses, was ripe
For recumbent, blonde-gal-cousins to be so seductive in,
With hickory-scented hair and hickory-smoked breasts,
Until spasms, *passim*. Someone'd croon, cry, "Like it?
Lick it!" Harmonicas harmonized night and wind, lilies
And root beer, while the train, alcoholic or cruel, bluesy
Or despondent, went huffing past ponds and chicken coops
And the sewage lagoon, a tanner's horse tethered nearby.
While crickets chimed accord, you set bullrushes alight,
Ached to unscramble poems from brambles and kinky ink,
Beside railroad tracks, where lovers wallowed, using
Mosquitoes, thorns, gravel, for temporary underwear,

And screwed, funkily, even with bites of all sorts digging
Into sweet flesh, that was tan or pale or black, equalized.
Then it was you down there, in the funk and honey slime,
The slippery night jetting oily between your soiled thighs
Where the mosquitoes had been crushed, and a girl's hand,
First Caucasian, French-speaking, next Negro and English,
Was communicating her, your, lust with illicit liqueurs
And sugary wine mixed with racial theories you exploded.
Brit *professeurs* and cracker cops harrumphed, in perfect
Sneering grammar, again and again, "You have NO history."
True: *our* Stonehenge was just a bunch of dominoes
Stood on one end—a penurious gambler's last stand. . . .

The Crime of Poetry

George Elliott Clarke in Conversation with Wayde Compton and Kevin McNeilly

In the summer of 2002, George Elliott Clarke taught a graduate seminar as part of the University of British Columbia's Noted Scholar program. This interview consists of excerpts from a conversation, sponsored by *Canadian Literature*, in front of an audience at Green College, UBC, in late July 2002.

Kevin McNeilly (KM): George Elliott Clarke's poetry offers us an enticing tangle of contradictions and confrontations, things like a vicious delicacy or a brutal lyricism or—I've taken a phrase straight from his poetry—a "sweet hurt." Clarke provokes and challenges his readers' false comforts of culture, or of language, or of race, all the while immersing us in a kind of verbal balm. Wayde Compton's acclaimed first book of poems, *49th Parallel Psalm*, and his recent anthology *Bluesprint* have done great things to establish the presence and history of black British Columbian literature and orature. It's a pleasure to speak with you both today. I've asked Wayde to open the discussion.

Wayde Compton (wc): I haven't really prepared much, so I'll freestyle here a little bit. In 1994, I traveled to see Henry Louis Gates, Jr., launch *Colored People: A Memoir*. He read for a bit and in his discussion afterwards, somebody asked him: "Since you began studying African American literature, what has been the single, biggest change in the literature?" He answered that when he started looking at black writing in the United States, he was able to read every book that was published in America by a black author as each one appeared: "The biggest change is that sometime in the 1980s, I lost the ability to do that." So, my two questions for George are, first, do you do that? Do you read every book

published in Canada by a black writer? And second, what do you think has been the biggest change since you started?

George Elliott Clarke (GEC): Oh wow. No, I don't read every book published by a black writer, partly because my French isn't good enough, and in Canada that's a significant percentage of our literature. We're not talking about a whole lot of books anyway, especially if we're only talking about literary writing: but maybe ten or twenty literary books published by black writers in Canada a year. Probably something like that. Then there is this other group of books that is coming out in French; a significant body of material hasn't been translated. Stanley Péan, for instance, who is a major fantasy sci-fi writer in Quebec, a household name practically, but none of his work has been translated into English, so we don't know him. I really hope that will change, that we will have an expanding core of readers who will be able to read across the language division.

How has it expanded, how has it changed? When I did *Fire on the Water* twelve years ago, it was enough for me to say "Oh wow, there have been more than five or six books published by black Nova Scotians in the last 200 years. Good, that's kind of nice." [Laughter.]

When I first started doing my bibliography, *Africana Canadiana*, I thought, "This is going to be something that's going to be done very quickly." In fact, the first incarnation of that bibliography was only about twenty typed pages. I felt really good; I could carry it around very easily with me. But once I had a chance to do far more research, and really scour things, I'd go to the Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec and really look, and with a broad understanding of the term literature, it started just growing exponentially. When I first published that bibliography, I called it a comprehensive bibliography, i.e. everything that's ever been written by black authors, by black Canadian authors, is in this bibliography. I was wrong. That was silly.

WC Are you finding new stuff that wasn't included?

GEC Oh yeah, I've found stuff that's been left out, that I missed, that I wasn't aware of. And the final version that is coming out soon, I mean I'm already cringing because I know there are a couple of things that I've just learned about. But to sum up, I think black writing in Canada has become far more diverse, far more interesting.

KM You are both anthologists. Could you comment a little bit on your views about the cultural role of anthologists?

GEC Wayde? [Laughter.]

WC Well, I was wondering what inspired you to start the bibliography, because it's kind of the same question. For me, doing *Bluesprint* was just to get a sense of what is out there, to find the lay of the land. Because there's no foundation for what I'm doing in BC, I felt I needed to know what has come before. In terms of history, and also in terms of the writing. Is that a reason for doing a bibliography?

GEC What happened was, in fall 1994, I got a letter from Professor [Doug] Killam at the University of Guelph, and he asked me to do this article on connections between African Canadian writing and African writing. And I said, "Sure, it's a publication. I'm going to do this article." So I started looking for material to write about. And of course I used Lorris Elliott's very fine primary bibliography. Even though he did the research in 1978, the bibliography wasn't published until 1988. So really, it was out of date when it was published. So, in order for me to write the article I had to have a decent bibliography. Now happily, Lisette Boily had done a bibliography of writing by visible minority Canadians, which was in *West Coast Line* in the fall of 1994 [*West Coast Line* 28.1–2 (1994): 308–319], so I had Lisette's much more up-to-date bibliography to start with, and I just went to the library and started looking for stuff. And within 48 hours I had a bibliography that was way more extensive and deeper, and better, and larger.

I just got interested, and I asked myself, so what else has Austin Clarke done, for instance? What about books in translation? Who was the first black playwright in Canada? Who was the first black novelist? People were walking around saying, "Austin Clarke is the first black novelist." And yeah it's true, but only in terms of the first black novelist published in Canada. But if you looked at books published outside of Canada, then you talk about people like Amelia E. Johnson, who published a novel [*Clarence and Corinne; or, God's Way*], her first novel in 1890, but in Philadelphia. So does she count? Yeah, because she was born in Montreal, and grew up in Toronto. But Canada didn't exist yet. I count her as an African Canadian foremother, and I think she should be read in that way. She may never be very important in terms of African American literature, but I would argue that for African Canadian literature she's absolutely important, and partly because of the fact that in none of her three novels does she use black characters. They're all white characters because the people who were publishing

her—an American Baptist society—figured nobody was going to read them. They did advertise her as a coloured woman writer, but they realized there wasn't going to be a market for black characters. So as long as their black woman writer wrote about white characters, everybody would be happy. But what's fascinating for me is what A.E. Johnson did to counteract that: she uses Black English. She gives her white characters black English. It's like, thank you! The illustrations are of white characters, and they have what is demonstrably black plantation English going on in the text.

I place someone like Suzette Mayr against her, and the whole context of racial identity and so on, and Johnson becomes a very interesting ancestral figure, whether Suzette ever read her or would ever be interested in reading her or not. I want to honour those who went and wrote and published when they had no expectation of being received or even read. I mean, Truman Green, for instance, *A Credit to Your Race*, a fantastic work, and who read it in 1973?

WC Very few people.

KM What kind of an audience do you envision for your work? Are you thinking about audience? I mean, who's reading this stuff?

GEC I am hoping that everybody is. [Laughter.] That's my hope. I'm interested in an audience of anybody who can read English. Because that's the only way my work is accessible, in that particular language. On the other hand, yes, I am trying to communicate specifically to black Nova Scotians, black Canadians, as well. I'm hoping that a black Canadian audience might find my work interesting, and a black Nova Scotian audience would find it interesting. But I also know that there is no way I can confine my writing to only those audiences, because there are very few publishers who, in the first place, will say "Okay, how many readers, how many identifiably only black readers can we guarantee your book?" Also, like many of us, I'm also . . . not didactic, but I am an educator. I am hoping that people pick up *Beatrice Chancy* and when they read that work, they'll say, "Oh yeah, there was slavery in Nova Scotia, and in Canada, and it wasn't necessarily a nice thing."

As someone just tried to argue recently in *The Globe and Mail*, in a letter to the editor: "Yeah well you know, our slavery wasn't as bad as American slavery." And I was like, "Oh really, tell that to the slaves." It was apparently a "kinder gentler slavery in Canada." [Laughter.] I'm trying to address those national myths that we tell ourselves, for the fundamental purpose of making ourselves seem better than Americans.

There are a lot of things we do better than the Americans, maybe, like delivering health care; on the other hand, we can learn from them about addressing, despite our great multicultural society, our problem around race and racism. At least Americans talk about it. They may not solve it, but at least they talk about it. We don't even do that. I'm also trying to signal to the rest of the world, whoever may come across these texts in some obscure venue somewhere, that we exist!

[Laughter.] We exist! We've been here for a long time and for what it's worth, here's our literature. Take a look at it.

KM I know in the introduction to *Eyeing the North Star*, the anthology you produced through McClelland and Stewart, you distinguish between African American and African Canadian literary practices or contexts. Could you elaborate on that?

GEC Well, of course it's a major question, and it ties into the whole Canada/US difference thing. But I think the greatest difference between African Canadians and African Americans is that African Canadians are not a monolithic group. And even though African Americans are composed of many different kinds of black people, who come from all over the world, there is really only, I would argue, one overriding African American identity, to which everyone is expected to subscribe, no matter where you come from.

In the same way that no matter where you come from in the world, to join the American republic is to accept certain ideas, values, principles, without dispute. To be an American is to accept certain fundamental values: you take an oath of allegiance to the revolution in effect—to what the American Revolution stood for—when you become an American citizen. In the same way, African America also has a kind of expectation of immigrants to its body, so to speak, to become African American and to accept the major culture, the heroes, the history, . . . simply to identify with all of that.

Whereas in African Canada, there is no such overriding determination of what it means to be a black Canadian. You are black Canadian as you wish, more or less, in our context. And that makes for a far more heteroglot, far more diverse, far more democratic kind of community, I feel, and far more diverse community than you have with African Americans. On the other hand, that's not always completely good. Because it also means it's much more difficult to organize. A handy way to see the difference is that African America has tonnes of national organizations. National organizations of teachers, of defense attorneys,

of prosecutors, of whatever it is you want, there's a national association of black, or African American what-have-you to represent that interest. We don't have any. There isn't a single national black organization in Canada. Now there are national ethnic organizations, organizations if you like of Trinidadians, Jamaicans, Barbadians. But the difference is that here, one's ethnicity, national origin, home, root, culture still continue to have some prominence, and some importance, so one may easily identify oneself as being Somalian or Ethiopian or Trinidadian, as opposed to being Canadian, or as opposed to being African Canadian.

Another handy illustration of this principle comes from the 1991 census, and the analysis that was done in 1997 by James L. Torczyner at McGill University [*Diversity, Mobility and Change: The Dynamics of Black Communities in Canada*]. With a team of black sociologists, he looked at the 1991 census data; from an African American point of view, it's astonishing, because according to their analysis, 43% of black Canadians did not self-identify as black. In the 1991 census! Now, in the US, that's impossible. You could never get a figure like that. But in Canada, what happened, according to their analysis, was that people who came from majority black nations, in the Caribbean and in Africa, chose to identify themselves as being either British or French. So people from Jamaica, Trinidad or Nigeria said, "We're British," and people from Haiti and Senegal said, "We're French." From an African American point of view, again, this would be almost insane: "Why are you saying that you're British and French? Come off it!" But from their point of view, it made perfect sense, because the context is British, or the context is French, from which these respondents were coming.

Althea Prince in her introductory essay to *Being Black*, her collection of essays that came out from Insomniac Press last year [2001], has a great opening essay. She talks about coming from Antigua, a majority black nation, where she's been schooled in British traditions (Wordsworth, daffodils, all that), and she flies to Toronto. She has come into another part of the British Commonwealth where she is now going to live with her sister, who's already been in Canada for a while, and she gets off the plane at Toronto International Airport, and everybody's staring at her. It's 1965, by the way; she is twenty years old. And she asks her sister, "Why is everybody staring at us?" And her sister says "Because you're black," and she had no idea. [Laughter.] No

clue what her sister is saying to her: “What do you mean I’m black? That doesn’t make any sense. This is stupid! I’m Antiguan! I’m a student! Why are you telling me I’m black?”

When one comes to North America from majority black culture, you don’t grow up thinking of yourself as being black, you think about yourself in other ways. And so when you come to the US, to Britain, to France, to Europe in general or North America, you’re suddenly in a minority, and a racialized minority at that, where you have a black identity thrust upon you. But then you have to decide, is that who you are, or not? Is that an identity that you really feel comfortable with? And not everybody does, nor should they. To suddenly have to think of yourself as being a minority, as being somewhat disempowered because of that status in this society and because of all the stereotypes that go along with that, is a tricky thing to ask people to do. For first generation immigrant writers, you see a working out of that exact dilemma: of either an adoption of something called black identity, or a rejection of it, as something very artificial and strange.

And I think you see this quite clearly in [Dany] Laferrière’s *How to Make Love to A Negro*, which is a wonderful refutation of that attempt to impose a stereotype, even though he’s using the stereotypes in that book. He can afford to make fun of those stereotypes because they are completely alien, artificial, antithetical to where he’s coming from, where he’s come from literally. And so he sees North Americans talking about black men and white women. For him this is actually a lot of fun. It’s so silly in terms of his context, his own native context, that he can afford to have all kinds of fun with things that people like Eldridge Cleaver had to take seriously.

Henry Martey Codjoe is from Ghana originally, he has this wonderful essay [“Black Nationalists Beware! You Could be Called a Racist for Being ‘Too Black and African’”] in the book edited by Adrienne Shadd and Carl James, called *Talking About Difference: Encounters in Culture, Language and Identity* [1994], where he talks about becoming black. He arrives from Ghana, a majority black country, and he comes to Canada and now everybody is telling him that he’s black. You’re black this, you’re black that, and he’s like “what is this?” So he has to go and purchase it. And it’s really funny because he talks about how he basically buys this commodified blackness: Malcolm X, Parliament Funkadelic, James Brown. Through purchasing these cultural com-

modities he starts to understand what the black experience is about. He has to be socialized into this whole new identity, by other black people in North America, in Canada. It's a funny essay, because by the end of it, he's completely radicalized: "I'm a radical Black Nationalist now!" Okay cool, but how do you get there? One of the phrases I use in my writing, I revised from Shakespeare: "Some are born black, some achieve blackness, and some have blackness thrust upon them." And I think that's really the Canadian way, so to speak.

Whereas in African America, it's simply imposed. I was given this lesson in very clear terms one bleak, rainy Friday night just outside Durham [North Carolina]. I was driving in my used 1990 Miata, towards the coast, and I was speeding, I admit it, I was speeding, and it was a lot of fun, and I got pulled over in the rain. Well, first of all, remembering that I'm a black male, no matter what, I keep both hands on my steering wheel. So I never move them off the steering wheel; they're always there, just in case there's any question of where my hands are, or what I might be doing. I don't want to get shot in the back of the head and all the rest of it. So the officer comes up; he takes a lot of time to approach the vehicle, and finally does. I admit: "Yes, you got me, yes I'm way over the speed limit." But anyway, he said, "Okay (I think he was mollified by the fact that I admitted my guilt), I'm going to mark you down as being only five miles over the speed limit so you'll only have a \$100 fine instead of a \$200 fine." Okay, I really appreciate that, officer: and I took the ticket and I was really happy. But when I finally looked at it the next morning, I realized there were two boxes on it, "B" and "W" and he'd checked off "B" for black, on a speeding ticket! [Laughter.] But it reminded me, viscerally, that this is a society where in every single fundamental way, I was being determined. I was saying I'm Canadian, but I'm a "B" to him. Okay, I accept that, I'm happy, I identify, it's not a problem, I even identify in traffic court. [Laughter.] So there's much less space for discussions of mixed race identity, hybridity, than there is here. I mean here, here there's a lot more space.

WC Witness the response to Tiger Woods trying to claim that he's mixed race. It didn't go over among African Americans.

GEC No, that's right. You get raced very clearly and specifically there. Afrocentrism in Canada has to be lived intellectually, spiritually, psychologically, but it can't be lived politically, not in the ways it can be in the

United States. In the United States you have blacks in numbers: in particular places, they can control the political network, the political system, including in some major cities. It's just not possible here, unless you are able to go off, settle, and form your own community someplace.

It's a mixed bag, I think in Canada you don't have as much reinforcement of a black identity which means you have a harder time to insist on one and communicate one and to live a black identity, it's much harder in Canada. That also means that you have a lot more freedom to be other things, whatever it is you may choose to be. A lot more space than you have in the US. On the other hand, if you want to organize against police brutality, against racism in the school system, about getting more blacks hired, and whatever, or wherever, you're going to have a harder time.

KM Both you and Wayde have produced anthologies with other kinds of conceptual frameworks that have to do with region: could either of you address the idea of region?

wc When I realized that *Bluesprint* was being published, one of the things that I thought was strange (because I knew about *Fire on the Water* and was using that as kind of a model)—and it seems odd, but it was nicely symmetrical—was that on both ends of the country, the first regional anthology had come out of Nova Scotia, and the second had come out of BC. But it seems strange because the designation “black British Columbian” seems a little arbitrary. The whole time I was struggling with it: is this the body of people that I should be looking at, or should it be Western Canadian, or Alberta and BC, or what? Because the term “black British Columbia” isn't something that people own. Which is just what George is saying, on a sort of micro-cosmic level. But in Nova Scotia there is that sense, because it is a longer history I guess, of something more deeply rooted. But the black population in BC is actually larger than the black population in Nova Scotia today, by thousands. But still, there isn't a centrally located black community. I wonder what you have seen in terms of regionalism in Canada. We have regional issues among the general population of Canada, the way Canada breaks down, as Western Canada, the Maritimes, Quebec, Central Canada. In terms of black people, or black literature, do the regions have significance to the writing, or the way that black people formulate themselves? In BC sort of, but it is hard to say.

GEC The answer to that is yes. I will, to my dying breath, say that black Canadian writing is as regional as Canadian writing in general. I do think there is a distinctive black BC school: now that you have put out *Bluesprint*, we all know there is one now. And whether it existed before or not, it does exist now. That is one of the functions of an anthology, to say “this is who we are.” Whether anybody agrees or not, the editor says, this is who we are. Even though you are being very cautious, and so on, and gentle, about imposing any kind of definition on people. The fact that the book is there, and the fact that you claim Sir James Douglas as a black writer, thank you, you are making some very real claims about territoriality, and what this body of literature consists of. What’s going to happen now, Mr. Compton, is that younger black writers coming up, ten years younger than yourself, who may not have even started writing yet, when they start writing, and they’re living in Vancouver or Surrey or Kamloops, and they go to the library, they will pick up *Bluesprint*, as they will whether you know it or not, and say, “Yeah, I’m a black BC writer, and when I am older and I pick up *Bluesprint*, we’re all going to be included.” And so when you set up those regional anthologies, you are setting up a tradition. All anthologies are basically saying a tradition exists. Whether you are talking about queer and lesbian writing, whether you are talking about women’s writing from the 16th century, as soon as that scholar comes along and says, “Here is the anthology folks,” *boom*, you’ve got a tradition, you have a canon. And the other anthologists are going to come along and say, “Well I don’t really consider so and so to be a part of this; they are not really that kind of writer.” But it’s too late: you’ve already claimed it! It’s already happened.

I do think that the writers you’ve collected are in some ways different from writers, say, in central Canada. And I think one of the major differences is the fact that there’s more space in BC to talk about racial hybridity than there is say in Toronto, or than there is in Nova Scotia. I think that in these places, the mixed race black person, to use that phrase, is racialized to a certain extent, much more so than perhaps may be the case in BC, as black. I also think BC is different because you have someone like James Douglas, as the founding father of the literature. There isn’t another black community in Canada that can say the governor of the colony was a member of the establishment and got their literature started.

WC In a place like Vancouver, for younger black people, hip-hop has become their first exposure to what blackness is. It's this determining blackness that's coming from the US, which I am starting to think of as a kind of a sub-cultural imperialism. But yeah, black kids in Vancouver aren't thinking about Nova Scotia or Montreal necessarily, but they are thinking about the United States, they are thinking about hip-hop, and that's shaping how they see themselves. I'm starting to feel like I want to resist it, to a certain degree, because it's unsatisfying in a lot of ways.

GEC Resist no longer! (That's a Phantom of the Opera slogan.) Resist no longer! You're absolutely right, of course it's cultural imperialism: wherever Coca-Cola goes BET [Black Entertainment Television] follows. Although African Americans don't really have any conception of themselves as being part of the whole global cultural imperialist machinery of American culture. Even though, in fact, hip-hop helps smooth the way for Coca-Cola. So if you're trying to be black in Vancouver, and even though African American hip-hop may give you some clues and some ideas, you have to reconfigure that in your own ways in order to have it be useful for your life here. This is what I find fascinating about African American cultural imperialism on Canada, or Black Canadians, is that I argue that we take that influence and we adapt it. I feel that. I see that in the writing, and I see that in the music itself. Canadian hip-hop is not the same thing as American hip-hop.

KM Maybe we can talk for a minute about the nature of the writing practice, or the textures of these conversations or the reconfigurations you're talking about. I borrowed today's title (which we tacked onto the poster without your permission) from the author's disclaimer at the end of *Execution Poems*, where you talked about the crime of poetry. Although the book itself is about a crime, it's a very interesting move to hear poetry described as criminal. In what ways is the act of writing transgressive, perhaps, or criminal? How do you address that phrase, and why did you use it?

GEC Wayde?

WC Well, speaking at all seems to be breaking that, breaking a prohibition point in terms of black writing.

GEC I think when you are coming from a minority perspective there is always a grain of transgression: the fact that you're speaking up, the fact that you are talking about injustice as you perceive it, as you see it. The fact that you claim that the white government in British Columbia is black

is transgressive. It can be viewed as a kind of crime, of literature, of statement, of being, of saying. And also too, the fact that often we are trying to speak the unspeakable, we're trying to say what has not been said before, at least not in Canada in certain ways—trying to disturb the very idea of what is a Canadian identity. Can Canadian itself be centralized as white, or Anglo-Saxon, or Gaelic? Can it, really? Is it really possible to do that legitimately? And I think that a lot of the writing that we've been doing is an attempt to say no.



Post-Cannibalism

(for Douglas Kerr)

Up your
arse,
Robinson Crusoe

It's not just
pidgin talk,
but words
(encoded)

An authentic pilgrim's
progress—
you make

On an (un)deserted
island—
I piss on your head,
indeed

Because of a name
I carry; oh, what a name—
Man Friday

Or it's disdain I feel,
unlike Solomon Grundy
born on a Monday,
christened on Tuesday.

Dammit Crusoe,
the Cross you carry
because of a burden

You bear, salvation
being always
at hand for you—
but never me

Cannibal as I may be;
and this bread I break
with you

Being more than flesh
I wish to devour,
sacramental time
because of a life we live

Far from home,
in foreign territory no less,
Empire being all

With meaning more solid
than I care
to think about,
all things being (signified).

Writing a Home for Prairie Blackness

Addena Sumter Freitag's
Stay Black and Die and
Cheryl Foggo's *Pourin' Down Rain*

In the late 1950s, the deteriorating log cabin of Alberta's best-known black pioneer, the cowboy John Ware, was relocated from its original site in Brooks to Dinosaur Provincial Park. The Dinosaur Natural History Association started a John Ware Cabin Restoration Fund to rebuild and refurbish the nineteenth-century cabin. Today the log house remains at Dinosaur Provincial Park, and there tourists encounter the preserved home of the black pioneer who invented steer wrestling, discovered the Turner Valley gas fields, and rode against the 1885 Riel Rebellions. In the museum's interpretive material, the wider history of black settlement on the prairies is left unremarked. By effacing the larger frame of black prairie history, the museum makes both the cabin and John Ware's presence on the prairies intelligible only through the rhetoric of extinction; they become relics divorced from their place in the history of the migration of hundreds of black Oklahoman and other black settlers to the Canadian prairies in the early part of the twentieth century. Alongside the bones and fossilized remains of extinct dinosaurs, John Ware's cabin becomes another dusty relic, curiously outside history and outside the fabric of national culture. What John Ware could have been doing in Canada at the turn of the century, why he might have chosen the prairies in particular as his home, and what his sense of belonging to this prairie geography might have been are questions that for the tourist to Dinosaur Provincial Park remain unanswered. The Ware cabin is a testament to the difficulty of finding an adequate "home" for prairie blackness.

The sense of home as a fraught space haunts black prairie cultural production. Like black writers in other regions of Canada, black prairie authors

must constantly negotiate the erasure of their history in both the official accounts of the region and in the national and regional imaginaries.¹ For instance, in the 1970s and 80s and even into the 90s, when regionalism was being theorized as a healthy heterogeneity—even a radical response to the perceived cultural and political dominance of central Canada—several regional anthologies and histories of prairie literature were produced. Among them are Robert Kroetsch's *Sundogs: Stories From Saskatchewan* (1980), Birk Sproxton's *Trace: Prairie Writers on Writing* (1986), Mark Duncan's *Section Lines: A Manitoba Anthology* (1988), Wayne Tefs, Geoffrey Ursell and Aritha Van Herk's *Due West: 30 Great Stories from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba* (1996) and George Melnyk's *Literary History of Alberta* (1998), to name only a few. Looking at these volumes, one would assume that few black writers live or produce work on the prairies. In constructing and delimiting a particularly "prairie" literary production, such volumes effectively place the history of black cultural production on the prairies under erasure.

Despite the regional discourses that continue to overdetermine the prairies as a racially homogeneous (white) microcosm, and the regional anthologies that continue to ignore the work of black writers, the prairies have been the site of a unique and important black history that spans the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example, according to recent critical histories, such as those of Bruce Shepherd (*Deemed Unsuitable* 1997) and Robin Winks (*The Blacks in Canada: A History* 1997), between 1905 and 1912 at least one thousand black settlers seeking refuge from the rising tide of racial discrimination in Oklahoma and adjoining states responded to Wilfrid Laurier's call to settle the Canadian west. Black farmers and their families migrated northward, settling in large numbers in northern Alberta's Athabasca region, where the all-black communities of Amber Valley and Keystone were established. In Saskatchewan, black settlers homesteaded in Maidstone, and in Manitoba, in the Big Woody District near Swan River. By 1911, fearing that the numbers of black immigrants moving north threatened to transform the Canadian west into the "black prairies,"² the Federal government drafted an Order-in-Council prohibiting for one year "any immigrants belonging to the Negro race, which race is deemed unsuitable to the climate and requirements of Canada" (Shepherd 1). By 1914, after an intensive but unofficial program undertaken by the Federal Liberal government to halt black immigration to the prairies,³ the Oklahoman blacks' interest in Canada waned. Those already in Canada tried to forget their hostile recep-

tion and concentrated on building their communities. According to Winks, by 1929, when an acting Deputy Minister for Immigration reported, mistakenly, that none of the original black settlers remained in the west (313), it seemed that nearly everyone had forgotten them. But the first influx of settlers in the early part of the century endured, and after 1955 the black population on the prairies both increased and diversified (when restrictions on West Indian immigration began to be relaxed) with new arrivants from the Caribbean, Africa, the U.S., and other parts of Canada. That this history has been largely repressed in the prairie imaginary makes black spaces on the prairies feel like fraught, un-home-like places.

Given this historical and cultural context, so much black prairie cultural production has needed to inscribe a “home” for prairie blackness. *Stay Black and Die* (1996) and *Pourin’ Down Rain* (1990) are part of the large nineteenth- and twentieth-century archive of the neglected literature of black prairie culture. Seldom noticed by black cultural studies in Canada,⁴ and overlooked by Canadian letters, black prairie literature, a literature that dates back to 1873, has much to offer both disciplines. In the context of contemporary debates about Canadian regionalisms as “new dominants” (Davey 16)—they present themselves as natural formations but serve particular race, ethnic, class and gender interests—black prairie literature reveals the extent to which regional designations such as “the prairies” have historically gained purchase on their identities by eliding minority, and in particular black, history and literature.

Addena Sumter Freitag, a playwright who was born and raised in Winnipeg’s North End, and Cheryl Foggo, a Calgary-based children’s author and family historian, both write about the difficulty of achieving a sense of belonging, despite generations of family history on the prairies. Far from abandoning the sense of home, these authors struggle toward a new realization of it. By writing their stories about growing up, dramatizing the problems of finding security, reassurance, and community, they archive their personal, historical, and cultural memories. Whereas home is traditionally thought of as a place of stability, a rooted or bounded space, these examples of black prairie cultural production push us toward a sense of home as the archive of racially-inflected history, memory and cultural consciousness that black writers and orators produce. By theorizing home in this way, as an archive for historical and cultural memories rather than as a territorial phenomenon, I seek to counter the theorization of long-standing Canadian blackness as “native,” “aboriginal” or “indigenous.”⁵ This move, I argue,

elides First Nations histories and needs to be addressed as a paramount concern in black cultural studies in Canada.

As if responding to the way John Ware's cabin has been constructed as a dusty, museum-piece curiosity, Addena Sumter Freitag's unpublished one-act play, *Stay Black and Die*, first performed in 1996, opens with every window and door in the house being thrown wide open, and the sub-zero winds of a Manitoba winter blowing it clean of cobwebs and the smell of sleeping bodies. This purging, the play's protagonist, eleven-year-old Penny, explains, was one of her mother's tactics to ensure home as a place of belonging:

MOTHER: Get Up. Get Up! Get your lazy asses out of bed. You can run the streets all night and yea can't get your black asses up in the mornin' Get Up!!

GIRL: That's the sound of my mother's voice, and that's the sound we'd wake up to every morning; Walter and Leslie, my two brothers, and I, and my dad. My sister June had escaped by getting married, and she moved as far away as she could. . . .

And she'd open up every door and window in the house, and the wind would blow 'frost clouds' through our little house and my Mother would come and stand menacingly in our bedroom doorway, expecting us to jump up and clean everything, (in, and outta' sight). (2-3)

Though the play has never before been considered in an academic context, I would argue that for black studies in Canada, and for scholars of Canadian prairie literature, *Stay Black and Die's* unsentimental account of growing up black on the prairies makes it a vitally important social and literary document. In the context of the Canadian racism of the 1950s and 60s, as well as the continued erasure of black prairie history, Sumter Freitag dramatizes the difficulties of creating a place of safety and belonging for the black subject. The characters at home in this play struggle with isolation from the larger black communities of the Maritimes, central Canada and the United States. They struggle with the difficulties of achieving a self-assured blackness, where it sometimes feels like yours is the only black family in the city, and all black cultural products are either absent or must be imported from elsewhere. Penny struggles in particular to come to terms with the differences between her mother's boisterous, Maritime-inflected blackness and her own, quieter, emergent prairie blackness.

While Penny and her brothers were born in Winnipeg, Mrs. Sumter tells us she was born in Truro, Nova Scotia, a place she calls "more prejudice than Alabama" (20). She remembers the race riots when she was a child:⁶

All of them White people got up in a big mob, and they were comin' down, to our district, "*The Island*" . . . to kill 'all of us Black people.' Why, we were all hiding in the swamps, for days! And in the slews.

And the men moved away the 'Out-Houses' . . . [THE MOTHER REACTS AS IF SHE IS PICTURING THIS MEMORY] and they hid us kids in the SHIT . . . up to our necks. (19–20)

Mrs. Sumter moved to Manitoba in the 1940s. The sparseness of the black community in Winnipeg and its short history relative to Nova Scotia's meant she found the anti-black racism of Winnipeg not as deeply entrenched. She remembers, for instance, that

I was the first Black person to sit down and eat **inside** a restaurant in Truro, Nova Scotia in 1950. When me and the kids went there during the 'Big Flood' here.

Remember dad?

[SHE YELLS AT HER HUSBAND]

Sumter . . . Walter! Are you listening to me! . . . I said do you remember 1950?

[SHE CONTINUES TELLING THE KIDS]

We had a big flood here in Winnipeg and I took all of you kids home with me to Truro, (and I left dad here to clean up the house.) I went inside the restaurant, and my cousins started 'calling me out of there', knocking on the window, sayin':

"Daisy, Daisy, come out of there "Daisy." (They call me Daisy). Daisy come out . . .

[SHE SUCKS HER TEETH EXAGGERATEDLY]

I called the waitress over: "Miss! Miss!"

*Look, (I told her) I ain't one of them 'fools' from **here!** . . . I'm from Winnipeg now, and honey . . . you tell your manager, if you don't serve **me** some food, this 'crazy nigger' is going to redecorate this restaurant"!*

[SHE GESTURES PROUD, AND STANDS EVEN TALLER]

"I KNOW THEY SERVED ME!"

We went to Halifax after that, for a visit. Honest to God, Sumter, I still remember all their faces when me and all these kids stood **at the front desk of the hotel**, and I said: *"I want rooms for four!"* They knew I wasn't from Nova Scotia. . . . Not no more!" (20, emphases in original)

For Kathleen Sumter, shifting herself to the prairies entailed a shift in her blackness. While growing up in the richness of a large and long-standing black community had shaped for her a more self-assured blackness than her daughter's, the less deeply entrenched racism of the prairies allowed more expansiveness to come into her voice and into her desires; it allowed her to speak back to power. Penny remembers how in the North End of Winnipeg in the 1950s, the robustness of her mother's voice became legendary. She recalls the time her mother threw the landlord out of the house "for trespassing":

She actually threw him, down the stairs, and then (my brother Leslie said), she kicked my baby carriage down the stairs after him, and it went bouncing down the stairs, right over top of him, and right through the 'plate glass' door in the landing. And then she said:

MOTHER: He's got his fuckin' nerve comin' in MY house and askin' for his rent. It's only the first of the month. I don't owe him no rent yet. I don't owe him nothing till the day's over. I bet he didn't go askin' none of the honkies for their rent, and they're always "skippin' out." You don't see no Darkies "skippin' out on their rent."

GIRL: And then she leaned over the banister and she yelled down at him:

MOTHER. And next time, you knock before you come in MY house 'Sucker.' You may own this shack, but I pay the rent here. Makes it MY house. And if you come in here, you'd better respect me in my house. (4)

As heartening as it is to watch the spirited Kathleen Sumter defend her home ground, her ability to create a safe home for her children is compromised by her own mis-treatment of them. At times it is Mrs. Sumter herself, not the racist bully Larry, who is the most threatening figure. Penny remembers and re-lives on stage the beatings she received for small infractions, for dawdling, daydreaming, and losing fifty cents. Her mother hit her with the cord of the electric frying pan until the raised welts made her look fat (15).

Penny also remembers a childhood home haunted by isolation. Though other black families lived in the neighbourhood and attended the Colored Baptist Church, the Sumters kept to themselves:

There were Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, a few Chinese, and one Japanese, (the Harmattas). Huh . . . oh, and one of us.

We were the only black family in that part of the "North End."

Well there was only bout 4 or 5 black families that lived in the North End of Winnipeg at that time, but we never saw 'em, we never saw 'em. They lived way across town, way across town! near Higgins and Maple Street. (emphasis in original 6)

This largely immigrant, mostly Eastern European neighbourhood was not only a hybrid space, it was also a hybridizing place: "My family loved living in the North End," says Penny, despite the lack of other black folks there. "They fit in" (6). But a neighbour, Mrs. Adolph, casts the situation in another light when she remarks, "*purr-haps dey fit in too vell*" (6). Mrs. Adolph laughingly recounts how the youngest Sumter, Les, explained why the neighbour kids left him behind: "I zink it eez bee-cause I am German, and da War eez on!" (6). On hearing this, Mrs. Sumter decides the time has come to visit the Colored Baptist Church so her son can learn that, like the rest of the congregation, he's black:

MOTHER: Listen boy, you go inside that church you hear that music, you can snap your fingers, you can tap your feet, you can sway to the music, but don't you 'break out' and dance, 'cause 'them's' hymns in there, and it's a sin to dance to a hymn.

GIRL: Now, Les was 'just'a' grinning at the sounds of the choir coming from inside. He loved music, (My mom had a big record collection, of 'black artists,' songs that we never heard on the radio in Winnipeg).

You see, when anybody visited us from the States, or when any of the Porters on the railroad, 'ran' out of town, and went 'across' to the states, they always brought back all kinds of records for themselves, and their friends.

We had Jazz, we had Blues, we had Gospel.

Les was so excited he just burst right through the doors and marched right up the aisle, sat down and took a look around at all the people, and he let out a blood-curdling scream:

[GIRL MIMICKS LESLIE'S VOICE] Momma "Get me outta here, Oh mama get me outta here, get me outta here, I'm scared of all these people. [HE WHISPERS] They're all black!

GIRL: My mother, she got him out of there all right! And she beat him all the way home, for embarrassing her, and she stood him in front of the mirror and told him . . .

MOTHER: Boy! I want you to take a look into that mirror and see what nationality you are. You're the same nationality as all those people! You're not German! You're Colored, and don't you ever forget it. (7, emphases in original)

Later in the play, when Penny describes the humiliations of having to grow up wearing an eye patch for a lazy eye, a pink eye patch, no less, the kind made for white folks, it is difficult not to see the image as a striking inverse representation of double-consciousness. Growing up on the prairies with few positive signs of blackness around to bolster her, the challenge for the black subject is not the doubling of consciousness as W.E.B. Du Bois argued it was in his American context. Penny and her brother don't perceive themselves as experiencing the surplus of perception that comes from being—to paraphrase Du Bois—a Canadian, a Negro. Instead, as the characters' names suggest ("penny" and "less"), the play explores the anxieties of prairie people who consider themselves singly diminished black subjects.⁷ Penny remembers, for example, the experience of watching the civil rights struggles on T.V. and feeling "unworthy" of her black American brothers and sisters:

And in the States! Colored people are Rioting, and marching, and integrating into white schools. We used ta' watch them on TV. Men, women, and children, marching together . . . and Look! White people were marching with them too. TOGETHER. Knowing they'd get beaten. They'd get beaten in the heads with clubs! And fire hoses, and police dogs would be released on them . . . and we'd watch the dogs, slashing, and tearing at their flesh, and they would scream in pain.

. . . And I cried

Because I felt unworthy of 'my people.'

'Like' I believed in every thing they were fighting for, but I could never march knowing I'd get beaten, and they weren't scared, and I was. (21, emphases in original)

In his essays "Must All Blackness Be American?" (1996) and "Contesting a Model Blackness" (1998), George Elliott Clarke has noted how African America has long been held out, by both African Americans and black Canadians, as the authentic mode of blackness. Clarke writes that before reading the black and east coast history that would later strengthen his sense of himself as an

assuredly "Black Nova Scotian" . . . I reviled Halifax, my native city, for it failed, I worried, to provide an 'authentic' black experience. We had no seditious civil rights agitation, for school segregation had been velvetly abolished by the provincial government between 1954 and the 1960s. There was no righteously destabilizing Black Power activism, for our provincial community of less than 30,000 souls was too small and too conservative to tolerate more than a casually militant rhetoric. Consequently, I absorbed as much African-American music and letters as possible (27 "Contesting").

Significantly, in *Stay Black and Die*, not only the American model but Mrs. Sumter's Nova Scotian, country-inflected blackness is, for her urban, prairie-born child, the dominant, authentic model. Penny's own voice, she fears, echoes not with her mother's down-home cadences, but with the mixed rhythms of (white) prairie city culture. Distanced as she is from the reassuring tones of black community, Penny confesses that she often finds her mother's "negro proverbs" puzzling:

'O-oooh.' Call them: "*Negro proverbs*," she had a million of 'em. We never understood any of them.

She used [to] always say: There are 3 methods of communication: tell a phone, telegraph, and tele-nigger!

You keep that up and I'm gonna slap all the Black offa you.

No, you can't have no coffee, kids shouldn't drink coffee . . . 'cause coffee is what makes you black . . .

Girl don't you let your mouth write no checks your ass can't cash!

Girl get that off, I told you no bright colors, especially Red, someone might think you're West Indian. (8)

Penny's voice, on the other hand, recites the accents I recall from my own days on the prairies. She longs for Mrs. Gratanowich's famous "pa de heh,"

and describes running down the street with a particularly prairie turn of phrase, “bootin’ it”: “She’d grab my hand and off we’d go, “*‘justa’ bootin’ it down the street, ‘Just ’a bootin’ it! . . .*” (12).

As long as Penny has access only to remote modes of blackness, such as the images of the civil rights struggle on TV, or her mother’s Maritime-inflected accent, her own quiet, burgeoning prairie blackness exists only as repressed absence. Much of the tension in the play is built on Penny’s feeling haunted by the caricatured image of blackness she sees in a lawn jockey she passes on her way to school each day. She remembers:

Those were the little metal statues everyone would stick out on the lawn every morning to water their lawn. They were ugly, ugly, black, black, black, boys. And they had big ‘poppy’ eyes and flat noses, (spread all over their face) and they had big, BIG, **ugly** lips, all outlined and painted in white, and they had a hose stuck down there. [SHE POINTS TO THE GROIN AREA] Down there.

And they’d gyrate around [SHE GESTURES] and water the lawn.

They used to make me feel so ashamed. (10, emphases in original)

It isn’t until near the end of the play, when Penny’s mother shares her stories about the black scene in Winnipeg before World War II (and her father shares with her his African American history and the story of his immigration to Canada) that she begins to have a historical sense of herself as a black subject who belongs to the prairies. In the absence of official histories of black prairie habitation, Penny’s mother’s stories write their daughter home. “Oh there were thousands of stories,” Penny remembers:

Stories of when they first moved to Winnipeg, and how nice and clean Main Street was then. All the families would go for walks on Sunday down Main Street, or Downtown past Misha Pollock’s store. Then they went for chips at Keleckis’s Chip Stand. (It was just a ‘stand’ then. Before he even built his first restaurant!) . . .

Well, Colored People weren’t allowed to go to Night-Clubs “in those days.” Well! . . . the Big Bands weren’t allowed to **stay** in the Night Clubs, after they finished playin’ either! **SO** . . . they all went to places that ‘Colored people’ ‘ran,’ called “Bootlegging Joints.” (that’s what she called ‘em) and they’d **dance**, and **party**, and everyone would drink ‘bootleg liquor’ **all night long**, till mornin’!

Mom’s favorite Boot-leggin Joint was called, “The Rum Boogie,” cause (she said): *everyone drank bootleg rum, and danced ‘Boogie-Woogie’ “all night long!”* The man that ‘ran’ it, was named, “*Do Love*” . . . cause, like he said . . . “***I do love ‘ta’ party!***” (35, emphases in original)

Though the history itself is not comforting—it abounds with narratives of racism, segregation and poverty—hearing it allows Penny to think of

Winnipeg for the first time as a black space. This insight is so climactic that the play's resolution quickly follows. Penny is now able to face the lawn-jockey that has tormented her throughout the play. She is able now to see him—and herself—not as a grotesquely black, but in a sense, as beautiful:

The paint on him had 'long faded,' so he wasn't Black, Black, Black, anymore.
He was . . . just . . . "Black" . . .

He wasn't ugly!

He was . . . beautiful! and he looked . . . he looked . . . just like me! (38, emphases in original)

Although the epiphany appears a little too suddenly, and involves a mere reversal (but not a transcendence of) racist logic (where once the lawn jockey was ugly she can now see him as beautiful), the message still hits home. In the absence of official histories about the long habitation of black folks on the prairies, black prairie writers and orators must write their own way home.

Because of the repression of black history in the prairie imaginary, when black prairie authors write, the genre of the family memoir is dominant.⁸ Like *Stay Black and Die*, Cheryl Foggo's *Pourin' Down Rain* documents the stories of four generations of family history in Calgary, Regina and Winnipeg. *Pourin' Down Rain* shares with *Stay Black and Die* many of the same concerns with living black on the prairies: the experience of isolation, the need for black community, anxiety over feelings of inauthenticity and, ultimately, the discovery of the importance of oral family histories. Discovering black history is treated by both authors, but particularly by Foggo, as an awakening. Awakening to our own history is a defining experience of the current generation of black prairie subjects.

Like Sumter Freitag, whose play literally stages a black home space, Foggo's memoir narrates details of all the home spaces inhabited by four generations of her family. Of such central importance are these home spaces that Foggo structures her narrative around them. A chapter is devoted to her grandparents' house on "Ottawa Street"; another to "In Sharon's Room." Foggo's careful account of pot-bellied stoves, porches and water wells, writes the history that Foucault urges remains to be written, the history of "the little tactics of the habitat" (149). This history—or maybe it is properly called genealogy—gives the lie to the notion of blackness as a new or recent (immigrant) phenomenon to the prairies. Foggo, for instance, remembers how her grandparents met, at a gathering of one hundred or more of the black settlers who lived around Maidstone,

Saskatchewan. They had gathered to help one of their neighbours raise a barn or a house. “It was 1915,” she writes. “Many of the Black pioneers had now been in Canada for five years, some for longer than that, and they had grown accustomed to this way of helping, of leaning heavily upon one another to survive in this strange climate of the country that was less than the promised land they had hoped for” (80). Black community, gathering itself together to build a home in a space in which they increasingly felt dislocated, becomes the signal motif of black prairie habitation.

Of her grandparents’ home in Regina during the difficult Depression years of the 1930s and 40s, Foggo writes of a similar in-gathering of family and community expanding a black home space:

My grandparents started their large family on a farm near Lashburn, Saskatchewan. . . . The family moved frequently at first, always, as the family grew, in search of larger premises. . . . The big, old house on Ottawa Street with its reasonable six dollars per month rent was where they settled for a number of years and where dwell most of their childhood memories. . . .

The house was at the end of Ottawa Street. Beyond the Smiths was the prairie, no trees, just the hardy grasses and the gophers. When it rained, they were surrounded by mud of the sort that would swallow you, but when it was dry they had a boundless playground and a shortcut to school.

There was a well in back of the house, a luxury which saved them the inconvenience of walking several blocks, as most of their neighbours did, to draw their water.

To their joy, the house proved to be actually large enough for their needs, with three bedrooms up and one down, a cellar with a big black, coal and wood stove, a living room, dining room and a large kitchen. . . . In the middle of the room stood the pot-bellied stove. Often, in the evenings, my grandmother would drag the rocking chair in from the living room, hold the twins or the babies, Bert and Dave, on her lap, the other children would settle themselves around her and she would tell them stories. . . .

It was a very fundamental life that they had. My grandparents struggled to provide basic care, food and clothing, but they raised their family with their full hearts and, from all accounts, the family was a happy one. They loved each other with what seems to be almost ferocity and the house was filled with a great deal of laughter. (23–5)

Foggo describes how the family pulled together and worked with dignity to survive the Depression. Her grandfather, she writes, found a position “pinning” chickens at Canada Packers:

The Smith children emulated their parents’ attitude toward work. Aside from their chores—drawing water from the well, cutting, chopping and stacking wood, cleaning, cooking and laundry—the entire family congregated in the cellar in the

evening, pinning chickens to help meet expenses. In the mid-to late-thirties, pinning a chicken was worth five cents and the Smith children were allowed to pocket two cents from every nickel that they earned. (25)

Foggo also describes the black home spaces her family builds during the early 1960s, prior to the American civil rights struggles and the anti-colonial movements in Africa and the Caribbean, which would soon radicalize black subjectivity across the diaspora. The challenges of racism were primary. The worn and tired appearance of her aunt's house is suggestive of the Calgary black community's feeling after several generations of living on an often-times (racially—not climatically) hostile prairie:

They lived in a house that must have seemed small to the seven of them, especially considering the needy people that they often took in, but to me it was large enough to harbor many secrets, it was familiar and warmly faded. The house looked like a tired, very old woman trying to maintain her posture, but wanting to relax, to sag a little. (36-7)

Foggo describes how the architecture of this old house, with its cozy attic and creaking staircase (which gave away any eavesdroppers), created a space for nurturing, private conversations with her older cousin:

Sharon and I sat crosslegged on her bed, which was nestled into a nook created by the slanted ceiling of the attic and the wall. . . .

We were cracking and eating sunflower seeds. . . .

I looked down, pretending to search the foil bag for seeds that had already lost their shell. . . . After a time I spoke again. "Sharon?"

"Uhhhm mmmm?"

"What does nigger mean?"

"It doesn't mean anything."

I did not reply and I did not look up, so she continued.

"It means that the person saying it is ignorant."

"I know." I had heard that a hundred times. "But what does it really mean in the dictionary?"

"It's not in the dictionary, honey." Her tone was very gentle. "Who's been calling you nigger?"

"The Webber boys," I said, whispering.

I began to cry and she pulled me to her. . . .

"Do you know what it means?" Sharon was rocking me and humming. "It means that the person saying it is a nigger. When someone calls you nigger they are really talking about themselves." . . .

She quietly left the room after switching the table lamp on, familiar as she was with my dislike for dark places. She extinguished the overhead light and did not close the door.

I was very safe. (38-9)

In this vignette the architecture of the house itself forms a scaffolding around Cheryl's emergent blackness. This room structures their safety and allows Cheryl to ask—and Sharon to answer—frightening questions about racism. Though today we may find Sharon's analysis of racism limited (it avoids any question of power), it provides Cheryl with new-found security.⁹

Coming together in these black home spaces on a regular basis was one of the strategies Foggo's family developed to re-affirm one another's sense of themselves as black people. Though Calgary in the 1960s had at least one hundred black folks living there (Jamerson fonds, City of Edmonton Archives), in a population of about 311,000¹⁰ they were very much in the minority. Foggo remembers that during family get-togethers, their use of language affirmed their black identities:

I learned a good deal, at an early age from those gatherings. I learned how to tell a story, the importance of the family and our history and I began to learn the way Black people, at least the kind of Black people that we are, use language.

My mother spoke to her family in a way that she never spoke to our neighbours at home. Sometimes she said "ain't" or "don't" when she meant "doesn't" as in, "don't make no difference."

Why, I wondered, would she say "don't make no difference" when I knew quite well that at home she would say "doesn't matter?"

With the exception of Aunt Edie, who had married a man from a rural Black community and adopted some of his expressions and speech patterns, none of Mother's family used expressions like "y'all" as part of their natural speech. One would not have known it, however, from listening to them when they were together in the security of their parents' home. Their high-spirited conversation was heavily peppered with "y'all's" and "uhhmm uhhm uhhms" and other colloquialisms usually associated with rural Black American speech.

I began to understand, as I grew older, that they did this to entertain one other and to affirm their "Blackness." They were people with ambivalent feelings about their isolation from other Blacks. They had no desire to return to the America that their parents had fled, nor did they wish to be completely swallowed by the White society in which they all lived. (18)

The code-switching that Foggo describes is a survival strategy of black prairie culture. Their daily speech demonstrates to their neighbours (and to themselves) that black Canadians can speak "Canadian" English too. But "talking black" to one another allows them to also feel black, despite being raised almost exclusively in the dominant white culture. In a sense, then, long before writers such as Foggo and Sumter Freitag began consciously archiving their family stories, or academics like myself began writing about the strategies black authors use to inscribe a home, black writers and

orators have been archiving these stories. In their unique language, black prairie subjects remind one another about “the kind of black people we are.”

Despite her very fortunate connection to her large family, and to other black families in Calgary, Foggo writes that as a teenager she was still haunted by an anxiety that, “I was not black enough” (53). *Pourin’ Down Rain* echoes *Stay Black and Die’s* fears of inauthenticity in what feels like the outmost limits of the black diaspora. Just as Penny worries that she is “not worthy” of her black American neighbours, Foggo also describes how learning about the struggle for black civil rights in the U.S. precipitates a crisis in her blackness: “I was dimly aware that while I was spending my summers dodging trains on the Twin Bridges and gathering herbs from the hills to make ‘perfume,’ Black people in America were rioting. . . . Although the struggles of Black Americans had very little impact on my day-to-day life, after 1966 I became less comfortable in my White world” (43). In 1968, when Martin Luther King is assassinated, Foggo decides to make the march in his honour her first political act. But when the two-hundred-odd marchers convene for a rendition of “We Shall Overcome,” hardly anyone knows the words. “I was not black enough,” she concludes later that year. “Too many years in a White world had caused me to forget, once too often, that I was Black and that my blackness was the first thing seen and reacted to by every white person that I met Whether I liked it or not, the world was Black and White and I had been attempting to live in the middle. . . . I no longer believed Canada was a refuge from racism and resented being raised in isolation from other Blacks” (53).

As in Sumter Freitag’s play, when Foggo discovers her family’s oral histories she stops regarding her world in exclusively black or white terms. When Foggo’s grandmother and aunt Daisy relate to her (at separate times) their extended history on the prairies, Foggo realizes how long the prairies have been a hybrid place. Daisy’s story is truly remarkable for its long remembering. She takes Cheryl back through time, through the history of the Oklahoman migration that brought her ancestors to Saskatchewan, back through the history of slavery in Arkansas and Texas, back to the story of an African man named Kudjo, their ancestor who endured the voyage of the middle passage. This history becomes the sounding-line through time that finally connects Cheryl’s Calgary to the history of the black diaspora. Returning to Calgary with a head full of family stories, Foggo experiences a revelation akin to Penny’s:

I was growing toward a quiet confidence that I could not yet articulate, even in my thoughts. I had learned more about my family’s history, about what it meant

to be Black in North America, about my own blackness in eight months than what I had cared to know in all the previous years of my life. I was beginning to understand that I had a right to exist in my world.

This may not be comprehensible to someone who has not lived as a peculiarity, the idea that a child must one day tell herself, "I am allowed, I was meant to be, I have a right to exist." But when you are a Black child who looks out into the world and sees hostility toward Blackness, you begin to ask why, you look for rationality behind the hostility, until the day you realize that racism is not your responsibility, it is the responsibility of its perpetrators. That day you say, "I belong in this world. I belong here in Western Canada where my family has lived and worked for four generations."

We drove on, the miles peeled away. Back to Calgary and my life there. (83)

Characters in Foggo and Sumter Freitag's texts must learn to become self-confidently black (blackness having no guarantees in nature). Discovering an archive of stories about black prairie history, while it may not be capable of establishing a black identity in and of itself, infuses the subject with the sense of historicity and belonging-in-place that is necessary for a self-assured blackness. Both authors argue that the sense of reassurance and affinity, fitness and community that properly belong to our sense of ourselves and our home cannot attach to the prairies so long as the historical archive remains present only as a repressed absence in both official histories and in the prairie imaginary. By re-placing blackness into the regional imaginary, Foggo and Sumter Freitag challenge our inherited notions about the prairies as a homogeneous, unracialized microcosm. They encourage us to see how the prairies have long been a black space, and a hybridized place. Given the recent critiques by Canadian literary theorists of regional discourses as "new dominants," such as those of Christian Reigel and Herb Wyle, I would argue that we need the neglected archive of black prairie culture now more than ever. Because black prairie cultural production makes visible the repression of black history in the regional imaginary, it is as troubling as it is necessary to our inherited notions of what constitutes "prairie" history and literature and what regional Canadian literature is and means.

NOTES

- 1 Though in this paper I use the regional designation "the prairies," and sometimes "the west" to refer to the politically-, economically-, and culturally-defined geographies of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, one of my intentions is to deconstruct such regionalisms as ideological formations. While "the prairies" continues to operate in this paper both rhetorically and heuristically, my gesture of not capitalizing these terms indicates my intention to de-naturalize what have become reified concepts.

- 2 Winks records that in 1911 the Member for Lanark North, fearing the arrival of tens of thousands of black settlers to the prairies, told government officials that they must “preserve for the sons of Canada the lands they propose to give to niggers” (309). The conservative Member for Quebec’s Lisgar constituency admittedly argued for an all-white west (Winks 307), and Lethbridge Conservative C.E. Simmons urged against importing “Dark Spots” into Alberta.
- 3 Though the Order-in-Council was never passed, the Canadian government nevertheless moved swiftly and efficiently to eliminate black settlement. For instance, Canadian agents were dispatched to Oklahoma to discourage prospective immigrants, “pointing out the difficulties of the climate and the general prejudice which was sweeping over Canada against the negro.” During 1912, the Great Northern Railway sent notices to its employees warning that selling tickets to potential black immigrants between Saint Paul and the border should be prevented. And in March of the same year, the Superintendent of Immigration, W.D. Scott, publicly asked black Americans not to come to the prairies since opportunities for them were better in warmer climates (Winks 311–12).
- 4 Though it is beyond the scope of this particular paper, I would argue that one of the important questions for black studies in Canada might become: How has the pervasiveness of certain grammars for black, which emphasize its urbanity and postmodernity, deprived black prairie subjectivity, which has historically been elaborated in a rural, even pioneer, context?
- 5 Liz Cromwell introduces the term “native born Canadians” into black Canadian literary theorizing in 1975, in her Foreword to *One Out of Many: A Collection of Writings by 21 Black Women in Ontario*. In 1996 Anthony Joyette distinguishes between “aboriginal (descendants of early settlers)” and “naturalized (immigrant) African-Canadian writers,” a distinction George Elliot Clarke admires as “a fine classification” (“Introduction,” *Eyeing* xxii). Walcott posits a similar concept, “indigenous black Canadians,” a year later in *Black Like Who?* (1997), though it is, he writes, “for lack of a better term” (39). Though both Clarke and Walcott rightly recognize the way indigenizing metaphors have operated to maintain problematic divisions between long-standing and immigrant black communities, histories, identities and cultural production, the term is not interrogated for the way it in turn represses the only truly indigenous history in Canada, that of the First Nations.
- 6 The riot she refers to may be the Trenton, Nova Scotia riot of 1937. According to Winks, an angry white mob stoned a black man who had recently bought a house in Trenton. After being dispersed by the RCMP, the mob returned the following day, four-hundred strong, and destroyed the house and its contents (419).
- 7 George Elliott Clarke explores this question as well when he asks whether it is possible to think of the hyphen that floats in between “African” and “Canadian” “as an ampersand, or is it really a double-edged minus sign?” (“Contesting” 40). Clarke’s discussion of double-consciousness, however, goes on to revise the Du Boisian formulation: “Yet, the African-Canadian consciousness is not simply dualistic. We are divided severally; we are not just ‘black’ and Canadian, but also adherents to a region, speakers of an ‘official’ language (either English or French), disciples of heterogeneous faiths, and related to a particular ethnicity (or ‘national’ group), all of which shape our identities” (40). I agree with Clarke that black Canadian consciousness is multiple and fractured, but am less comfortable with the idea that black subjects “adhere” to their regional affiliations. Is there a way, I wonder, to theorize a black-inflected consciousness that has been shaped (and mis-shaped) by location without reinscribing the geographic determinism of regional discourses?

- 8 Memoirs, biographies, documentaries, historical literature and orature are not pre-eminent genres on the prairies alone. Black writers across Canada have felt the urgent need to record the unique histories of their particular locales, families, churches and communities. As George Elliott Clarke has put it, “because African-Canadian history is ignored in Canada, African-Canadian writers are forced to become historians” (Introduction, *Eyeing* xx).
- 9 Both Foggo and Sumter Freitag imagine safety in terms of the home. Foggo’s text, more than Sumter Freitag’s, works to extend the sense of security into the imagined space of the region. Significantly, both texts appear more interested in addressing civic and regional discourses than national ones (for instance, Sumter Freitag has named her production a “North-End Girl Production”). Perhaps the nation is only implicitly, rather than explicitly, addressed because both authors regard the nation as the original source of danger.
- 10 The January 1965 Calgary Civic Census puts the population of the city at 311,116. <www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/calgary/popchart1.html>

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The Tasks

Who coordinates this awesome spectacle
of concept, object, thought and weighty task?

How long can such a marshalling cohere,
as if it does, suspended in midair?

No, I am not coherent or even half alive,
but dreaming perplexed stones uphill in stony sleep.

The Cave in the Coals

Would you enter this luminous centre? I had a friend
who wanted to put his face in the fire. And everyone gathers
around a woodstove in a kitchen. *Such a penetrating
heat*, they say. And the origin both of community
and contemplative solitude—the opportunity staring
through flame’s window, through that door of tempered glass
into that intensity, to speak without looking
around. To overhear
oneself. To muse aloud, obliquely
universal. This was the centre
for millennia until television. I thought then of my friend’s desire,
It is despair of being heard or known. Or a fiendish, sudden appetite
for rage and pain made manifest, explicit.
Or the profoundest hope of the handsome
for disfigurement. To face the world and others turned
away, a liberating roominess. Gazing
into fire’s old face today I see for the first time
an emberred hollow near the draught, incandescent space
on the underside of an alder log beckoning. *Shelter*,
it promises past the rim of flame. Like the promise

of a woman's body. Depths of heat and pleasure
and then, as hearth in earth and heart in art end
and eschew their initial heroics, regain their cool, each

exhausted half-husk rolls
onto its side, a geode opened

earth egg on my study's sill. After the puff of gas or dust or tiny gasp
of vacuum broken into the saw bisected stone

for its treasure of absence—cup
of encrusted immaculate shatter, crystalline, sparkling

firmament of puckered O past slippery
bright lip, past buff and bluff and buffeting
where anything one is might hold, where everything

one might be grows. Where we, oh human family, breathe
in, breathe out, keep company.

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Histories of Difference

Najia Aarim-Heriot

Chinese Immigrants, African Americans, and Racial Anxiety in the United States, 1848–82. U of Illinois P \$39.95

Rajani Sudan

Fair Exotics: Xenophobic Subjects in English Literature, 1720–1850. U of Pennsylvania P \$74.25

Reviewed by Lily Cho

Difference has a history. As postcolonial critics have begun to assert, difference is produced through contact, not simply productive of it; whiteness becomes white through interaction with that which it does not recognize as itself. Both Najia Aarim-Heriot and Rajani Sudan explore the interactions with otherness that produce whiteness's sense of itself.

Aarim-Heriot's history of Chinese immigration fills a crucial gap in our understanding of the processes of racialization that inform nineteenth-century U.S. immigration laws. While there is a substantial body of scholarship addressing racist laws against Chinese immigrants in the U.S. during this period, Aarim-Heriot's approach significantly contributes to our understanding of this history by looking at the Chinese American community in conjunction with the African American community. As theorists such as Avtar Brah and James Clifford have argued, we need to think of diasporas not only in their interactions with white society, but also laterally across minoritized communities. Aarim-

Heriot rightly notes that much of the history of the head tax and exclusion acts against Chinese Americans has been written without a sense of the other kinds of legislative exclusions occurring simultaneously. Aarim-Heriot's research effectively reveals the ways in which discourses of blackness were used to shore up those against Chineseness and vice versa.

Aarim-Heriot traces the negroization of Chinese immigrants through the conflation of Chinese immigrant labour with African American labour in the antebellum era. The problem of defining free and unfree labour becomes a major theme of Aarim-Heriot's argument. She must insist on Chinese immigrant labour as being "free" in order to demonstrate the unfairness of U.S. immigration and labour policy. This insistence leads to a possible downplaying of the exploitative conditions of the vast majority of contract labour. However, the book's discussion of the conflation of Chinese indenture with slavery is fascinating. In particular, the chapter on the Chinese in the South and in New England is interesting for the way it illuminates a global turn to Asian indentured labour after the "abolishing" of slave labour in most nineteenth-century European colonies.

More than an important contribution to our understanding of the events that lead up to Chinese exclusion in the U.S., Aarim-Heriot's book also shows how whiteness was one of the cornerstones of U.S. citizenship in the antebellum era. Further, Aarim-Heriot offers a useful model for research

which seeks to understand racialization as a process which cuts across racialized communities.

Rajani Sudan's *Fair Exotics* also explores the cultural aftermath of contact through an examination of xenophobia in Romantic British literature. Sudan's work seeks to intervene against Romanticism's notion of a singular, internalized, authorial subject by arguing that this insularity is produced by a deep fear of and desire for otherness—what Sudan refers to as the relationship between xenophobia and xenodochy. The originality of the argument lies in its attempt to historicize the psychic impulses behind the nineteenth-century British imperial and nationalist project. However, in constructing her argument, Sudan seems to assume rather than historicize xenophobia as a pathology.

Sudan proposes that we understand xenophobia as the “psychological hinge” between imperialism and nationalism. Reading texts as varied as Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary*, Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions* and Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, Sudan details the emergence of xenophobia in British romantic literature. While she notes that her choice of texts is not typical of the romantic canon, what surprises me is not so much the focus on less obvious romantic writers as the way in which Sudan's readings seem to take the definition of xenophobia for granted, rather than giving her readers a sense of the rise of a pathology that appears to be so imbricated with imperialism. If xenophobia, as it is commonly understood, is a fear of the foreign, what specifically constitutes the foreign that hinges imperialism and nationalism? Without a clear sense of the constitution of the foreign, Sudan's readings conflate the Malaysian servant with the mustachioed Frenchman, the “specifically non-English” maid in Wollstonecraft's *Maria* with the orientalized figure of the tiger in De Quincey's *Confessions*. The

capaciousness of the category of the foreign leaves Sudan's argument vulnerable to a flattening out of the problem of race.

Clearly, the Frenchman and the Malay servant are not foreign in the same way, and yet Sudan reads so earnestly for their similarities that she does not make clear enough their differences.

Given Sudan's focus on the psychological aspects of imperialism and nineteenth-century British writing, it is also surprising that she does not make use of major figures of postcolonial theory such as Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Ashis Nandy and Homi Bhabha. For example, establishing her argument for xenophobia as a psychological hinge by suggesting that it functions like Freud's fetish, Sudan curiously does not mention Bhabha's “The Other Question,” which makes a very similar argument for understanding cultural difference through the mechanism of fetishism.

Sudan suggests that “[i]t should not be possible to think about romanticism without invoking xenophobia.” While I believe that there is a strong argument to be made for detailed work on the relationship between conceptions of the foreign in British romantic literature and British imperialism, I cannot help wondering what is specific about xenophobia in British romanticism that differentiates it from xenophobia in the seventeenth or eighteenth century. Sudan raises a series of intriguing questions regarding the psychological impulses that drive nationalism and imperialism. In the same way that we now understand cultural difference as having a history, perhaps we may come to see the ways in which colonial pathologies also carry specific histories. *Fair Exotics* is a step in that direction.



Fresh and Tired Metaphors

Meredith Andrew

Margery Looks Up. Mercury \$17.95

Catherine Jenkins

Swimming in the Ocean. Insomniac \$19.95

Howard Norman

The Haunting of L. Knopf Canada \$34.95

Reviewed by Afra Kavanagh

In Meredith Andrew's novel, *Margery Looks Up*, the narrator has withdrawn from human intercourse in order to get over the betrayals she suffered in her past relationships with men. Margery is wary but smart, and she entertains the readers with colourful narrative detours and irreverent retellings of the stories of her "sisters in pain," the saints. Margery also addresses the reader warmly and appreciatively and draws us into the narrative act and its postponements. She makes frequent reference to weather and sky, her only evidence of a magnificent universe, and the site of her eventual redemption.

This second novel for Andrew is well conceived and written. Andrew carefully synthesizes metaphors and digressions with the other elements of the novel to create a pleasing and forward-moving narrative. She repeatedly delays telling us her "core" story, and cleverly builds interest in her secret trauma. Betrayed by her young boyfriend, she heads off to a convent in France to get over the break up, only to be betrayed again by an old man who pretends to help her, gains her trust and then rapes her. This eventual telling of her debilitating trauma is too brief and anti-climactic. Told from an emotional distance, it fails to grip us. We are also disappointed by the quick and implausible disposal of the figure of the old man who Margery says inhabits her and is threatening to engulf her, her metaphor for being possessed by her memories. This haste is obviously a strategy to affirm Margery's decision to "look up" and to

become involved again. However, the novel is saved by Andrew's adept use of metaphor. Through references to the saints, stars and sky, Andrew metonymically expands the novel's emotional landscape.

Like Andrew's novel, *Swimming in the Ocean* records and analyzes the personal journey of a female narrator. Jenkins' main character too suffers from past pain and alienation. However, Jenkins makes the mistakes of a first novelist, and is not successful at integrating the materials she includes about the ocean. (These fill almost half the pages of the novel.) She alternates the narrator's story of past loves and disillusionment with information about the ocean and its predatory inhabitants. This material about the attributes and mating habits of various sea creatures is, as she acknowledges, from web sites (grammatical errors and all) and encyclopedias, and is not recast to reflect the voice of the narrator or the tenor of the narrative itself. Jenkins' attempt to imbue the narrator's world with significance by using the metaphor of a teeming ocean fails because she does not permit the two worlds to intersect.

Jenkins also fails to draw the reader into the narrative. Her narrator is intense, and she solipsistically anguishes over past relationships. She lives in the past, seeing and talking to no one for the duration of the novel. She even worries that she has AIDS because of her lover's infidelity, and spends pages prolonging her despair. She also addresses herself to "you" through the novel, a "you" that turns out to be not the reader but her past lovers, one after the other. At first, this innovative strategy is intriguing and evocative of the narrative stylings of Jeanette Winterson, to whom Jenkins is compared by the book's jacket blurb. But this direct address has an oddly accusatory tone. As the reader, I was annoyed by a pronoun that seemed to call on me but had nothing to do with me. Ironically, the narrator's final decision to

get into the ocean and swim is both predictable and too long in coming.

Howard Norman's only claim to attention by this journal is the Canadian setting of his novel, *The Haunting of L*. Yet the Churchill, Manitoba, and Halifax, N.S., that he depicts are no more familiar to me than Timbuktu, and the characters he creates are not recognizable as "Canadian." In this psychological thriller, the main "characters" are a husband and wife team.

Vienna Linn photographs made-to-order disasters, and Kala Murie lectures on "spirit photographs." Living on the fringes of respectable society, Linn is at home with violence and exploitation, and is a cardboard reproduction of a figure from a Hollywood movie about the early twentieth century in America. In fact, the novel seems to be written with a movie in mind. Disappointingly, it adds nothing new to the discussion about crime, photography and truth that was initiated in Michelangelo Antonioni's famous 1966 film, *Blow Up*. Norman's novel probes photography's role in the public's growing fascination with images of death and disaster, but does not offer any insights as to how individuals or society might deal with this problem. *The Haunting of L* merely queries the problematic role of this art form in recording and/or creating identity and history. The novel disappoints in other ways. Norman makes photographs and photography work on too many levels by, for example, creating a tertiary character whose only role is to illustrate the new twentieth-century obsession with the potential for creative self-representation through photography. Also, the novel's narrative voice—that of Peter Duvett, a relocated Briton who experiences life as "views," photographs to be captioned, who works with Linn and sleeps with Kala—does not convincingly render the psychological or practical reasons for Linn's awakening conscience and ensuing suicide. Furthermore, the novel does not deal with

the moral implications of Peter's and Kala's failure to report Linn's crimes; the author lets them "sail off into the sunset," giving them a happy ending and disappointing our narrative desire for perfect justice.

Home and Away

Diana C. Archibald

Domesticity, Imperialism, and Emigration in the Victorian Novel. U of Missouri P \$34.95

Peter S. Li

Destination Canada: Immigration Debates and Issues. Oxford UP \$29.95

Westwood Creative Artists

Passages: Welcome Home to Canada. Dominion Institute/Doubleday Canada \$34.95

Reviewed by Annette Kern-Stähler

In our age of globalization, the related issues of migration and identity are frequently pursued in literature and in a range of academic disciplines. Three new books discuss immigration and the formation of national and individual identities.

In the Victorian age, immigration to Canada was largely British. Badly needed for the "production" of colonial-bred workers, British women were encouraged to leave for the colonies and thus to contribute to the imperial mission to "civilize" the rest of the world. However, as Diana Archibald shows, the arguments in favour of immigration conflicted with domestic ideology, according to which women were expected to stay at home, the female presence of the 'domestic angel' providing the moral centre at the heart of the British Empire. Building on a range of scholarship which has established the Victorian novel as a site for the construction and the subversion of ideologies, Archibald convincingly argues that the Victorian novel participates in a social dialogue on women, emigration, and home. Drawing on previously neglected texts, she shows that the Victorian novel enacts the conflict between the domestic

and imperialistic ideologies and that it simultaneously promotes and undermines the ideal of the “domestic angel.” Although constructed as repulsive and unfeminine, colonial and native women often appear to be much more interesting and life-like. Enquiring into this ambivalence, Archibald, in her clearly structured study, devotes a chapter each to the literary construction of the top three imperial destinations in relation to Britain as the imperial centre (Canada: Elizabeth Gaskell; Australia: Anthony Trollope; New Zealand: Samuel Butler), followed by a fourth chapter on emigration to the most popular destination, the United States, in the novels of Dickens, Charles Reade, Trollope, and Thackeray. Archibald’s thorough and stimulating study will be of interest to literary historians and historians of emigration of the nineteenth century.

With *Destination Canada*, Li provides an insightful and comprehensive introduction to the ongoing immigration debate in Canada. Since this debate, as he argues in Chapter One, is expressed in terms of benefits to the receiving Canadian society and, accordingly, prospective immigrants are largely evaluated in terms of their ability to increase Canada’s productivity, Li examines the issues of immigration from the vantage point of the receiving society. Throughout Canada’s history, immigration policy has been framed to address economic needs. Selection criteria have placed great emphasis on the prospective immigrants’ occupational skills and, increasingly, on business expertise, substantial investment, and educational credentials. The changes in immigration regulations, especially the introduction of the universal point system in 1967 for the selection of economic immigrants regardless of racial and national origin, resulted in a sharp increase in immigration from Asian and African countries. Non-white immigrants are, in what Li shows to be a racialized immigration discourse, constructed as a threat to the nation’s social cohesion and

normative order. Supporting his arguments with analytical and descriptive data, he persuasively argues against the “emerging anti-immigration stance in some public quarters” and the notion that non-white immigrants are a burden to Canadian society. In fact, he shows how immigration has contributed greatly to Canada’s population growth, economy, cultural enrichment and urban life. Li certainly achieves his aim of being “as accessible as possible to a wide audience.” His study will thus be of value not only to students of sociology but to anyone interested in the immigration debate and in global issues.

The contribution of immigrants to Canada’s cultural enrichment pointed at by Li is illustrated by the life-writings of eleven contemporary émigré authors and public figures published in *Passages* (Michelle Berry, Ying Chen, Brian D. Johnson, Dany Laferrière, Alberto Manguel, Anna Porter, Nino Ricci, Shyam Selvadurai, M. G. Vassanji, Ken Wiwa, Moses Znaimer). Immigrant experiences of otherness and of multiple identities emerge as crucial for their creativity, for they provide, in Michelle Berry’s words, “a space outside both countries,” “the lucky position of an observer” from which to explore the cultures of both Canada and their homelands. The physical distance from their homelands and its personal or cultural confines, as is illustrated by Wiwa and Selvadurai, enables them to discover and to express themselves. Conflicting commitments to the old and new countries are addressed by Michael Ignatieff in his introduction to the volume. He urges newcomers to take their identities and their memories of political injustices along to Canada but to leave any “fantasies of revenge” behind. Referring to the funding and fanning of violence in other countries by Canadian diasporas, he asks Canadians to rethink the myth of Canada as a refuge from hatred. He points to Canada’s image

as a welcoming country as another myth to re-evaluate. While the contributors to this collection emphasize (some more than others) the generosity, openness and safety that Canada offers, particularly the individual experiences of some of the non-white émigré authors in *Passages* reflect some of Li's findings. Racism is transmitted through the devaluation of their educational credentials (Selvadurai), or experiences at work (Laferrrière), or with Canada Customs officers (Chen). Vassanji seems to echo Li's admonition to "embrace the opportunity of becoming a truly multicultural and multiracial nation" when he invokes Canada's diversity as its "strength and its identity, its uniqueness—not its source of insecurity." Conjuring up the immigration experience, the publication of *Passages* is certainly one more successful step by the Dominion Institute in articulating the diverse richness of Canadian history. The website provides, among other information, a free curriculum-based teachers' resource booklet for six of the immigration accounts.

All three books provide valuable insights into a subject matter very much at the core of modern experience and are to be recommended to anyone interested in migration and identity, but especially to those concerned with the Canadian immigration experience.

Mysteries of the Quotidian

Brenda Baker

The Maleness of God. Coteau Books \$16.95

Susan Zettell

Night Watch. Signature Editions \$14.95

Reviewed by Shannon Catherine MacRae

The Maleness of God and *Night Watch*, two short story collections written by relatively new authors, cover the familiar territory of the casual cruelty of families, mistaken epiphanies, and the emptiness of nostalgia. Yet, while the main themes that both Baker

and Zettell explore are not new, both collections continually surprise with their shared freshness, lyrical yet economical use of language, and the ability to draw the reader into a space where the mundane becomes infused with meaning. Both capture the raw significance of the everyday without bogging the reader down with heavy-handed symbolism.

Night Watch, which is in many ways reminiscent of Alice Munro's *Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You* or *Lives of Girls and Women*, is a meditation on loss. Nearly all of the stories are organized around one of the many incarnations of loss that Zettell enumerates, which are further startling in their variety. The quartet for which the collection is named, "Night Watch," follows Pamela, who is first encountered in "Nimbostratus" on the cusp of leaving her childhood behind at a bus station, through to her inability to deal with the death of her thirty-three year old sister and, finally, to a broken marriage and minimum-wage job at an armoured car company. Yet, Pamela's recognition of her various losses, which form the frames through which Zettell organizes the quartet, occurs through the most unlikely of mediums. In "November," Pamela "perfected her pie crust" while her sister, Cecily, lingers before her eventual death. She then becomes driven to bake new pies everyday in an effort to believe that Cecily, who can only manage "three or four spoonfuls" of baby food or yogurt at best, secretly eats the pie that is left for her in some elaborate overnight game. When Pamela returns in the evening prior to Cecily's death and notices the janitor demolishing the pie that she had left behind, she finally realizes that she is simply assuaging her own guilt. Likewise, in "Anniversary," Pamela recalls her mother's attachment to "Miss Caw," a local crow with a predilection for expensive all-beef hotdogs, and Pamela's own later solitary encounter with the crow, who pecks at the

eyeball of a freshly killed squirrel. This bizarre detail dovetails nicely with Zettell's larger purpose in the story: the marking of the one year "anniversary" of Pamela's divorce, which, true to Zettell's coy playfulness, is duly reported to be celebrated with her parents and a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken. Zettell's enormous skill in drawing believable characters is continuously highlighted throughout the quartet, as well as in other such stories as "Clafouti aux cerises" and "Facts About Niagara."

A real strength across this collection is how the stories are narrated in order to match the reader's recognition with the characters' own slow visionary progress. *Night Watch* is far from a cozy read, as these stories feature Zettell's special ability to catch her reader unaware and to highlight the brutality which lurks underneath the everyday.

Baker's *The Maleness of God*, which won the Saskatchewan Writer's Guild literary award for fiction in manuscript form, is the ideal companion piece to Zettell's collection. While, *The Maleness of God* is not as overtly thematically arranged as Zettell's collection, this first impression is dispelled by Baker's examination of the various ways in which cruelty, chance, and miscommunication hamper relationships. Baker has an uncanny ability to create a nearly instantaneous emotional reaction in her reader. The first story of the collection, "Bathing Dad," is wrenching in its examination of the relationship between an adult woman and her ageing father. When Marian describes bathing her father, something which at first was an unwelcome chore, she finds that her entire perception of him has been remediated through such intimate contact with his body:

Without him watching or talking, bathing my father became kind of a private thing between me and his body. And it's the physical things I most often remember now. Like his hip. The flesh fell into the bone and made a perfect curve. I loved to

look at it, even though the skin hung loose and spotted.

This recognition of the bodily connection between father and daughter is striking, and typifies Baker's capacity to explore familial relationships in ways that are simultaneously accessible and innovative.

The story for which Baker's collection is named, "The Maleness of God," explores the territory of the religious right, and tenderly describes the spiritual crisis of Louise, who discovers that her son is tentatively, and secretly, exploring emerging homosexual feelings. Baker writes without judgement and the story reads without any feeling of didacticism; in fact, the story is resolved with Louise's conviction that she can retain her spirituality and her relationship with her son. While drinking tea at a gas station snack bar, Louise experiences a spiritual revelation, something which, from past events relayed by the narrator, has been slowly building. Within the unlikely location, and only after hitting and killing a deer, Louise finds a place where she can accept her son's choice and realizes that he "would remain in the fold, whatever fold would have them both." As with all of Baker's stories in the collection, "The Maleness of God" presents a world where polarities meld into one another and ambivalence is the default emotion. Baker should be commended for handling such topical themes without being influenced by the typical rhetoric that so often surrounds literary attempts to work out these issues.

Canadian Letters

Donna Bennett and Russell Brown, eds.

A New Anthology of Canadian Literature in English. Oxford UP \$57.95

Reviewed by Gordon Bölling

At the close of their introductory essay, the editors of *A New Anthology of Canadian Literature in English*, argue that "the

literature we have is richly multiple and various and endlessly fascinating.” This assessment of the diversity of the Canadian literary imagination is borne out by the thoughtful selection of classic favourites and contemporary texts collected in this new edition. Two decades after the publication of the original two-volume version and twelve years after the release of the first one-volume edition, Donna Bennett and Russell Brown re-examine the development of Canadian literature in English and present an updated and thoroughly revised edition of their notable anthology.

Although the emphasis is on twentieth-century writing and in particular on works published after the Second World War, the collection neglects neither the beginnings of a literary culture in the eighteenth century nor the growth of Canadian literature in the nineteenth century. The fictional texts gathered range from Frances Brooke’s epistolary novel *The History of Emily Montague* to the contemporary verse of Anne Carson, and from Sara Jeannette Duncan’s masterpiece *The Imperialist* to Aritha van Herk’s geografictione *Places Far from Ellesmere*. Featured, among many other Canadian authors, are such prominent writers as Thomas Chandler Haliburton, Dorothy Livesay, Sheila Watson, Mavis Gallant, Tomson Highway, and Dionne Brand. Making use of a wide definition of literature, Donna Bennett and Russell Brown also include a number of texts that are generally considered to belong to non-fictional genres. Among these are the exploration narratives of Samuel Hearne and David Thompson as well as John Franklin’s and Dr. John Richardson’s *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea in the Years 1819, 20, 21 and 22*. The genre of travel writing is represented by excerpts from Anna Brownell Jameson’s *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada*, whereas Catharine Parr Traill’s *The Backwoods of Canada* and

Susanna Moodie’s *Roughing It in the Bush* serve as examples of the form of the pioneer memoir. In addition to the annotated primary texts themselves, the anthology contains an introductory overview of Canadian literature, and headnotes on the life and oeuvre of each writer. These editorial materials are supplemented by nine, at times very short, essays, which seek to illuminate the broader contexts of a particular genre or historical event. The excerpt from Jane Urquhart’s most recent novel, *The Stone Carvers*, for example, is complemented by a short text on the First World War in Canadian literature and art.

The present collection testifies to the richness of Canadian prose and verse. However, questions could be raised concerning the exclusion of drama. Although this genre’s length does not lend itself easily to the inclusion in anthologies, the editors’ policy is problematic insofar as it fails to recognize the remarkable achievements of Canadian playwrights such as James Reaney, Sharon Pollock, and others. Excepting the absence of drama, *A New Anthology* offers its readers a well-balanced selection.

Maritime Narratives

Josiah Blackmore

Manifest Perdition: Shipwreck Narrative and the Disruption of Empire. U of Minnesota P us \$18.95

Robert Foulke

The Sea Voyage Narrative. Routledge \$28.95

Reviewed by Bryan N.S. Gooch

Josiah Blackmore’s approach to the record of peril and death in early Portuguese seafaring offers much to both the literary scholar and the student of Iberian expansion. His scholarship is careful and impressive, and his discourse critical, reflective, and persuasive. He begins his prologue with the story of the wreck (1552) of the *S. João* off the coast of east Africa, with the

captain, his wife, children and other survivors further imperilled on shore, and points out how such accounts became the stuff of legend and material for the literary world. He argues strongly for the distinctiveness of the shipwreck genre during Portuguese expansionism, and points—more than once in the book—to the way in which imperial quests, with the sea as both road to riches and adversary, could be frustrated and defeated, with goods of immense value cast into the waves in futile attempts to save a vessel. His coverage ranges from Alfonso X's *Cantigas de Santa Maria* to the fascinating and, indeed, riveting texts of the *História Trágico-Marítima* (two volumes compiled by Bernardo Gomes de Brito in the early eighteenth century and a third not supervised by da Brito). These texts encompass sinking, stranding, overland treks of appalling difficulty, and they tell of sickness, death, and, in many cases, enormous courage. Passages from the narratives are punctuated by critical observations. These relate not just to the nature of the events described but also attend to the metaphoric textures of the writing as the authors deal with the doom of a beautifully constructed ship. A reflection of shipwright's skill and national pride, smashed and torn, the vessel becomes a reminder of human frailty as it is turned into a waterlogged archaeological site or rudely bashed into thousands of widely scattered bits. In the annals of any nation bent on exploration and conquest there will inevitably be failures—such is the price of curiosity and imperial ambition. Blackmore's notes are generous, and the bibliography is a splendid resource for those wishing to explore the field and the whole issue of Iberian maritime ventures.

The Sea Voyage Narrative is, in many ways, a happy complement to the Portuguese sagas, for Foulke's range is much greater, moving from general comments on "The Nature of Voyaging" to focused considera-

tions of early navigation/pilotage and *The Odyssey*, to the travels of Columbus and Cook, to the "quest" stories of Melville (*Moby Dick*) and Hemingway (*The Old Man and the Sea*), to the problem of endurance as revealed by Conrad (*The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*) and finally to twentieth-century narratives, including stories by Mathiessen, Golding, Monsarrat, Slocum, Hayden, and Wouk. This volume makes a sure-footed sweep through a variety of material amid clear evidence that this is an author who has done his own seafaring. Foulke's concluding "Bibliographic Essay" is a *tour de force*. His list of recommended readings is useful to anyone wishing to explore a wide span of material, both fiction and non-fiction. While neither of the volumes deals with specifically Canadian narratives, these two books have distinguished lessons to offer which cross the boundaries of national cultures.

Petites victimes, petites terreurs

Camille Bouchard

Les petits soldats. Triptyque \$25.00

François Désalliers

Des steaks pour les élèves. Québec/Amérique, \$24.95

Comptes rendus par Édouard Magessa O'Reilly

Camille Bouchard nous propose un roman engagé qui dénonce l'exploitation des enfants et François Désalliers raconte les aventures rocambolesques d'un professeur de cégep martyrisé par ses élèves.

Les petits soldats de Camille Bouchard fait alterner deux narrateurs aux préoccupations assez différentes. Marie-Christine part au Caire chercher son amant, disparu sans laisser de trace il y a deux ans. Une lettre retrouvée au hasard lui met la puce à l'oreille : Jérôme serait parti inopinément en Afrique pour répondre à la demande d'aide d'un ami. Marie-Christine court à sa

poursuite. Son compagnon de voyage sera Raphaël, le fils d'une amie. Adolescent timide, Raphaël se déniaisera au cours de cette aventure et deviendra un homme : il aura à se battre et découvrira l'amour.

Arrivés au Caire, Marie-Christine et Raphaël se trouvent mêlés à la lutte contre l'exploitation des jeunes et rencontrent Milagre, qui ressemble comme deux gouttes d'eau au Jérôme disparu. Soudain, tous doivent fuir devant des agents de gouvernements et de groupes militaires qui pratiquent l'enrôlement obligatoire des mineurs. S'ensuit un récit qui avance de malheur en contretemps, périple du Caire au Sinaï puis en Érythrée et en Éthiopie que racontent à tour de rôle Marie-Christine et Raphaël. Leurs discours se relaient sans solution de continuité, toute recherche stylistique (à l'exception des répliques de Milagre) étant subordonnée au propos. Les intitulés de chapitre énumèrent les personnages rencontrés en cours de route, personnages qui représentent les points de vue variés de tous ceux qui participent au drame des enfants soldats. On rencontre les exploitants et les défenseurs, puis on entend des témoignages émouvants de jeunes combattants, marqués à vie par leurs expériences.

Et cet homme, Milagre, que Marie-Christine a retrouvé dans le Sinaï, est-ce son amant métamorphosé ? Et si c'est lui, pourquoi aurait-il si brusquement quitté sa vie au Québec pour devenir libérateur d'enfants soldats en Afrique ? On sera peut-être surpris de l'in vraisemblance d'une femme qui, malgré un long côtoïement dans des conditions de catastrophe, demeure dans le doute quant à son identité. Les explications attendues sont sans cesse remises à cause d'un nouveau revirement dans les événements. Une fois élucidées, elles révèlent deux intrigues savamment complémentaires mais entre lesquelles il y a une telle disproportion de texte que l'une paraît greffée sur l'autre, simple prétexte à un roman engagé.

Le récit sert les besoins du sujet et adopte la voie du réalisme documentaire. On y retrouve des exposés du soufisme ou de l'exploitation des jeunes au tiers-monde ainsi que des bouts d'exotisme. *Les petits soldats* peuvent nous apprendre des choses sur le Tiers Monde mais l'accent mis sur le référent, sur la représentation fidèle des points de vue et des situations finit par donner un récit quelque peu épisodique. Si vague que soit ce terme, le roman manque d'art.

Si *Les petits soldats* souffrent d'un excès de sérieux documentaire, *Des steaks pour les élèves* de François Désalliers exhibe peut-être trop d'insouciance. Le roman de Désalliers illustre le dicton « L'enseignement, c'est tuant ! ». Clarence, homme de théâtre au chômage, est séduit par l'offre d'un salaire régulier et accepte de devenir prof de théâtre dans un cégep. Son nouveau milieu lui en fait voir de toutes les couleurs et le fait passer à un cheveu de la mort. Lorsque le dicton en question est textualisé, à trois pages de la fin, le lecteur l'a déjà vu venir.

L'univers romanesque s'élabore sous le signe du surréalisme, en commençant par une onomastique des plus fantaisistes. La prof de chimie s'appelle Boum et la prof d'anglais Smallwood, d'autres s'appellent Couac et Spokenhere. Une étudiante brillante mais particulièrement réfractaire s'appelle Tête-bêche, son père Bêche-tête. L'intrigue énumère des événements aussi invraisemblables que les noms. L'interview entre Clarence et la directrice de l'école commence par un bras de fer. Lors de leur première réunion de l'année, les professeurs parlent moins de pédagogie que du nombre de boucles d'oreille à autoriser chez les étudiantes et tout se mesure par la quantité de beignets et la température du café que fournit l'administration. Le titre du roman renvoie à un épisode rocambolesque où le pauvre Clarence, à bout de ressources devant ses élèves impatientes et rouspétards, leur distribue des steaks pour les faire taire.

Quant aux installations, l'école comprend des tunnels et une cave où quelques membres du personnel enseignant vont s'imbiber des meilleurs crus. (C'est aussi dans cette cave que Clarence commencera une liaison amoureuse avec sa collègue Miss Smallwood.) Une des penderies de l'école est habitée par un dénommé Guenille, sorte de sans logis—trait oblique—sage.

Dans ce milieu loufoque, Clarence passe par toutes les épreuves, les petites et les grandes. Parmi celles-ci, la liaison amoureuse avec Miss Smallwood menace sa vie familiale et le conflit de personnalité avec Tête-bêche menace jusqu'à sa vie. Mais tout finira bien. Si sa maison est emportée par l'acte pyromane de l'étudiante, son mariage tient le coup et malgré tous ses malheurs, Clarence monte avec succès les spectacles de Noël et de fin d'année. Sa première année d'enseignement se termine en beauté et Clarence en sort indemne, prêt à affronter une nouvelle année scolaire.

Et voilà précisément ce que l'on peut reprocher à ce roman. À la dernière page, tout recommence. Mais s'agit-il d'un cycle éternel grâce auquel la sagesse des âges s'accumule ? C'est plutôt la légèreté du *sitcom* américain où tout se passe mais où rien ne porte à conséquence. Ce n'était que pour rire, pour passer une petite heure, sagement inscrite à l'horaire.

Cette légèreté (inoffensive ? insidieuse ?) mise à part, *Des steaks pour les élèves* est une lecture que d'aucuns jugeront appropriée aux lecteurs adolescents. Le texte est bien écrit : le vocabulaire est précis et varié, les personnages sont intéressants et le récit habilement construit. C'est sans contester un roman divertissant, qui leur fera passer quelques heures en contact avec un discours de qualité.



Orbiting Toronto

Dionne Brand

Thirsty. McClelland and Stewart \$16.99

Reviewed by Heather Smyth

Dionne Brand's latest work is a long poem set in Toronto. *Thirsty* revisits the moment in May, 1980, when Alan—Jamaican-Canadian immigrant, prophet, and representative echo of similar incidents in the 1970s and 80s—is shot by police at his home and falls, whispering “thirsty,” sending out ripples of horror and beauty that touch the city. The memories of Alan's daughter, wife Julia, and mother Chloe become a yearly cycle of mourning into which the poet steps. These three women describe an “orbit” that passes through other peoples' lives and stories, prompting the poet to reflect on the ways that gesture, proximity, and pain bind strangers into a community.

Alan's thirst—for passion, flowers, a “calm loving spot” even though “the world doesn't love you”—becomes a metaphor for the poet's craving for language and hope: “thirst I know, and falling, thirst for fragrant / books, a waiting peace, for life . . . I crave of course being human as he must have.” The city around her becomes a sentence in the making: Alan's falling body is a “parched . . . declension / a curved caesura”; Julia's face is “a mixture of twigs and ink she's like paper”; Somali women “hyphenate” Scarlett Road; immigrant memories of home are “pluperfect.” Brand's reflections on the poet's craft blend seamlessly with her account of Alan's killing and the wounded city. Her search for a language is part of this wounding:

I can't touch syllables
tenderness, throats.
Look it's like this, I'm just like the rest,
limping across the city, flying when I can.

Brand's recent texts repeatedly address similar images and questions. *A Map to*

the Door of No Return, for instance, reflects on the visceral need and impossibility of charting a pathway “home” past histories of slavery, migration, and racism in the Black diaspora. That book searches for ways to imagine community and diasporic identity that do not lead to a reification of origins or to “calcified hyphenated” nationalisms. One of Brand’s solutions in both *Map* and *Thirsty* is the fragile connection that exists among strangers when their lives intersect in a city. Toronto, in this long poem, is a community held together by proximity in space and parallel histories. In contrast to “set notions” of culture in “chrysalises” of origins, Brand proposes, “no voyage is seamless. Nothing in a city is discrete. / A city is all inter-polation.”

The detritus of the city, “wrappers, coffee cups,” “pizza boxes, dead couches,” may numb the poet; the “dreadfulness” that haunts Alan—murders, race-killings, and sexual predation—may lead Brand to the edge of panic and despair. But in this city the poet also finds a deeply humane source of life and almost-comfort: in “the brittle, gnawed life we live, / I am held, and held” in an embrace by intimate strangers, “as if we need each other to breathe, to bring / it into sense.” What links communities in this vision of Toronto is not simply a universalistic “common humanity,” but the patterns by which lives lived in very specific and individual ways brush up against (or run headlong into) the same structures of oppression and exclusion. The final poem is a particularly aching articulation of these connections: when the poet wakes at night to the sound of sirens, she hears “someone’s life falling apart . . . [someone] caught human,” and it leaves her “open as doorways, breathless as a coming hour, and undone.” *Thirsty* as a whole strikes this balance between lushness and asceticism, and does so in a profoundly satisfying way.

The Decline of “Sisterhood”

Ruth Compton Brouwer

Modern Women Modernizing Men: The Changing Missions of Three Professional Women in Asia and Africa, 1902–69. UBC Press \$85.00/\$29.95

Myra Rutherdale

Women and the White Man’s God: Gender and Race in the Canadian Mission Field. UBC Press \$85.00/\$29.95

Reviewed by Margaret Prang

The first of these books is an important interpretative work about women in overseas missions between the two world wars. Brouwer focuses on the careers of three Canadian women, “as case studies of a missionary world in transition” under the impact of secularization and a growing emphasis on professionalism. Brouwer is a master of condensed yet readable prose: in a mere 131 pages of text she sketches three eventful lives in sufficient detail to establish her argument. Any of the three would be worth a full-scale biography.

The careers of Dr. Choné Oliver in British India, Dr. Florence Murray in Japanese and post-colonial Korea, and Margaret Wrong in Africa, illuminate the decline of “sisterhood,” or “women’s work for women,” as a major rationale for female missionary labours overseas. In their efforts to raise medical and educational standards, all three women became increasingly involved in a professional world of male students and colleagues.

After two decades of pioneering hospital work, Choné Oliver devoted herself to the restructuring of Christian medical work in India through the establishment of a Christian medical college based on the highest professional standards of western medicine. She met resistance from missionary bureaucrats and Christians, both Indian and foreign, who adhered to older ideas of medicine as an instrument of evangelism rather than to Oliver’s ideal

of professional service in the spirit of Jesus, "the Great Physician." Eventually, the American sponsored Vellore Medical College was upgraded and affiliated with the University of Madras in 1950. Oliver's vision of "men and women capable of being colleagues and eventually successors" was on the way to being realized.

When Florence Murray arrived at the Presbyterian (after 1925, United Church) mission hospital in northern Korea in 1921 she was horrified by conditions there. In twenty years she built up a modern hospital and began training doctors. Korean girls almost always married, and were restricted in becoming doctors, but a male doctor was a long-term investment in Korea's medical progress. A zealous teacher of her specialty, surgery, Murray's initial relations were often tense with interns unaccustomed to instruction from a demanding woman. In time, her strong commitment to their professional development and personal well-being won the respect of her male colleagues. After the Korean war, Murray spent several rewarding years in relief and refugee work in Pusan under various NGOs and continued to play a significant role in the medical education of both men and women in South Korea.

Margaret Wrong's "good" family background and connections, her Toronto and Oxford education, and a decade of work with Protestant ecumenical organizations, fit well with the plans of the International Missionary Council for the restructuring of missionary educational work in Africa. In 1929 she was appointed Secretary of the International Committee on Christian Literature for Africa, a position she held until her sudden death in Uganda in 1949. During four major tours of sub-Saharan Africa she established endless connections and committees for the promotion of literature for and by Africans, relying mainly on the support of male African intellectuals and writers who were initially the chief

beneficiaries of her initiatives. Since few women were literate, they could do little to raise the level of literacy at that time. In common with Oliver and Murray, Wrong had a "feminist consciousness" which made her sympathetically aware of the barriers to women's advancement. Brouwer defends all three women against any suggestion that they "sold out" to male agendas; she contends that "they bowed to circumstances for the time when necessary and they rose to many occasions." Their compromises facilitated gains that eventually benefitted women as well as men.

Rutherford's study of Anglican women missionaries in British Columbia, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories is a valuable addition to the sparse literature on domestic missions, especially on women missionaries. The author notes that if missionary wives are included, then women were a majority of missionaries in the north. Their inclusion is legitimate, since wives usually worked as hard as their husbands or single women in the mission field. Nearly all of them served under the low church Church Missionary Society until the formation in 1920 of the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada.

The experiences of 132 women on the northern mission frontier from 1860 to 1940 bear some similarities to Brouwer's three case studies. In the Canadian north, the colonial context of missions was even more evident, since the Church of England was highly conscious that it served outposts of Empire and of "Canada's colonies." As was the case overseas, female friendships and "sisterhood" remained important in private life, but traditional gender roles were frequently blurred by work: of necessity, nurses often provided services normally given only by doctors; women missionaries frequently performed all the work of the clergy, save administering the sacraments, (they could not be ordained until 1976) but they were effectively

excluded from official power. Yet Rutherford shows how “the rhetoric of subordination was most often in contrast to women’s actual experience.” Further, close contact with diverse Aboriginal cultures eroded racial stereotypes as women came to understand how much they could learn from native peoples about living in a northern land.

The author has made excellent use of a wealth of archival sources and contemporary printed accounts and has a fine eye for lively and revealing quotation. Both books are well footnoted, have useful bibliographies and indexes, and well chosen photographs and maps.

Encountering the Other

Marie Carrière

Writing in the Feminine in French and English Canada: A Question of Ethics. U of Toronto P \$58.00

Rosemary Sullivan

Labyrinth of Desire: Women, Passion and Romantic Obsession. HarperFlamingo Canada \$26.00

Reviewed by Mary Jean Green

Asserting that literary and ethical studies have been moving closer together in recent years, Marie Carrière explores the ethical perspective developed in the work of five Canadian feminist poets, anglophone and francophone: Nicole Brossard, France Théoret, Di Brandt, Erin Mouré, and Lola Lemire Tostevin. Their work can be seen as fitting within the movement known as “writing in the feminine,” seen by Carrière as a historical phenomenon of the 1970s and 1980s, now more interesting for its ethical insights than its radical stance. While emphasizing the ethical dimension may place unusual demands on what are essentially poetic, rather than philosophical texts, Carrière’s probing analysis brings this group of writers together in exciting new ways and illuminates their contribution to feminist thought.

In their feminist ethics, these five writers attempt to rethink intersubjective relationships according to a model that is, in Carrière’s view, best defined by French philosopher Paul Ricoeur: “the esteem of the other as a oneself and the esteem of oneself as another.” This is a dialectic that Carrière also sees as being at the core of the mother-daughter bond. Although Ricoeur is not commonly invoked as an influence on feminist theory, his formulations of reciprocal intersubjective relationships do provide a philosophical statement relevant to certain concepts developed by Canadian feminists, particularly Brossard’s “*même différence*.” And through their common indebtedness to fellow philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, Carrière links Ricoeur to French feminist Luce Irigaray and her analysis of the mother-daughter dyad. Supplemented by references to Julia Kristeva and Jacques Derrida, the trinity of Lévinas, Ricoeur, and Irigaray serves as the basis of Carrière’s ethical analysis, firmly grounding her work in a type of Continental philosophy she sees as particularly relevant to writers in Quebec.

Nicole Brossard’s work, and particularly *L’Amèr*, with its specific focus on the maternal, lends itself admirably to Carrière’s ethical model. Although Carrière is admittedly troubled by the vehemence of Brossard’s explicitly matricidal statements (“*J’ai tué le ventre*”), she revels in Brossard’s evolution toward a relational ethic, where mothers and daughters dance together, taking pleasure in their sameness and difference. Indeed, the matricidal impulse seems unknown to Carrière’s theoretical trinity. Her understanding of Brossard might have been nuanced and enriched by reference to American feminist Adrienne Rich, whose work, like *L’Amèr*, moves through what she calls “*matrophobia*” to arrive at a concept of relationship not unlike Ricoeur’s.

Despite its initial violence, however,

Brossard's work provides a good illustration of Carrière's model, as do the writings of anglophone poet Di Brandt. The analysis of the work of Erin Mouré, however, seems more forced. Carrière must expend a greater effort to discern a female ethics based in what she calls "maternalism," an ethics which, as Carrière acknowledges, "may not always be sustained in her [Mouré's] poetry." Her reading of Lola Lemire Tostevin is much more convincing, enabled by Tostevin's clear focus on linguistic conflict between the dominant (phallogocentric) English and her suppressed French mother tongue, a phenomenon which, as Carrière points out, alludes to the thought of Derrida and Kristeva.

What is most interesting about Carrière's project is her attempt to bring together the work of these francophone and anglophone feminist writers around a shared ethical stance. And this, almost inevitably, constitutes her work's greatest problem. Committed to a model of feminine interrelationship based on the mother-daughter bond, Carrière has some difficulty with writers who refuse to conform. A case in point is France Théoret, whose strong emphasis on relationships between women is clearly congruent with Carrière's expectations. Indeed, in her lucid essays (*Entre raison et déraison*), Théoret herself refers to the philosophy of Lévinas. But Théoret's own representation of the maternal as an oppressive construction of the Quebec patriarchy does not readily present itself as the basis of a relational ethic, however much Carrière tries to see the mother in Théoret's texts as proposing "at least the possibility of female ethical exchange."

Carrière's readings of individual writers are generally attentive to the specificity of their poetic texts, but at times she seems to demand of them a coherence and comprehensiveness more likely to be found in formal ethical theory. At times, she uses her ethical model not only as a means to create

new understanding of the texts but also as a perspective from which to point out their contradictions. Yet, despite its somewhat contentious view of the texts under study, Carrière's analysis reminds us of the intensity and intellectual sophistication of the feminist project of the 1970s and 80s and brings new life to the work of these five important writers.

Rosemary Sullivan's approach to inter-subjective relationships in *Labyrinth of Desire* is quite different. In one chapter, she writes: "Opening to another is risky business. When we fall in love, the psyche wakes up. Love is dangerous. Sometimes it even feels like a calamity." Sullivan's subject is women's experiences of passion and romantic obsession, experiences which have arguably inspired much of the world's great literature.

Sullivan has made her name as a literary biographer (one of the subjects of her biographical research, Elizabeth Smart, also figures prominently in this text), and one of the most fascinating aspects of her book is her interest in revealing the real-life obsessions that contributed to some of the great romantic obsessions of literature. Beneath Jane Eyre's attraction to Rochester, she unearths Charlotte Brönte's unrequited love for a Belgian professor, and behind Jean Rhys' rewriting of Brönte's classic novel, a life of failed romance. Her women writers build on their intense but troubled passions to construct their life's work, as did Goethe, who turned a passing affection into young Werther, the model of the romantic hero. But with Goethe's life, Sullivan is less sympathetic, finding him quickly seeking consolation with other women, even before his original ardour had time to cool. In Sullivan's view, passion has different effects on the lives of women.

Perhaps because of Sullivan's unwavering focus on heterosexual relationships, her emphasis is on sexual difference and lack of understanding between women and their

male love-objects, an emphasis that leads to some strange generalizations, often supported by one or two personal or literary examples. An example is her judgment that, “Women can’t fully know who they are unless men tell them.” But such reflections are unobjectionable in the open literary form Sullivan has chosen, an unstable genre falling somewhere between fiction, personal confession, essay and literary biography.

Odysseys

George Elliott Clarke

Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature. U of Toronto P \$38.95.

Reviewed by Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi

George Elliott Clarke’s *Odysseys Home* is a welcome addition to scholarship on African-Canadian literature. This volume features scholarly essays, informative book reviews and a comprehensive bibliography of African-Canadian literature from 1785 to 2001. The book’s prefatory and programmatic essay, “Embarkation: Discovering African-Canadian Literature,” grounds Clarke’s essays in his upbringing as a member of a black minority community in Nova Scotia.

The key tasks in Clarke’s momentous project are the retrieval of African-Canadian literary legacies and the documentation of an African-Canadian literary genealogy that proves Black Canadian literary activity did not begin with the wave of immigrants from the Caribbean in the 1960s, as other scholars have mistakenly assumed. Ultimately, the author’s undertaking is to remedy what he calls ‘crimes’ against African-Canadian literature. Chief among these crimes are evacuations and misconstructions of African-Canada’s plurivocality as well as the production and dissemination of “faulty parallels with African-American literature and culture.” A polarisation flickers in these essays as Clarke argues the existence of a heteroge-

neous Black Canada but is constantly at pains to highlight the genealogy of black presence in Canada dating back to the advent of the Black Loyalists. This tension is, arguably, best described as a concentration on blackness within the nation in contradistinction to critics commenting on blackness from the discursive structures of diaspora studies. (For comparison, interested readers could look at essays on African-Canadian literature by Diana Brydon, Rinaldo Walcott, and David Chariandy, amongst others.)

Clarke’s own odyssey becomes specifically pertinent within the context of the relationships of Canada’s many black parts to its alleged ‘white whole.’ It would be reductive to argue a total synchronization between the author’s academic work and his travel itineraries. But Clarke’s excavations of Black Nova Scotian (Africadian) literature and culture are best understood as part of the urgent demonstration of over two centuries’ of African-inflected cultures in Canada, of which he is part. The essays “The Career of Black English in Nova Scotia” and “The Birth and Rebirth of Africadian Literature” perform the task of retrieval. “Harris, Philip, Brand: Three Authors in Search of Literate Criticism” examines the misprisions attending the beatification of the trio of Harris, Philip and Brand as well as the resulting ‘erasure’ of other African-Canadian writers. The reasons for the success of the “triumvirate” and the erasure of others demand further study.

Clarke argues strongly for the diversity of cultures and experiences that have nurtured Black Canadian writing. He contends, especially, that Black Canadian writers are caught between nationalism and assimilation. This basic charge informs “Clarke versus Clarke: Tory Elitism in Austin Clarke’s Short Fiction,” “Liberalism and Its Discontents: Reading Black and White in Contemporary Quebec,” and “Toward a Conservative Modernity: Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary

Acadian and Africadian Poetry.” Attention to the genealogies of African-Canadian writing undergirds the arguments in “Treason of Black Intellectuals,” “Contesting a Model Blackness” and “Must All Blackness Be American?” This triad repays special scrutiny because they present Clarke at his most incisive and polemical. The last two essays attempt to wrestle Black Canadian writing from under Black America’s long shadow.

The accent is on *attempt* because as much as the author maintains the imbrications of Black Canadian writing in non-American traditions, Black Canadian literature is repeatedly defined in opposition to African-American literature. Given that African-American blackness is precisely what is being contested, some degree of concentration on the United States is to be expected in both investigations of the uses and deployments of African-American blackness. The critique of Gilroy is laudable but, as Clarke points out, the latter’s invective against African-American ethnocentrism is riddled with contradictions. Clarke concludes, rightly I say, that there is no model blackness despite the prominence of Black America within discourses of the African diaspora. Clarke mentions Stuart Hall briefly in his introduction but focuses on Paul Gilroy’s work. (A book promoting trans-Atlantic and trans-national black experience, *The Black Atlantic* concentrates, largely, on African-American authors and African-American experience.) I suspect that subsequent scholarship on Black Canadian letters will be engaging paradigms—outside of America—that could not be considered in this already expansive book.

Because these essays evolved separately over time, reading them together as one publication can daunt the faint-hearted. Readers will particularly need agile brainwork to keep abreast of Clarke’s arguments as they evolve from one essay to the other. I sometimes wished that key arguments

that surface in several essays were enunciated forcefully in one ‘take.’ For example, repeating in several essays that African-Canadian writing does not begin with the Caribbean influx blunts the edge of a critical statement. Similarly, it can be challenging to follow Clarke as he (at times) criticizes and again embraces Black America. At work in these pages is a series of strategic essentialisms and borrowings according to which it is at times crucial to contest an African-American model of blackness and occasionally expedient to make use of *the* African-American experience or to absorb important African-American writers into the African-Canadian canon.

There is little doubt that *Odysseys Home* will become a point of reference for scholars of both African-Canadian writing and critics of the Canadian canon. The author’s ample bibliography rounds off a truly remarkable volume. Clarke’s writing is at turns witty and acerbic. Often, it is boldly assertive—I know of no other critic who steadfastly appends racial descriptions to fellow commentators. Groundwork of such value prompts fresh and thought-provoking responses.

Black Like To Who(m)?

Wayde Compton

49th Parallel Psalm. Advance Editions, \$15.95

Reviewed by Julian Manyoni

How does one approach a text that has variously been described as encapsulating “the 150-year story of Black folks in British Columbia” (George Bowering), an “insightful examination of the construction of the African Canadian subject” (Kwame Dawes) and “the sound/song of Black Canadian geographies” (Rinaldo Walcott)? For me, it is with a sense of profound skepticism. Any time I see a text purported to provide some kind of ‘authentic’ insight into a racialized subject I automatically

cringe: especially when I am one of those subjects being described.

The basic theme of *49th Parallel Psalm* revolves around questions of Black history in British Columbia, with a focus on movement that points to Rinaldo Walcott's pet theme of intra-continental migration patterns forming a central part of the Canadian Black experience. Compton's writing develops this theme with numerous poems that focus on motion, whether migration, dance, children at play, or even spinning turntables manipulated by a hip hop DJ. Compton's poems create an image of Blackness as a state of constant flux.

Inscribed in these poems are stories of hope and bitter disappointment, racism, irony, struggle, grim resignation, and strength. Compton combines elements of traditional African-American folklore, Caribbean voodoo and allegorical tales with a dose of contemporary Black popular culture, through a variety of assumed personae, in order to examine critically what it is to be "Black" in Canada—or perhaps as much what it is to be not-Black. The most telling moments in this book occur when Compton uses Black experience of the white gaze to reflect that gaze back on itself. "Legba, Landed," for example, illustrates the more sinister aspects of the migrant experience, exposing white xenophobia hidden in the national rhetoric of tolerance and multiculturalism:

here eyes bear the white burden
of watchful wardens
dutiful citizens in
lower mainlands
patrol each shade of un
white, each stray curl of un
straight, each singular hint of un
settled seeking for home

"Jamb" takes this silent white hostility and returns it with equal venom: "Your skin is your ID. you are what you wear. / you're your ear. So what you starin / at, Jack? punk best to back the fuck up. got me // a razor

and a flask of lightning-white rupture / tucked in the folds of my fines." Compton continually takes aim at the myth of Canada as a haven for immigrants and a land of opportunity, highlighting the impenetrability of borders in numerous pieces. Reminiscent of Dionne Brand's scathing criticisms of Canada's unfriendly shores, "The Book," which exposes the white gaze and Black ambivalence to it, is perhaps one of Compton's most effective critiques—a story all too familiar to any Black person entering the country, whether as an immigrant or as a "citizen" returning "home":

he flips
the pages slowly, disinterestedly. playing
with me,
there's nothing. cuts deeper. than time.
...
question: 'you a pimp?'

To me (as a young man of mixed race living in British Columbia), Compton's most engaging efforts are those in which he critically examines Blackness from this same equivocal position. "Bluer Blues" provides perhaps the best expression of this uncertainty: "I'm still ambiv / alently coloured and liv / ing in Xanada, / trying to spell and accent *Santeria* and *Aime Cesaire*, / trying to pronounce *houngan*, trying to try, trying to care, / . . . trying / to keep my / self smouldering, thinking, / 'Halffrican' at others in cafés, the talented tenth / of a percent, trying / to keep anchored, / above the line, to keep a language / living, envying / patois or nation / language, or anything." What are the criteria that make one 'authentically' Black? Who sets those conditions and who decides who fulfills them? Poems like "Babylon Slim's Song" and "Diamond" (a humorous piece centred on a fictional hip hop show "featuring DJ T-Rope, N.W.N (Niggas With Négritude), DJ Osiris, Grand Master Narrative and the Tenuous Ten, and DJ Parataxis") raise questions about the expression of "authentic" Blackness through popular culture,

white appropriation of Black cultural production and the uncertain yet fluid position of a mixed race child within this matrix of assumed identities and ascribed ethnicities. Compton's self-reflexive humour and strong sense of irony stand in sharp juxtaposition to the biting social commentary expressed throughout this volume. In the end, Compton creates a vision of Blackness based on unanswered questions: the uncertain and the inexpressible. It is a vision that is fully grounded in experience, yet one which defies simple explanation.

Palimpsest Crossroads

Wayde Compton, ed.

Bluesprint: Black British Columbian Literature and Orature. Arsenal Pulp \$24.95

David N. Odhiambo

Kipligat's Chance. Penguin \$24.00

Reviewed by Jenny Pai

Sir James Douglas, the founding governor of British Columbia, is the first writer anthologized in Wayde Compton's *Bluesprint: Black British Columbian Literature and Orature*. While this placement is explained through the text's roughly chronological organization, Douglas also fortuitously serves as a framework for the project, something that Compton acknowledges in the introduction: "With such an indeterminate history, perhaps it is fitting that black writing in B.C. begins with Sir James Douglas, a figure whose blackness was for years the subject of rumour and speculation." Herein lies the crossroads of Compton's *Bluesprint*, for the anthology creates community along the axes of time, heritage, location, and genre. The result is a "phantom lineage" which Compton hopes will enable future writers to "see that the subjects and subjectivities which appear in their writing are not isolated features, but rather parts of an experience that is over 150 years in the making."

In replacing the experience of isolation with an impetus for community, Compton's work as editor echoes the text's cover image of an outstretched black palm with its criss-crossing paths of wrinkles and out-of-focus fingerprints.

Among the many descriptions of community, the excerpts from Daphne Marlatt and Carole Itter's 1979 collection of interviews, *Opening Doors: Vancouver's East End*, are some of the most vivid. Speakers recount "the lowdown rundown on the way it went at that time" in Vancouver's now-vanished black neighbourhood, "Hogan's Alley." Three of the interviewees recount stories that depict food as representative of both the everyday and the monumental, marking quotidian acts of living, eating, and working in the same breaths that they underscore significant instances in the speakers' lives. Rosa Pryor's two-chicken assembly line is both a familiar anecdote of building a business and an extraordinary account of creativity and tenacity that gains resonance through Dorothy Healy's revelation that "[p]ractically every Black woman in Vancouver has worked for Mrs. Pryor's Chicken Inn sometime or other." Two different meals discussed by Nora Hendrix, Thanksgiving turkey and chitlins, emphasize the elevation of homey food over celebratory cuisine as she quickly glosses over the turkey, instead focusing on the popularity of the chitlin suppers that would "sell out so fast, why, they wouldn't last no time." Her story concludes with the enigmatic statement, "You can't buy no chitlins now. No, they run out of chitlins, I don't know how many years back," not revealing whether this lack is caused by a shrinking black population or the community's desire to distance itself from a simple food with painful connections to poverty. Moving forward in the collection to Karina Vernon's *Aunt Ermine's Recipe for Brown Sugar Fudge*, considerations of "authentic" cooking resurface in the recipe's demand

for “real” ingredients. The parenthetical instruction that one can add less cream “for a darker fudge” questions the notion of purity even as the recipe posits its existence. The tendency for excerpts in the collection to repeatedly reach across pages, informing creative acts that come before or after, gains significance through Compton’s belief that “tidalectics,” Kamau Brathwaite’s term for “seeing history as a palimpsest,” applies to the experiences of the black British Columbian community.

This layered vision of history and identity is equally relevant to one of the authors represented in *Bluesprint*, David N. Odhiambo, whose second novel, *Kipligat’s Chance*, depicts a world in which people run to escape the palimpsests of their lives. While the central character, John “Leeds” Kipligat, looks to competitive running as his opportunity to rise above the poverty, racism, and violence that comprise his teenage experience, he is not the only Kipligat who searches for an opportunity to get away from life’s realities. In their own ways, his mother and father also attempt to deal with the crossroads of past family failures and feelings of helplessness; the largest part of this burden involves John’s missing older brother, Koech. Before his disappearance, Koech was the runner in the family. Now John physically and mentally pushes himself to beat his brother’s best time, gain a running scholarship, and overcome the urge to self-mutilate. John’s body is not the only site for violence in the novel; the girls and women in his life have their lost chances marked on their bodies and minds, inflicted by an assortment of men in the name of love or protection. John often turns to his running coach, Sam Holt, and his best friend, Kulvinder Sharma, for stability and guidance, but Sam’s and Kulvinder’s problems yield their own destructive results. Early on, John finds a safe hiding-place in the comfort of Koech’s hooded sweatshirt and the sweatshirt’s

eventual fate becomes emblematic of John’s relationship with the destructive familial and personal palimpsests around him.

Cycles of history are physically rendered on the pages of Odhiambo’s novel through italicized flashbacks of the Kipligats’ and Sharmas’ experiences in Kenya before they came to Canada. Vivid depictions of classism, racism, fear, and helplessness connect the past to similar experiences in present-day Canada. After all, Vancouver is where John plays ice hockey, only to be told that racist epithets follow “in the tradition of Maurice ‘the Rocket’ Richard, who’d put up with getting called a frog back in the game’s glory days.” If racism is accepted as part of Canada’s national sport, what does that tell recent immigrants about the national mindset? Early in the novel, John’s feelings of marginalization lead him to realize that he “needs to be a different person, a necessary person,” but he hides behind the safety of claiming that “[t]rying is overrated,” adding that “[m]aking an effort has never made an ounce of difference in [his] life.” The effort that John expends in the final pages of *Kipligat’s Chance* is an agonizing negotiation between his past and his future, his ability to navigate his particular present and make the chance he’s been given count. *Bluesprint’s* introduction asserts that “we do not *improve upon* the past, but are ourselves *versions* of the past,” a sentiment that is wholly evoked on the closing page of *Kipligat’s Chance*, where John recalls the last time he raced his brother: “When the dust finally settled, I couldn’t distinguish his footprints from mine.” As Compton and Odhiambo consider how communities are defined and by whom, they speak to a recognition that the palimpsest crossroads of history is not so much traversed as it is experienced.



Lyric and Anti-Lyric

Marlene Cookshaw

Shameless. Brick \$15.00

Kristjana Gunnars

Silence of the Country. Coteau \$12.95

Daphne Marlatt

Salvage. NeWest \$9.95

Reviewed by Rob Budde

Three books of poetry by BC authors claim very different territories on the lyric/anti-lyric frontier, described by Douglas Barbour, even as all three engage in a textual mediation of place.

As a reader, I tend to be attracted to the anti-lyric, those texts that stray from the lyrically beaten path. In *Lyric/Anti-Lyric: Essays on Contemporary Poetry*, Douglas Barbour quotes Ezra Pound to describe anti-lyric as creating a “heave” in the status quo. This creation of something altogether new is what interests me but I begrudge no one their lyric druthers. Artistic power is generated by multiple poetic strategies.

Marlene Cookshaw’s fourth book of poetry, *Shameless*, has already garnered her several award nominations including the Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize and the Pat Lowther Award. This is not surprising given the precision and understated power in the collection. Cookshaw’s poems perform an unabashed lyricism through contemplative modes of expression, and a casual assumption of line breaks, the exploration of the complexity of human nature, the clean closure in each poem:

Habit: what we
put on. The clothing of our spirits. Times
when all I wanted was the next to be
familiar.

...

Home is gesture, repeated.

The “gesture” of the lyric poem is “home” to most Canadian poetry readers; it is a stylistic code that runs deep through

British and American influences and extends to the distant past. The lyric affords the poet the rich fabric of poetic freedom to express the newness the poet sees in the physical and ethical place we inhabit. And Cookshaw has the poetic eye to spot the unexpected, the unique, from the vistas around her. This is from “The Mysteries”:

The balsam grove inhales dawn light
and wears it like a curtain by Vermeer.

Eastward the valley pockets mist. Cat tracks
burn the frosted air

Cookshaw freezes time and meticulously dissects the folds of summer afternoon strolls, pastoral lakeside scenes, an urban love-drenched evening, the radio story of a death by drowning. The lines of the poems are deft, controlled, even too controlled—I wanted a misstep, a gangly line, a transgression beyond the even tenor of the form and content of the poems. It is an acutely careful shamelessness that Cookshaw presents here.

Kristjana Gunnars’ seventh book of poetry comes with a slightly more troubled relationship to place. *Silence of the Country* is written from an unsettled state, an ambiguous point of view that threatens the assurance of the lyric “I”:

I tell myself, this is home
remind myself, as if otherwise
forgotten, a memory blackout

...

not even this
vision from my window is sure
and I knock on the glass to hear a sound

In the “Introduction,” Gunnars explains the context and process of writing the poems. She had gone to Norway for six months and, upon her return, wrote the poems about that experience. The poems also became a record of her return to BC:

I went about the house and the yard and
the environment refamiliarizing myself
with everything. I had to more or less
move into my own home anew . . . For
the next three years I carved out poem

after poem, at a rather slow pace. I noticed the poems were hard at the edges. They had refused to become soft and pliable. I wrote them as if I had just learned English again.

Because of the 'in-between-ness,' that sure-footed lyric stance is lost: "so much can be lost in the kinds of transitions mine represented. Identity, culture, language, all are on the chopping block." Gunnars' poems, when compared to Cookshaw's, come across as more Spartan, pared back, unassuming, thrifty, tentative:

after the end of our days
the quiet seems crooked
seems calling out for remorse
I wander about the place unsure
where in the house I hid parts of me
the parts that needed hiding when the
earth turned

In these poems, the questioning and instability adds a swerve, a crack, a fault-line to traditional lyric verse that adds integrity to the poems even as it creates a certain amount of unease in the reading.

Salvage is Daphne Marlatt's fourteenth book of poetry and she has tested the limits of poetic expression from the very outset of her career. In other words, anti-lyricism is her vital self-conscious and political relationship to language. While *Silence of the Country* is unsettled by dislocation, *Salvage* is a text that is twice unsettled as it re-enters and re-inscribes already troubled texts. *Salvage* is a collection of pieces "salvaged" from other writing projects (*Steveston*, *Ana Historic*) and correspondence with feminist contemporaries (Nicole Brossard). Marlatt's writing, while far less 'located' and lyrically cohesive than the other two books, is far more politically 'situated': "the entire book attempts to salvage the wreckage of language so freighted with phallogocentric values it must be subverted and re-shaped, as Virginia Woolf said of the sentence, for a woman's use." But this 'position' of subversion is necessar-

ily dislocated and insecure. The NeWest book design bespeaks fragmentation, overlap, and distortion. What Marlatt creates is an 'other' space; into the male topographies of commerce and domesticity, she wedges a female landscape/cityscape of the imagination. It is an act of recovery, a diving into the wreck of BC history, a salvaging of the lost particulars of women, the "(pent up, hungry)" counter-realities of women that have always been there:

There is a door other than that which
opens to the known world

...

where women meet where the words
face up, are heard—i know what you
mean—in these small houses walls are
falling

Marlatt uses the page, the conventions of prose, the fluidity of the hybrid stanza-graph, the freedom of space, caesura, and unconventional punctuation to keep pace with the neither-here-nor-there presences in her text: *Steveston* and the memory of *Steveston*, Brossard's text and its translation, "this tracking back and forth across the white, this tearing of papyrus/crosswise, the tearing of love in our mouths to leave our mark in the midst of/rumour, coming out." Marlatt's alternative writing process invites an alternative reading practice, one that does not rely on the communicative model of speaker and listener polarities. The text is woven with multiplicity and an uncertainty that unseats that confident (patriarchal) lyric voice.

A Burnt-Out Case

Gil Courtemanche

A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali. Knopf \$34.95

Reviewed by Neil ten Kortenaar

Gil Courtemanche's novel bears witness to the war of extermination waged in April 1994 by Hutu radicals in control of the

Rwandan state against Tutsis and opposition Hutus. All the Rwandan characters in the novel bear the names of people the author knew, some of whom died, others who survived, and others who were among the killers. The novel's terrible violence—rapes, dismemberments, torture—is not, the author assures us in a preface, the product of “an overactive imagination.”

A Sunday at the Pool in Kigali does not just name names and remember real people: it also offers life lessons. Bernard Valcourt, a Québécois journalist whose overly cerebral relation to the world has left him “dead though alive,” learns how to live from his African friends, several of whom are already dying of AIDS when the state militias gather to kill them. The wisdom that the novel attributes to those about to die promises a measure of redemption, however muted, and this is a problem, aesthetic and moral. Intended to honour the victims and “convey the human quality of the murdered,” the symbolism with which the violence is charged feels to this reader like the work of an “overactive imagination.” The life lessons Valcourt learns all relate to embodiment and the twin truths of the body, sex and death. No one in the novel dies without first experiencing a moment of transcendent sex. In the novel's carnal mysticism, sex is life's riposte to death and is itself a kind of death. In a world of extremes, the forces of hate are at war against the forces of love, yet love and hate take the same form: the penetration of the body. The blurring of desire and hate makes it difficult not to feel that one incident in particular, the cruel and violent revenge inflicted by a Rwandan on a complacent Québécoise adulteress, is the novel's own revenge on her.

Rwanda, like Somalia, has a particular meaning for Canadians. Several of the genocide's instigators were students in Quebec. Brigadier General Roméo Dallaire, commander of the UN troops in Kigali and now a Canadian hero, makes an unflattering

appearance: “Unassuming, apprehensive, ineloquent and naïve, like Canada,” he is too obedient of rules, too trusting of Rwandans in authority, and, as a consequence, unwilling to save lives if it means risking his men. National stereotypes are nowhere as valid as among expatriates in Africa. “You see,” Valcourt explains to his hosts, “each country has a colour, a smell, and also a contagious sickness. In my country the sickness is complacency. In France, it's arrogance, and in the United States it's ignorance.”

Stereotypes, of course, are at the heart of the genocide. In Rwanda, Valcourt learns about love from the gorgeous Gentille, whose beauty is devastating in both senses of that word: the tallness and thinness that attracts Valcourt are also classically Tutsi, according to the racial classifications that, first taught by the colonizers, have been internalized by the colonized. The novel explains the ethnic strife by inventing a single great-great-grandfather of Gentille who had sought to drown his Hutuness by breeding with Tutsis. This makes Gentille neither Hutu nor Tutsi, but Rwandan: she is “like the fruit of the red earth of this hill, a mysterious mix of all the seeds and all the toil of this country.” When Valcourt marries her he also “marries” the country of a thousand hills. He does not seem to notice that the explanation of Gentille based on her genetic origins, conveniently located in a single patrilineal ancestor, is but a variant on the dangerous notion that individuals embody a “people or tribe.”

Betrayers and Betrayed

Sheldon Currie

Down the Coaltown Road. Key Porter Books
\$24.95

Reviewed by Jim Taylor

Down the Coaltown Road is an apt title for Sheldon Currie's third novel, a work that exhibits some of his most eloquent,

descriptive prose. Other titles highlighting the Italian dimension of the novel were considered and rejected—a good decision. Though the novel deals with the internment of industrial Cape Breton's Italians during the Second World War and rightly draws attention to a shameful chapter in the history of Canada's treatment of ethnic minorities, it is as much about the struggles of individuals in Coaltown as it is about the internment controversy. In particular, it is about Coaltown's pastor, Father Rod MacDonald, the war hero who lost an eye in battle—a kind of Catholic Moshe Dayan—who is expected to understand and solve everyone's problems while coping with his own theological doubts—and on a less lofty plane, with the calculated advances of his housekeeper Anna who artfully maneuvers to have sex with him in the bathtub.

Currie employs two voices to develop different narrative strands. Much of the Italian story is told in Anna's voice (always in italic print). Anna's story begins in Italy, when as a young girl, she wants to immigrate to the New World. Part of her emigration plan seems to necessitate marrying the most acclaimed bachelor in her village. With astonishing adroitness, she sets about enticing Tomassio, the volatile soccer hero. She succeeds. They marry and start a new life in Cape Breton. The omniscient voice tells the story of Father Rod and his efforts to guide his parishioners and protect the local Italians from bigotry. The misadventures of Sister Helen Perenowsky, and her passionate affair directly responsible for her brother's death, is also related by this narrator. Sister Helen's story brackets the novel. The prologue describes her return, twenty years earlier, to the Lorelei Rock where she had discovered Tomassio's body; and the epilogue recounts her discussion with Sister Mary and Sister Sara, her decision to attend her daughter's wedding, and forgive the man who once betrayed her.

The novel's opening proclaims the centrality of the Roman Catholic faith. The description of three prominent buildings (the church, the glebe, and the convent) is meant, both figuratively and literally, to place the faith as the reference point for the novel's narrative landscape: "The parish church remains the same . . . an immense mass of brown shingles, tall windows and doors, a medieval anomaly dominating the rows of company houses crouching in its neighborhood like legions of urban peasants." If the Catholic Church is the novel's reference point and Father Rod the spokesman for its truth, then his homily at Tomassio's funeral states the church's message and the novel's theme: betrayal, reconciliation, and redemption through forgiveness.

A pleasing feature of the novel is the inclusion of quotations at the beginning of each chapter. Currie's choice of authors is diverse and revealing. Included are such disparate notables as Gerard Manley Hopkins, William Lyon MacKenzie King, Mother Teresa, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Yogi Berra. The quotations share a recognition of humanity's fallen nature and also a faith in the possibility of redemption through grace, or struggle, or both. In this respect, *Down the Coaltown Road* reflects the influence of the famous southern Catholic writer, Flannery O' Connor, whose stories, grounded in Catholic theological teachings on redemption, reveal a keen eye for the absurd and grotesque in the apparently commonplace.

Evident in the novel are familiar topics from Currie's other works: bootlegging (coal and liquor), labor union strife, the call to a religious vocation, sexual awakenings (sex in the bathtub not included), delightful Gaelic wit, and the coal miner's life with its code of loyalty and stoicism. Into the mix of his imaginary world, Currie, not surprisingly, in a work that has as its backdrop the Second World War, stirs

in descriptions of things military—artillery emplacements at Lingan, rescue missions and fire fights in France, German spies in Cape Breton, and the murder of an interned Italian. Indeed, *Down the Coaltown Road*, unlike Currie's other works, is exuberantly dramatic and will no doubt have great potential for stage or screen. Allusions to Catholic liturgy and thought permeate the lives of Coaltown's inhabitants, and every aspect of Cape Breton life is coloured by the Catholic context in which it is explored.

Beyond Ethnography

Rocío Davis

Transcultural Reinventions: Asian American and Asian Canadian Short Story Cycles. TSAR \$23.95

Reviewed by Lily Cho

Moving beyond ethnography has become an increasingly urgent task in Asian North American literary studies. It is not enough to read these texts as marginalized histories which merely supplement a dominant western narrative, nor can we read them as transparent texts of identity. The work of writers such as Lois-Ann Yamanaka and Sigrid Nunez demands an embracing of the difficulties and complexities of their textual innovations. In this sense, Rocío Davis' *Transcultural Reinventions* takes up a timely task in Asian North American literary criticism. As she notes in her introduction to the book, "[r]eading contemporary Asian American and Asian Canadian literature primarily as ethnographic texts undercuts much of its value as a complex dynamic of cultural production, where the choice and manipulation of form and technique serve as signifying aspects to experiences and subjectivities" (3). In the area of Asian American and Asian Canadian poetry, critics such as Garrett Hongo, Timothy Yu, Dorothy Wang, and Shelley Sunn Wong have all, in different ways, already made the

argument for attending to the complexities of racialized subjectivity and Fred Wah has termed this complexity "ethnopoetics."

Although this discussion already has a history in terms of poetry, relatively little has been written on other forms of Asian North American literature with these debates specifically in mind.

In an original move, Davis has chosen to focus on the short-story cycle and to explore this genre as a specific site in which Asian Canadian and Asian American writers situate a series of interventions. As Davis' book shows, there are a number of Asian Canadian and Asian American writers who have written in this genre. Indeed, some of the texts that may be seen as foundational to Asian American literature, such as Amy Tan's *Joy Luck Club* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *Woman Warrior*, can be classified as short-story cycles.

While I believe that Asian American and Asian Canadian literary criticism will have to grapple increasingly with the kind of critical project that Davis proposes, this kind of criticism is certainly not easy to do. The degree of its difficulty emerges in Davis' execution of this book. What Davis calls for is a rigorous attention to the formal aspects of Asian North American literature. Despite the desire to move beyond an ethnographic reading of this literature, Davis' treatment of these texts results in a series of readings that treat the Asian North American texts under discussion as representative texts of Asian American and Asian Canadian experience. For example, regarding Wayson Choy's *The Jade Peony*, Davis reads Choy's use of the novella form (a form that she sees as akin to the short-story cycle) in order to represent multiple views of Vancouver's Chinatown between the two World Wars. Davis argues that "[b]y developing the individual voices of the three children and expanding the cultural significance of their stories, the author builds a multidimensional image of Chinese

Canadian identity within and beyond a Chinatown setting" (214). This reading of *The Jade Peony*, which seeks within the text an image of Chinatown that comes closer to a representative Chinese Canadian identity, falls precisely within the ethnographic logic which Davis proposes to move beyond.

Further, Davis' discussion relies upon relatively familiar categories that do not necessarily challenge ethnographic readings. The organization of the book into themed chapters such as "Myths of Childhood and the Voice of the Child," "Inscribing Mothers and Daughters," and "Rewriting History" all bear the traces of some of the previous criticism and it is not always clear how Davis intervenes in previous discussions. Davis' reading of Amy Tan's *Joy Luck Club* under the theme of mother-daughter relationships reinscribes much of what the critic works against. She suggests that "Tan's mother-and-daughter cycle widens the narrative possibility of representing the languages, conflicts, and attitudes that separate and the bond that ultimately unites" (92). Again, Davis takes the literary text as representative of a social condition.

Davis' reliance upon a thematic reading that is representative of a particular social world not only results in an ethnographic mode of reading, but also leaves her reading vulnerable to missing some of the important ways in which this literature does resist ethnographic criticism. Viet Nguyen's discussion of Lois-Ann Yamanaka's text shows the kind of problems that Yamanaka poses for Asian American literary criticism in terms of highlighting the divisions between minority communities. The interventions of Lois-Ann Yamanaka are not the same as that of Amy Tan and yet Davis' treatment of this diverse canon effects a curious flattening out of difference under the category of genre. While I agree with the overall argument that "[t]he short-story cycle

illustrates the general process of multiethnic literature toward plurality, multiplicity, polyphony, and fragmentation as it tends to favor the multi-voiced text" (Davis 22) I am also troubled by the limitations of genre criticism. Polyphony, fragmentation, and so on are characteristic of any number of literary texts, but what we need to know is how Asian American and Asian Canadian writers attend to racialized subjectivities. However, this is difficult work and *Transcultural Reinventions* deserves notice for its commitment to a significant critical project.

Writes of Passage:

Seodial F.H. Deena

Canonization, Colonization, Decolonization: A Comparative Study of Political and Critical Works by Minority Writers. Peter Lang US \$32.95

Angelita Reyes

Mothering Across Cultures: Postcolonial Representations. U of Minnesota P US \$17.95

Amitava Kumar

Passport Photos. U of California P \$28.00

Reviewed by Wendy Robbins

The dialogue in the USA amongst post-colonial theorists, Americanists, and women's studies scholars is growing, often led by faculty who are immigrants and belong to racialized minority groups. Issues of nation-within-nation, gender, race, hybridity, liminality, fragmentation, displacement, and refuge are defining elements of identity and experience in people's daily lives around the globe, including its one superpower, which is paying new attention to ethnic issues and "multicultural" education. The politics of identity, politics of memory, and the narratives (autobiographical or fictional) that they shape are central issues in the three postcolonial critiques by Seodial Deena, Angelita Reyes, and Amitava Kumar, all published in the new millennium in the USA.

Deena's is the least interesting; instead of a nuanced, contemporary analysis of the literary canon as an instrument of colonization, he offers an unoriginal, uncritical review of cross-cultural staples such as *The Mimic Men* and *Heart of Darkness*, alongside African American classics *Native Son* and *The Colour Purple*, and one Native American life story, based on interviews by a non-Native, *Black Elk Speaks*. Deena's thesis and language are blunt: "literature has to be used as a means to re-educate the natives of former colonies," and his tone is evangelical: "Just as the upsurge of literatures by women and African Americans created space and recognition in current curriculum and critical debates, so shall all silenced literatures [Native American, Asian American, Latina and Latino, and Third World literatures] explode from the bondage of oppression to the freedom of recognition."

Reyes' work, however, makes a genuine scholarly contribution. A woman-centred survey of the African literary diaspora focused on character, it highlights the heroism (some would use the neologism "sheroism") of "mother-women" in the "matrilineal diaspora." Reyes radically redefines Kate Chopin's term: "Mothering . . . is meant as a caring of . . . ourselves and our extended kinship of community within the diversity of the matrilineal diaspora" (9). Reyes links a rich array of African, African American, and African Caribbean women writers, including Miriama Ba, Toni Morrison, Paule Marshall, Simone Schwartz-Bart, Jean Rhys, and Mary Prince (whose pioneering slave narrative was penned by amanuensis Susanna Strickland Moodie). These "heroic mother" narratives provide "textual healing," and they challenge the Gilbert-and-Gubar tradition of interpreting madness as subversion. In representing positive Black female identity, the stories that Reyes explores present a range of emotions, from stoic patience, through

joy and celebration, to transforming rage, but rarely madness. Reyes' introduction is pointedly titled, "I'm not Mad, I'm Postcolonial, a Woman, and a Mother." Regardless of Western concerns about essentialism and of African issues such as polygamy, these strong women characters, according to Reyes, define themselves on the nurturing grounds of family, community, and nation.

The South Asian diaspora—and his own life—provide the context of Kumar's *Passport Photos*, a "multi-genre" report on "immigritude" (the immigrant condition), diasporic poetics/politics, and transnational identities. Kumar endorses the thesis of the director Shadwell in Hanif Kureishi's *Buddha of Suburbia*: "The immigrant is the Everyman of the twentieth century." Kumar's identity—Indian and American—is hybrid: "I feel, quite strongly, that in contemporary times the pathos of the human being unable to choose between two nation-states has been overwhelmed by another, new kind of feeling. This feeling is the abjection of the postcolonial citizen whose problem is not so much being unable to choose between two homelands as being expected to choose only one." He writes against "barren binaries," "theory-speak," and superficially "professing post-colonialism"; he calls for aligning scholarship and activism, to "relate what is taught in the classroom with the world outside it." He cautions that "multicultural education in the US might be nothing more than propaganda—or worse, advertising—if it doesn't hear, and amplify, those voices all over the world who talk back to power." He agrees with Houston Baker, a past president of the MLA, that "pedagogy is a place where the personal and the public meet to give rise to a provocative kind of politics"—a politics of affiliation, as well as of disaffiliation. With some American intellectuals obsessing about the "death" of the humanities, and some Canadian bureau-

crats dismissing literary studies as lifeless “text-based disciplines,” the energy and integrity of two of these three recent books are as welcome as a heart massage.

Lives in Art

Anne Denoon

Back Flip. The Porcupine’s Quill \$24.95

Jean McNeil

Private View. Weidenfeld & Nicolson \$23.95

Reviewed by Susan Wasserman

Exposing the slick surfaces and pitted underbelly of Toronto’s art scene in 1967, Anne Denoon’s first novel, *Back Flip*, smacks of an insider’s familiarity. Having studied art at the University of Toronto during the 1960s and worked in galleries, Denoon speaks with authority, humour, and unsentimental nostalgia, as she skewers the flabby egos and revved-up ambitions of the artists and dealers who compete for gallery shows, public attention, financial patronage, and respect. References to 1960s art and music, hallucinogens, and the taboo of birth control pills keep us anchored in the era, but the human theatrics are ageless: artistic sterility and creative booms, infidelities, predatory seductions, stolen art, conspiracies (real and imagined), and even an off-stage murder. While the country celebrates its centennial, Toronto’s art scene quietly comes of age. But for most of the characters it’s a tough passage.

Denoon sustains a nimble pace, navigating multiple plot lines with a sharp, uncluttered style and satirical assurance. Even with her deftness, however, the reader takes a while to get acquainted with the massive, sometimes cartoonish cast. And the book occasionally veers into a tangle of sitcom and soap opera, but Denoon saves such moments through insight into her characters’ percolating psyches, a perceptiveness that, at its best, evokes Carol Shields.

Many of the characters are unsympathetic, their relationships fuelled by narcissism, professional ambition, or over-wrought libidos. But they are also victims of raw need, consuming inadequacies, and some bad luck. The once-beautiful Winifred Beecham—battling the narrowed status of middle-age—warily considers the consequences of an affair with the apparently interested but married Tom Dale, “Canada’s foremost abstractionist.” She is eventually passed over for the younger Eleanor Zeffler. Dale himself falls prey to premature dementia. Immigrant Bruno Gonzaga’s rise through blue collar anonymity to gallery ownership has not dislodged his ingrained sense of inferiority: “Because the privileged had not always bothered to behave well in the presence of their inferiors, he had . . . acquired a useful pessimism about human nature. That, he believed, might be his most powerful weapon in this new world where nearly everyone pretended to be equal and honest.” This skittery environment eventually devours him.

Churning up latent jealousies and unsettled scores, effete Quintin Margrave is in town to orchestrate Artquake, a prestigious exhibit of contemporary art which will eventually move from Canada to England. As chief curator of the Spitalfield gallery in London, Margrave’s choices for the show can make or break careers. The novel’s focal action involves the abduction of *Back Flip*, an abstract piece by young painter Eddie O’Hara, which has gained a coveted place in the exhibit. *Back Flip* disappears, is reproduced (in a day!), the copy—posing as the original—is slashed where it hangs in the Artquake exhibit, and the original found, decades later, in its hiding place behind a false wall in the Gonzaga gallery.

Back Flip’s trail leads us in and out of the narrative labyrinth (complete with some too-tidy tying of plot strings), until we leap into 2002. The survivors of the 1960s are

gathered to celebrate a revival of Artquake, “a reconsideration of and tribute to the optimism and ferment of that Centennial year.” This final scene updates us on the characters’ mostly happy fates and spotlights a national confidence forged in the interim. As Winifred notes, since this successful remount is not orchestrated by Margrave, it would seem that “we Canadians no longer consider it either necessary or appropriate to import foreigners . . . to explain our own culture to us.”

Jean McNeil, an expat Cape Bretoner now living in England, also renders the art world—painters and performance pieces, galleries and private views—in *Private View*, her second novel. But this bohemian scene, set in contemporary London, is secondary to the broader issues that are choreographed across a larger, darker canvas than Denoon’s.

Whereas *Back Flip* gently probes its characters’ frailties, maintaining a comfortable, satirical buffer between reader and text, *Private View* relentlessly brandishes its social and political concerns: soul-shriveling loneliness and guilt, middle-class anomie, the cavalier destruction of the environment, and multinational hegemony. As one character laments, “we’ve all been anaesthetized against feeling by media culture and excessive choice.” McNeil’s characters endlessly soul-search. But the novel’s heart is one woman’s fight to navigate this harrowing landscape and the alienation and fragmentation of a horrific personal trauma.

Alex, a onetime painter, is the sole survivor of a plane crash in the depths of a Central American rainforest. McNeil reveals this grisly event in short segments laced throughout the present-time narrative. Memories slowly unfurl of Alex’s two-week ordeal, her struggle through dense jungle, bones broken, partially blinded, and delirious. Recollection is jagged, incomplete; large chunks of her life, including the accident itself, remain lodged in her sub-

conscious. Once safely back in London, she lives with the threat that her memories could ravage the frail security that she harbors.

Her experience haunts and stigmatizes her. She is burdened not only by survivor’s guilt, but by a surreal awareness spawned by her dance with mortality (perhaps another version of the title’s “private view”): “Death had . . . made her permeable, over-aware of how delicate her boundaries actually were, over-knowledgeable of how it will one day end.” Stricken and withdrawn, “trapped in a cold capsule of self,” she is shunned by old friends. Conrad, a victim of a different sort, takes her in, offering to share his flat. Like Alex, he is a guilty survivor, an escapee from the suicide of his younger brother and a stifling upbringing in the Miramichi. Manic-depressive, he barely copes through a regime of lithium and one-night stands, until he disappears, becoming a ghost in his own abandoned life.

The book takes us beyond Alex’s and Conrad’s sometimes claustrophobic psyches through pointed historical references. Alex sees their London flat as a kind of palimpsest. Outside their window, she imagines centuries of ghosts passing by, en route to (mis)adventures in other lands, “pre-ghosts, destined never to return.” These figures conjure eons of exploitation and persecution, represented in the eerie apparition that seems to live in their flat. Perhaps Alex and Conrad’s internalized victimization is projected onto this figure of religious persecution, a Quaker imprisoned for refusing the King’s Oath. The genocidal heart of darkness beats in the historical references to Pedro de Alvarado, the blond conquistador of Guatemala, famous for “burning many people alive, or roast[ing] them over spits.”

McNeil sustains all this without veering off into the over-wrought, or merely parading the damaged and victimized. Occasionally, narrative tension slackens,

but the impetus is always restored by the potency of Alex's story. The quiet promise at book's end is heartening: Conrad returns, Alex forges a tentative human connection, and she finally shakes off the feeling "that death was . . . like a shadowy accomplice following her everywhere."

Blissful, Messy Impermanence

Jason Dewinetz

moving to the clear. NeWest \$14.95

Lea Harper

Shadowcrossing. Black Moss \$17.95

Lyle Neff

Full Magpie Dodge. Anvil \$13.95

Kenneth Sherman

The Well: New and Selected Poems. Wolsak and Wynn \$15.00

Reviewed by Sonnet L'Abbé

Jason Dewinetz' mission, in his first collection *moving to the clear*, is to "expose the heart useless with theoretical gestures." The depth of words' (and humans') shortcomings, Dewinetz suggests, are felt most keenly in matters of love, and that no one is more acutely aware of words' limitations and blunt, bludgeoning strengths than the poet or theorist, both of whom work in the world of text yet still must live and interpret an embodied, material existence.

Dewinetz is at his best in the book's final section, "In Theory," which theorizes the towering figures of deconstructive literary criticism as ultimately human, their readerly astuteness and semantic precision revealed as dumb stumps when confronted with a lover's body's "constantly mutating points of reference." However, the poems on Géricault's paintings of severed limbs feels more explicitly like an attempt to find a "purchase" within one of the academy's most sexily commodified discourses—"the grotesque"—than a move to speak to the heart.

The presence of alcohol, its "meaning" and ways of muting, runs like a subplot through Dewinetz' poetic movements. Rye blurs into watery glimpses the boathouse retreat a man shares with a woman, and vodka is the liquid courage at the book's thematic climax, where a man hides in the bathroom to get his swallow. This moment of gestural honesty is the weightiest point of the book. Overall Dewinetz leaves us a controlled, meditative voice still searching, still reaching "for pen, paper, / hoping that this time I'll give you something clear, / not these fragments of ideas, feeling." I look forward to Dewinetz allowing his own musings the same density he gives to his imaginings of others.

Lyle Neff too wants a visceral truth, and cries out for a moment of clarity, in his book *Full Magpie Dodge*. "It's a signal I want, not a goddam omen, nothing / obscure or symbolic or crying for interpretation," Neff rages.

Working from the other side of the same spiritual coin, Neff wants to swallow and regurgitate the chaos that Dewinetz processes in sips. To Neff we are not beautiful minds slowed in the flesh, but "animals with problems." Neff extends the urban jungle metaphor into a thematic, reminding us of our institutional organics, of our market index of the daily movement of bodies, of the wildness that proliferates within the order of the metropolitan grid.

Yet where Dewinetz tries to break down messy experience into explainable bits, Neff has already given up explaining, knowing "the mess is on the inside," too. He's an observer with no claim to authority except his own participation in concrete reality, choosing his subjects from the reactionary, "vulgar" end of the aesthetic spectrum: "bums, scags and whores" are beautiful, a vision of sewage prompts a reflection on human interdependence, and a meditation on skin considers the "herds of [bacterial]

livestock” living on it. His voice is unstable, volatile, uncompromising.

Neff asserts his intention to soldier in the army of “artists of complaint, dissenters, the grievance stricken,” echoing such anti-status-quo voices as Irving Layton’s or Charles Bukowski’s. Yet I was unsure where this stance came from, other than stylistic appreciation: one suspects Neff of a comfortable upbringing, that has left him suspicious of consumerism’s ability to satisfy, yet still better off than “the neglected, snotty-nosed kids up north in their rags, with their Kraft Dinner.” Without an honest self-positioning, Neff’s petulance expresses something more like a desire to renounce his insider position to the dis-course of moderate privilege, that denies him authentic access to the gritty, outsider authority of his precursors.

The Well offers us a sense of veteran poet Kenneth Sherman’s contribution to Canadian poetry since 1978. Though Sherman’s voice can be helpfully described as more “mature” than younger poets like Dewinetz’ or Neff’s, the “mature” qualities of acceptance, praise and an easy relation with language have been his trademark since the beginning of his output.

Inside *The Well* are glimpses of the twenty-five year progression of Sherman’s naturalist vision and of his deepening confidence in the musicality of his narrative voice. He likes to describe a view, but then his interest inevitably turns to what is not offered to the eye. Sherman lifts up the patio stones to tell what lives underneath; he considers the regret behind each door in the suburbs and wonders “what is constrained under the asphalt and pavement,” and asks what might dwell in the “silent richness we’re meant to visit, not inhabit.” His sonnets from far-away cities resonate with an impossible desire to know each place not as a tourist, but as an inhabitant.

In his later poems, childhood and memory itself become places where one cannot

stay. Sherman draws portraits of lost mentors and landscapes, penning brief drops of nostalgia that echo Seamus Heaney in their ability to evoke a child’s awe before the ordinary, adult world. Whether it be in time or space, Sherman is the traveller who wants to see it all yet stay in each place forever. *The Well* is proof that he has managed, through his long-standing poetic practice, to approach bravely the garden’s bittersweet ability to “not resist time, but [express] a reconciliation with passages.”

In *Shadowcrossing*, Lea Harper has preserved her own awe and expectation into adulthood. Her nostalgia reaches out, not for objects of personal memory, but for a time lost to us all, “back when the world looked after itself.” She mourns our lost synchronicity with the Earth’s rhythms, a spiritual birthright that has become, for many of us, so far removed from our daily experience that Harper’s voice seems not to speak for our time but for “once upon a time.”

Words like “third eye,” “mantra” and “voodoo,” lend a new age flavour to the collection, but I was uneasy about what struck me as Harper’s idealization of aboriginal and Asian cultures. Sometimes the Zen, philosophical tone was believably hers (“it is the emptiness that topples us”), but other times the words seemed borrowed, spoken from a constructed persona of Asian wisdom (“In the shadow of Shiva’s arms / hummingbirds levitate above the fuschia / like little yogis.”)

I appreciated Harper’s familiarity with thought from outside the Western hegemony, but heard in her voice an as-yet-uncalled truce between Harper’s transcendent spirit and the reality of her inhabiting a Western woman’s body. “I am a woman, I have the power of opening,” she tells a lover, almost as a challenge, in a world where women are “tricked into brothels,” and counselled to “express less anger, [less] resistance.” While on the one hand she asserts matriarchal power, she

nonetheless personifies Earth, the Great Mother, as exploited (“I Mother Earth / was taken by force / and the labour difficult”). Harper’s feminine clusters around the two poles of victim or goddess, and between them is something banal and domestic, something not yet confronted, that leaves Harper feeling “caught in the interval between worlds.”

Where she might use her third eye to witness everyday miracles, Harper remains the novice seeker, drawn to the explicitly mystic, mythic, ecstatic and or tragic. For wounds wrought by mundanity’s cutting edge, Harper’s wordcraft is a weak balm. This sorceress has yet to face that dragon. Yet for those who have already discovered their own sense of cosmic vibration, Harper sings a sympathetic, passionate psychic space.

Pray Meditate Upon its Poetry

Lise Downe

Disturbances of Progress. Coach House \$16.95

the soft signature. ECW \$12.00

Reviewed by Kevin McNeilly

The style and approach of Lise Downe’s poetry—an amalgam of Gertrude Stein’s precious reflexives and Lyn Hejinian’s pulled-taffy syntax, with dashes of Christopher Dewdney’s latinate scientism, Catriona Strang’s frayed archaism and (to my ear, a correspondence that might sit oddly with Downe herself) Tim Lilburn’s lyrical religiosity—have remained remarkably consistent in the years between these collections; *the soft signature* appeared in 1997 (and was inadvertently missed for review in *Canadian Literature*), while *Disturbances of Progress* dates from 2002, and contains material written over the previous seven years, two years before the preceding book’s appearance. This overlap might explain away the volumes’ formal

constants, which at first reading seem to undermine any sense of development. But such literary ideologies as advancement and newness get taken to task in Downe’s work, even if they are never quite renounced: progress is disturbed, deliberately, although unrelinquished.

Both books repeatedly acknowledge the exhaustion of their resources, as meaning devolves into referentiality and reflex, and as poetry comes increasing to consist in cannibalizing an already overwrought and nutrient-poor language. Downe’s lines maintain a pervasive stasis, strangely mired in their own figural plenitudes: each phrase, each fractured sentence has been reworked with echoes and puns, baroque flippancies, and dislocated spells—what she names, at one point, her “convoluted scenario”—to the degree that forward motion in a given poem gets lost, and all tend to sound roughly the same; if we find “shock infusing everything,” as Downe puts it, then nothing really remains verbally motile. But Downe also pervasively refuses to accept this stalemate, and each poem derives its sometimes vestigial push from an unshakable desire to speak, and to catch a trace of the ecstatic in this “noisy current / of representation” where “the illusion of depth is abandoned.”

While she will not delude herself with false claims—themselves top-heavy with quasi-philosophical jargon—of “ontological and explicit / reference,” she also clings to the possibility of “measures of eloquence” that exceed mere poeticizing, to touch “some ecstatic impulse that leaps in spite.” Negation, for Downe, wants to transform into viable song, sometimes even by detouring via childish banter and lightly scrambled typography: “Cannot. Canto.” Stumbling and groping through verbiage may offer intermittent affirmation—“the voice / yes / falters”—and the tentative possibility of poetic voice itself: “Someone / (maybe me) / imagining.” But such self-

consciousness remains insufficient for Downe, all talk and no action so to speak.

Her poems need to do more than describe their lack; as Downe openly admits—well, as openly as her fractals and shards allow her—they have to enact those “fugitive revelations,” to practise “what exalts” and not simply proffer spiritual or poetic neediness or “to commemorate a moment of / distraction / in a semi-exalted position.” Instead of distraction Downe wants a little endurance, something of value, as when she makes vaudevillian mockery shift, briefly, into bald paths: “eyes akimbo / of just how strong passion is / worth holding onto.” Despite an apparent groundlessness, Downe can still claim that “mobility, flesh and imagination astonish us,” recovering small miracles, kinetic flashes, from a weltering verbal mire. In a single looped simile, for instance, she can throw the contrivance of metaphor into question even as she affirms the momentary cohesiveness of poetic artifice, its collusion with the outer world it ingenuously claims to represent, to envision and to disclose: “hand painted light tumbling / like light.” That tumble, if I have it right, is a kind of excess, a transcendent and ungraspable “freefall / casual / spasmodic” that survives in language, despite itself, and that prods Downe to articulate, through a “differed tone,” what she can still name “presence of mind.”

Poetry, however fraught, remains for her a mode of attention, and enacts a vital phenomenology, sounding out toward consciousness: “still spoken I hear that old language swell / listening antennae.” Despite her recalcitrant suspicions of the capacity of words to say anything beyond their own insufficiencies, Downe manages—and this is what makes her poetry, in the end, compelling—to mine small diamonds from charred fragments, and to fabricate, as she says, from an intricate ardour “this ridiculous brilliance.”

Almosting

Stan Dragland

Apocrypha: Further Journeys. Newest P \$24.95

Reviewed by Kevin McNeilly

Dear Stan,

I have something to admit. Ever since *The Bees of the Invisible* I have admired and, well, coveted your ability to mix the confessional and the analytic, blending autobiography and keen-eared close reading in a critical mode that has become identifiably yours. Which puts me from the get-go in something of a bind, since I’m trying to mimic what I’ve praised as inimitable, your signature irresolution, the uniquely styled open-endedness of that “further” in your subtitle. The shards of memoir, essay and song gathered as *Apocrypha* work through writing by Erin Mouré, Bronwen Wallace, Roy Kiyooka, Matt Cohen, Halldór Laxness, Agnes Walsh, Himani Bannerji and others with strangely confident humility, an ingratiating distance. I’ll have to explain that. Stan, your range of reference is thoroughly impressive, both for its deftness and for the seductive fluidity with which you slide from point to point, teasing out tensions and collusions among the many writers you love. You make me want to read what you’re reading, the hallmark of a true critical gift.

Dear Stan,

Dipping into *Apocrypha* again I start to distrust you, which is natural. How can I trust someone whose style I covet, if I don’t want to end up a ventriloquist, or worse his dummy? As I think it over, Stan, I get the nagging sense that all this deference feels postured. In your open letters to Robert Kroetsch you admit you were actually “one of the drunks” at the party “that inspired Michael Ondaatje’s ‘Claude Glass,’” which nicely puts you in the company of writers you admire—though not merely as a hanger-on, the poem’s “unhappy

shadow”—while allowing you to make a point about fiction: “But only a fool prefers fact over full fathom five. I marvel at the sea-change of the poem. It is and is not the same party I partied.” The point being, I think, that like fact you can still slip into the poem by the back way. You sometimes make yourself out as that fool, when for instance you describe flubbing a performance of a song you wrote and then couldn’t remember. “*Real* musicians are cool,” you enthuse, to prove you’re neither cool nor real like them. But your italics point up slipperiness: is the “real” written or lived? Colliding Himani Bannerji and John Cage, you gesture at defamiliarization in good poetry, using the same oceanic imagery: “The sea of any real poetry is always strange, no matter how familiar, or who’d read a poem twice? And not only poetry, though the concentration and speed of poetry especially estranges the trepid reader.” Your ideal reader, who recurs all through these essays, is a figure of lived involvement; he or she collaborates actively, intrepidly, in the work—as you note of Fred Wah, whose genre-shifting “books help keep my thinking betwixt. They help keep certain questions a-boil: Is there a point at which the discipline of criticism lifts off the originating text & turns away into something else? How much will it stretch until—well, never; it never snaps in a reader of sufficient elasticity.” This readerly elasticity, this thinking betwixt, is the condition toward which your own restless texts aspire: a condition you repeatedly, and rightly, name desire.

Dear Stan,

Desire is a tricky business for a critic. Is criticism merely covetousness in disguise, wanting without doing? When, you ask, does the ingrained reflex let go, and commentary finally break into song without flubbing too badly? You write that your colleague Les Arnold “was obsessive about poetry. I sometimes felt that his writing

reflected that obsession to its detriment,” though his was still “an earned and integral reflexivity”; desire trips him up, as you say it does you: “He was drawn to American poetry. He taught it and wrote about it. I think he wanted to write it.” If you have to keep admitting to such want, when can you earnestly say you’ve earned it? You describe Kroetsch driven by “[r]eaching, desiring,” but then retreat: “I don’t get it. I want it. You don’t give it to me.” But you do give it to us, Stan: a brilliantly realized withholding, prodding your readers to think the unruly gap between givenness and wanting—for you the space of real poetry. Yours very truly.

A Distinguished Man

Sandra Djwa

Professing English: A Life of Roy Daniells. U of Toronto P \$55.00

Reviewed by Heather Murray

Several years ago, and just before her death, I met a woman who decades previously, thanks to her status as a “faculty wife,” had been employed as an essay marker in the English department at the University of British Columbia. (Since she was suffering from Alzheimer’s disease at the time of our encounter, and since she could not have given consent to be identified, she must now be anonymous—unfortunately so, since many of the women in those early departmental days remain unacknowledged.) Learning of her connection, I asked whether she recalled Garnett Sedgewick, the colourful former head of the department. Indeed, she did, with a sudden certainty and clarity: “Professor Sedgewick,” she said, a smile transforming her quiet, anxious face, “was a WICKED WICKED man!” Her few delighted words told more than any anecdote, about the devilish charm of this idiosyncratic figure. I then asked if she remembered Roy Daniells, who succeeded

Sedgewick as head. Her voice became muted again. “Ah, Professor Daniells,” she said. “A very distinguished man.”

Daniells was indeed a distinguished man. He was indefatigable and accomplished as a writer, teacher, administrator, and public intellectual. A scholar of seventeenth-century literature and of the baroque, he was also an editor, poet, biographer, and a novelist *manqué*. He built the English department at Manitoba and remained head at UBC for almost twenty years. He promoted Canadian literature by encouraging novice authors, and by founding both the *Manitoba Arts Review* and, importantly, the very journal which the reader now has before her. He was both a contributor to, and an editor of, *The Literary History of Canada*, and performed cultural “outreach” work through his many broadcasts for the CBC. In 1957 he published a “Proposal for a Canadian Association of University Teachers of English,” which would result in the organization now known as ACCUTE, the largest humanities society in the country. In the same year, the federal government established a national scholarly funding program through the formation of the Canada Council, largely as a result of pressure from the Humanities Research Council, of which Daniells was a central member. Roy Daniells’ efforts on behalf of the humanities in Canada were rewarded by both the presidency of the Royal Society of Canada, and an appointment as a Companion of the Order of Canada. It is sobering—for today’s internet-linked, funded and subvented, print-inundated academic—to recall a time before national scholarly societies, grants programs, or venues for publication outside of the few university quarterlies. And salutary to reflect on the efforts it took to put this infrastructure in place.

Roy Daniells, as the apt title of *Professing English* will suggest, was a man whose life and work were deeply interconnected. As a result, one can approach Sandra Djwa’s

exhaustively researched, yet eminently readable, study of Daniells in several ways. It is, first of all, a history of the development of scholarship and of higher education in Canada, in the important growth years following the Second World War. A saga of organizing, lobbying, collaboration, and disputation, the book also details the more informal networks within which important scholars—Northrop Frye, for example, or Earle Birney, or Desmond Pacey—interacted and created during the formative stages of their careers. In addition, *Professing English* offers portraits of the English departments at Toronto (where Daniells was a graduate student), Manitoba, and British Columbia, during the years of Daniells’ association with them. Detailed, yet animated by interviews and first-hand accounts, *Professing English* makes an important contribution to the history of English studies, and of the humanities more generally, in this country.

But what of Daniells as an individual? Sandra Djwa has risen admirably to the daunting challenge of crafting the biography of “a very distinguished man”: a man whose life is etched into the public record, a man whose personal existence and work appear to have fused, and a man who lacked the charisma even of some of his own colleagues and contemporaries. Djwa’s achievement has been to pry apart the life and work and to construct an “inner” story to parallel the institutional narrative. Indeed—as the opening epigraph from *Pilgrim’s Progress* will signal to the reader—this life of Roy Daniells could as easily be classified as a spiritual biography. The book opens with a dramatic scene: Paris, Père-Lachaise cemetery, 1932, the young Roy Daniells renouncing the doctrines of the Plymouth Brethren faith in which he had been raised. Daniells would not be the first young man to remake his life in post-war Paris. And he was typical of his generation of English-Canadian writers and critics,

many of whom (as Djwa observes) were children of the manse or themselves clerics, and who would struggle to reconcile faith and secular values. But for Daniells, whose relationship to the faith of his family was both agonizing and agonistic, the replacement of the religious-fundamentalist by the literary-aesthetic, through the “professing” of English, would never be fully substitutive. Daniells’ life, according to Djwa, remained suspended between polarities: remorse and reform, angst and creativity, depression and constructive force. Authors of the seventeenth century had a more inflected vocabulary than we have today for these states of accidie and spiritual dread.

While Daniells’ private journey was hidden from most eyes, it was, as Djwa sees it, readable in the directions of his life’s work. Most specifically, as she observes, the methods of exegesis learned by Daniells in his Plymouth Brethren youth continued to shape his textual interpretations, particularly in his important monograph of 1963, *Milton, Mannerism, and Baroque*. In his own writing, and in the authors he chose to study, he sought expressions of the spiritual and the eternal. Yet his hope that education could free the mind of prejudice, and allow the individual to escape pre-ordination of any kind, was manifested in a life-long promotion of the humanities, with a legacy discernible even today. For Roy Daniells, to “profess” literature, was to be fully alive to each pedagogical, vocational, and religious implication of the term.



Books of Beasts

Wallace Edwards

Alphabeasts. Kids Can \$19.95

Aubrey Lang, with photographs by Wayne Lynch

Baby Elephant. Fitzhenry & Whiteside \$15.95

Baby Fox. Fitzhenry & Whiteside \$15.95

Baby Lion. Fitzhenry & Whiteside \$15.95

Reviewed by John Considine and Nicholas Brown-Considine

The alphabet poem is a genre which has been giving satisfaction to the young at least since the seventeenth century: the Opies quote a polemical text of 1671 in which a version of the rhyme “A was an apple pie” is referred to with casual familiarity. It is still going strong, and Wallace Edwards’s *Alphabeasts* shows its vitality. Edwards honours tradition in giving each letter a line, building his rhyme up in couplets: “A is for Alligator, awake from a dream. / B is for Bat, slurping ice cream. / C is for Cat, who reflects on its self.” Assigning an animal to each letter is also traditional: the title of this book has been used at least twice before, by the English writer Dick King-Smith in 1990 (with pictures by Quentin Blake) and by the American illustrator Durga Bernhard in 1993.

This book does not, then, do a new thing—but it does an old thing very well indeed, presenting each line of verse on a separate 31-centimetre page with an elaborate, pleasing, and oddly naturalistic illustration. The alligator sets the scene: it awakes, not on the edge of a body of murky water, but draped over a richly upholstered armchair, tail hanging over the back of the chair, belly on the seat, chin on two cushions piled on an upholstered stool, forelegs dangling. Every picture is set in the same opulently furnished, not-quite-Edwardian house, and suggests the same domesticity: “O is for Octopus, changing a light” shows an uncompromisingly loathsome octopus

changing several light-bulbs at once in the chandelier with which it is intertwined, and faces the “Pig, tucked in for the night,” which has irises on its bedroom wallpaper and a box of chocolates on the patchwork quilt. Edwards is really taking up a theme from just the period of his furnishings, that of the story from Saki’s *Beasts and Superbeasts* in which an artist makes his reputation by painting “Ox in a Morning-room, Late Autumn” from the life and goes on to “Barbary Apes Wrecking a Boudoir,” or of the passage in Hardy’s “Convergence of the Twain,” in which the sea-creatures glide through the grand rooms of the Titanic. But this house has not been invaded by animals: they live there, and like it.

Every page of *Alphabeasts* is richly decorative, and the book is full of jokes, some of them enigmatic: why does the narwhal sit below a picture of a late twentieth-century office key? Why is the frog wearing an opera scarf and carrying a brush dipped in white paint? These questions may amuse the adult reader of this book more than the child for whom it was bought. The older of the present reviewers finds himself reflecting on the possibility of framing some of the most gorgeous images in the book; the younger has been left a little cold by it. It won the Governor-General’s Award for children’s book illustration in 2002.

The three books *Baby Elephant*, *Baby Lion*, and *Baby Fox* look suspiciously formulaic at first glance. They belong to a “Nature Babies” series (the seal, penguin, owl, and ground squirrel are others)—and this series of superficially attractive and informative little books for children have in the past been produced by marrying stock images with a sketchy commentary. These books, however, are in a different class. They are the work of an expert and prolific Canadian wife-and-husband team of wildlife writers and photographers, widely travelled but with a particular interest in cold-climate work, which has led to books

on loons, the boreal forest, the prairies, the Arctic, bears, and penguins. Wayne Lynch’s photographs are original, the record of long expeditions in the Serengeti plains and boreal North America respectively. Aubrey Lang’s text comes from the same commitment to patient and respectful observation as the images.

Each of the three books is arranged in the same way. A prefatory note tells the reader that the photographs were taken in the field without distressing the animals. An unnecessary table of contents faces it, and then a first page of scene-setting text is followed by openings in which a mix of text and photographs faces a page devoted to a single photograph or, occasionally, a block of photographs. A page of factual information headed “Did you know?” and a simple index follow, and the authors’ biographical note concludes the book. The full-page images are the most arresting feature of the books; they are consistently beautiful. The smaller pictures which face them are likewise all attractive and interesting, although small enough to be better appreciated in solitary reading than by parent and child sitting together over a book. The text is unpretentious and well integrated with the pictures, though the small child who likes baby animals will find some of it out of her or his reach: “The strange smell is the urine of a male red fox. It is the winter mating season. The young female fox has never had a mate before . . . soon she accepts him as her mate.” But the small child, or the parent reading to one, can skip over this, and the older child can learn from it whatever she or he is ready to learn. The narrative is certainly never condescendingly written, and it never degenerates into cutesiness: the foxes are irritated by fleas, the elephants by tsetse flies, the lions by hunger. Young male elephants and lions are driven away from herd and pride as they mature; young foxes are ignored by their parents until hunger forces them to move on. These are real animals.

Lang and Lynch lead tours for a “photo safari” company, and the “Nature Babies” books offer a perspective on their subjects which is something like that of eco-tourism. Each claims to record a single expedition (though one very fine picture in *Baby Fox*, whose preface says that to photograph the foxes “we camped on the edge of the Arctic Ocean,” is described by Lynch in an online gallery as having been taken in Saskatchewan). Each takes a holistic approach to the lives of the animals it describes, being concerned with their places in their habitats, and with their interactions with other species, with the marked exception of humans. This last point suggests the obvious central dilemma for eco-tourism as a whole. Lang and Lynch write in the newsletter of the company for which they lead tours that “Many subjects are naturally unwary and they scream out to be photographed with small focal length lenses”; one need not be exaggeratedly scrupulous about human attitudes to wild animals, or “critters” as the same column calls them, to find this a little disquieting. How far does this attitude feed into the “Nature Babies” books, one may ask—were those lions by any chance hungry because there were two photographers tailing them in a car? Very possibly not; and anyway, since humans do inevitably interact with other species, work like Lang and Lynch’s offers the young as good a model of interaction as one could ask for.

Searching for Home

Sarah Ellis

Pick-Up Sticks. Groundwood \$5.95

Sarah Withrow

Box Girl. Groundwood \$18.95

Reviewed by Sarika P. Bose

Pick-Up Sticks and *Box Girl* should attract young teenagers with their simple style, sketches of school life and the frustrations

of teenage life. The protagonists of the novels are 13-year-old girls growing into independence, as they struggle to find stability in the form of a secure home while contending with unconventional adults.

Sarah Ellis’s Governor General’s Award-winning novel *Pick Up Sticks*, set in Vancouver, focuses on Polly’s search for a home after she and her mother face eviction. The novel’s title is a metaphor for the delicate negotiations Polly needs to make in all her various relationships as the crisis of impending homelessness forces her to re-examine her world. The title also echoes Polly’s desperate need for control in her life. Polly’s insistence on responsibility in school and in her library job not only stands for stability but constructs a model for adult behaviour which is then contrasted with the actual behaviour of adults around her, many of whom rely on her for guidance.

Polly lives with her free-spirited artist mother and wishes for a more stable life, but the only stable life represented is that of predictably unpleasant, wealthy relatives. The novel relies on stereotypes about wealth. Although Polly recognizes the warmth, sincerity and uniqueness of her mother and her eccentric acquaintances, she is also irritated and embarrassed by them. She may reject the “fat cats” represented by the cell-phone-carrying uncle, the rich teen Stephanie (whose hobby is petty crime) and the empty-headed aunt looking for inner peace in artificial and trendy ways, but she does appreciate the comforts of a full fridge and matching bed-linens.

One of the novel’s strengths is that Ellis resists easy solutions. She provides no real resolution of Polly’s problems. Her mother’s carefree definition of home as shelter—any shelter—as opposed to her relatives’ conservative attitude to home as property each fall short of Polly’s need for home as the centre of emotional strength and per-

manence. The mother does not become conventional and the uncle's family does not become liberal. Polly and her mother are still looking for a home. But in allowing Polly to experience the opposition of discomforts—physical in her mother's domestic spaces and ethical in her uncle's—Ellis gives Polly the ability to make a choice instead of having one made for her. At the end Polly must choose the best of temporary spaces, but she has learned the old lesson that home is where the heart is.

The title of Sarah Withrow's *Box Girl* refers to a private game in which the protagonist, Gwen obsessively tries to construct a box out of the few postcards sent by her absent mother, to create a "spell" to retrieve her mother's presence in her life. The novel examines parental abandonment and homosexuality from a teenager's perspective. Out of the frustration and embarrassment caused by unconventional parents, Gwen tries to hide her home from her peers, a crisis lent immediacy for the reader by the use of a first-person perspective. She ignores the love and friendship offered by her father and his partner Leon, as well as that offered by a new and eccentric schoolmate, Clara, in favour of fantasies fuelled by her mother's vague promises to rescue Gwen from her humdrum life and take her to live in Paris. Gwen's initial problems are of loss, both of her mother and of her best friend, who have moved away. As the novel progresses, the reader realises these losses have the same cause: her father's homosexuality. Through Clara's determined friendship, Gwen finally accepts both parents' nonconformism. The house of postcards is rejected for the solid and loving home provided by willing parental figures. However, the unfolding and final revelation of secrets needs tighter construction, so that the nature of the secrets and Gwen's acceptance of the new configuration of family becomes less abrupt.

In both novels, non-material values of tolerance and loving relationships are contrasted to the illusory qualities of luxury and glamour. The lack in adult guidance causes difficulty, but forces both girls to reexamine their assumptions and replace resentment with acceptance.

Sage and Silly

Sally Fitz-Gibbon, illustrations by

Farida Zaman

Two Shoes, Blue Shoes, New Shoes! Fitzhenry & Whiteside \$18.95

Claudia M. Lee, ed., pictures by Rafael Yockteng
Messengers of Rain and Other Poems from Latin America. Groundwood Books \$19.95

Al Pittman, illustrations by Pam Hall

Down by Jim Long's Stage: Rhymes for Children and Young Fish. Breakwater \$19.95

Richard Thompson,

illustrations by Martin Springett

The Night Walker. Fitzhenry & Whiteside \$21.00

Reviewed by John Considine and

Nicholas Brown-Considine

Children's books can be analysed as belonging to either of two traditions: the sage, whose instructive work may be done overtly or covertly or the silly, whose work is solely to be, as Buddy Wasiname and the Other Fellers put it in one of their shorter songs, "just a little piece / Of insignificant foolishness / . . . just a little ditty for to liven up your day." Both traditions have their own high points. Two of the books under review here belong to the first, two to the second.

Richard Thompson's *The Night Walker* is his third collaboration with Martin Springett, following *Who* (Orca, 1993) and *The Follower* (Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2000). It tells the story of a Native boy who goes for a long walk by himself. He finds a number of small treasures, which he puts in a pouch at his belt, but on his return home in the gathering dark, he is increasingly alarmed

to hear clinking and rustling noises as of someone following him, moving when he moves and silent when he pauses. Who is stalking him? The tension mounts until the dreadful thought occurs that it may be the Night Walker, ready to catch him with its claws and put him in its sack, and he runs in fear, falls, and ends up sleeping outside. The next morning he returns to his mother, who listens to his story, observes the little clinking and rustling noises which his treasures make in his pouch, and remarks "You know, my boy . . . sometimes the monster you hear behind you in the dark is only the clink and click and rustle of the things you have collected during the day." Both prose and stylized illustrations are elegantly done, and they sit well together; this is a smooth piece of work, whose clunky moral will not repel every reader.

Claudia Lee's *Messengers of Rain and Other Poems from Latin America* is more puzzling. It is the work of six people from Spanish-language sources. Lee selected "poems written in simple and direct language," which might "teach the young and spark their aspirations"; four translators rendered them into free verse, and the Colombian artist Rafael Yockteng then decorated the book with watercolours (which the younger co-author of this review liked). This outline description of the book already suggests some problems. Firstly, why only poems available in Spanish? Lee's prefatory claim that "[t]he cultures of Latin America are united by the heritage of the Castilian language" is, after all, not true: quite apart from the speakers of indigenous languages (some of whose traditional verse does appear, translated from Spanish translations of the originals), it excludes a hundred and fifty million Portuguese-speaking Brazilians. Secondly, why have the translators confined themselves to free verse? I am not sure that the sentiments of Rubén Darío's words "En la angustia de la ignorancia / de lo porvenir, saludemos / la

barca llena de fragancia / que tiene de marfil los remos" will particularly move children in any language, but at least the Spanish lines make a pleasing noise, whereas the translation does not: "Anguished as we are in our ignorance / of what's to come, let us greet / the fragrance filled vessel / urged on by ivory oars." This leads on to a third question: what children will read this book? The dustjacket claims boldly that "As a teacher and mother of three children, Claudia [Lee] is very knowledgeable about the kinds of literature that appeal to young readers," but won't the young reader who enjoys Darío's thoughts on anguished ignorance, or Octavio Paz's thoughts on Confucius and the butterfly, feel patronized by Yockteng's whimsical little drawings, or by some of the poetry written overtly for *los niños*? And how many young readers will really value the fact that all the poems in the volume are translated from the same language? This is a fairly pleasant children's book for the adult reader, but I would hesitate before giving it to a child.

Sally Fitz-Gibbon's *Two Shoes, Blue Shoes, New Shoes!* is genuinely a children's book, indeed more to the taste of a child than of an adult who dislikes whimsy. The plotline is extremely simple, much more so than that of the author's previous children's book, *The Patchwork House* (Orca, 1996); the small protagonist goes to school in her lovely new blue shoes, delights in them as she goes, and makes them part of a sequence of cheerful fantasies. That's all, and it is certainly enough to amuse a very young reader. Each opening has a rhymed couplet as its text: "Skipping down the street, shoes, / Look at who we meet, shoes!" or "Riding on a whale, shoes, / See him splash his tail, shoes!" These are embellished with *faux-naïf* paintings of the walk to school through a big city (New York City, though it hardly matters) and of the flights of imagination that take off from

it. Evoking uncomplicated happiness is a difficult task, at which Fitz-Gibbon succeeds as does her illustrator, Farida Zaman.

Al Pittman's book of rhymes for children *Down by Jim Long's Stage* first appeared in 1976, when it was widely and deservedly admired. Its characters are fish and shellfish: "A sculpin named Sam / thought as he swam / how wonderful ugly / was he. / He said with a grin, / 'I'm as ugly as sin.' / 'I'm the ugliest fish in the sea.'" They are, specifically, the fish and shellfish of Newfoundland, sculpins and conners and tom cod; the book's title is that of a traditional song from Bonavista Bay. Pam Hall's illustrations for the first edition, in monochrome with coloured details, won her the Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon award in 1977 and helped to make her name as an artist: with time and practice, anyone might learn to draw a sculpin, but the faint expression of complacency which Hall gives Sam without positively anthropomorphizing his face is brilliantly done. The book has now been republished, appearing in 2001, the year of Pittman's death, with a silver sticker on the cover identifying it as a "25th Anniversary Collectors Edition," a publisher's gimmick that has been used on reissues of other, more famous children's books such as Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. The claim to classic status it makes is in fact surely justified. The illustrations have been redrawn for reproduction in full colour (together with new and gorgeous endpapers), and have actually gained in the redrawing. The text does not feel dated, and its easy, unpretentious clarity is the mark of its being written by a poet, someone who understands what to leave out. In particular, any suggestion that the book is the work of an adult communicating with children is excised: no message, no explanations of hard words or place names, no exclamation marks to assure readers that they are having fun. Writers with Al Pittman's gift for silliness do not come along every day.

The Bajan Connection

Cecil Foster

Dry Bone Memories. Key Porter \$26.95

Reviewed by George Elliott Clarke

In a 1997 essay on the short stories of the estimable Barbadian-Canadian writer Austin Chesterfield Clarke, I compared the content and character of his prose to that of the British spy-thriller writer Ian Fleming, a rhetorical gambit that irked two York University Humanities professors. Yet, in my defence, I must suggest that male, Caribbean-born, African Canadian writers in English possess, as a model for their fiction, not only the elite examples of V.S. Naipaul, G.C.H. Thomas, and C.L.R. James. There is also the commercial appeal *cum* literary polish of the Montreal-born Jamaican writer John Hearne (1926-94), whose nine novels include three Fleming-style, martini-bikini-*assassini* 'capers,' co-authored with Morris Cargill and published under the joint pseudonym of John Morris, between 1969 and 1975. (Too, Fleming was himself a tangentially Caribbean author, residing in his latter years at Goldeneye, his Jamaican estate.) Hence, a writer like Clarke not only aspires to recreate the rich poetic of a Derek Walcott, but also the *recherché* popularity of Hearne.

This same analysis applies to Cecil Foster, Clarke's fellow—and one-generation-younger—Bajan émigré to Toronto who has scribed four novels, the last of which, *Dry Bone Memories*, though evincing dauntless, literary dexterity, is a pointedly market-oriented work about Columbian cocaine, cash cleaning and corruption in contemporary Barbados. First a journalist in Barbados and then Toronto, and now a professor of sociology at the University of Guelph, Foster presumably possesses first-hand knowledge of the 'coke' mafia's machinations in Colombia, the Caribbean and Canada. This context serves as a

creditable support for his tale of the rise and fall of Jeffrey Spencer—a rags-to-riches Rasputin—who both launders the profits of drug trafficking into vital infrastructure for the Bajan proletariat *and* corrupts police, politicians, “the people,” and friends and family. Like Clarke and Fleming and Hearne, Foster is a moralist for whom the wages of sin is death. Thus, this story ends with the survival of imperious crime, but with the extinction of its puny operatives, namely, Jeffrey and his wife (who has betrayed him to US authorities), the destruction of Jeffrey’s relationship with his God-fearing, grave-digging father and his boyhood chum, Edmund, as well as the literally scorched-earth devastation of the island economy and government. Part Macbeth and part Machiavelli, part Santa and part Satan, Jeffrey in his amoral ascent wrights apocalyptic misery for his entire society.

The politics here is clear Red Toryism (yet one more echo of Clarke). Arguably, Foster’s conservative philosophy rouges *Dry Bone Memories* as much as it does his previous novel, *Slammin’ Tar* (1998), his prize-winning study, *A Place Called Heaven: The Meaning of Being Black in Canada* (1996), and his gorgeously detailed memoir, *Island Wings* (1998), where he informs us that he had to flee Barbados because of his frank reportage that earned the potentially violent enmity of a prime minister. Though Foster alludes to African American liberal writers like James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison, the novel is suspicious of liberal modernity and its icons of superficial integration and exploitative free trade. For one thing, other references run from British protestant poet John Milton to Anglo-American rightist poet T.S. Eliot. Too, while Jeffrey is portrayed as a devilish child, he becomes a certified criminal only after the clandestine white racism he confronts as a student in Toronto scotches his planned legal career. He goes into business, which of course leads—as in F. Scott

Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925)—to crime. We soon learn that “native” greed is no legitimate reply to the humiliating poverty wrought by neo-colonialism.

Edmund, the lifelong friend and rival to the charismatic, treacherous Jeffrey, shares with the latter the narration of *Dry Bone Memories*. This duality repeats what the critic John Fraser, speaking partly of *Gatsby*, describes in *Violence in the Arts* (1974) as the “bifurcation between the socially injurious man of practical power”—Jeffrey here—“and the more civilized ironical observer”—Edmund here—“in a seductive relationship that . . . can be only corrupting for the latter.” Similarly, if, as Fraser states, *Gatsby* is “heavily indebted to [Joseph] Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*,” Foster’s novel seems to follow suit, with Edmund playing Marlow to Jeffrey’s Kurtz. A failed singer and the son of a preacher, Edmund addresses his audience as “brothers and sisters,” emphasizing moralism by preaching his story as if he were a minister. Structurally, the novel yearns to echo song: its three parts are titled “arpeggio,” “adagio” and “refrain.”

By turns didactic and pedestrian, poetic and transcendent, with one eye on the epochal Caribbean crime flick *The Harder They Come* (1972) and one on serious literature, *Dry Bone Memories* is a significant African Canadian attempt—like Lawrence Hill’s *Any Known Blood*—at drafting paperback, socially-uplifting entertainment with a black face and accent. Ultimately, it cannot fully succeed: the sermonizing subverts the sins.



A Balanced Education

Martin Friedland

The University of Toronto: A History. U of Toronto P \$60.00

Blair Neatby and Don McEown

Creating Carleton: The Shaping Of a University. McGill-Queens / Carleton UP \$49.95

Reviewed by L. M. Findlay

Canadian universities have become once again a focus of public discussion and concerted scholarly inquiry. Where does post-secondary education fit into the new knowledge economy or what is now being called Canada's "innovation agenda," in support of which university and college presidents have joined with the federal government in seeking to double academic research output and triple its commercialization by 2010? And where do particular institutions fit within this general rethinking of excellence? The annual *Maclean's* rankings are symptomatic of a more widespread desire to rate institutional performance and demand accountability.

However, in addition to much else, the two books reviewed here provide the kind of context that no magazine can supply but which any serious attempt at ranking should consider.

The story of academic excellence in Canada is intimately associated with, though not reducible to, the accomplishments of the University of Toronto. Legal scholar Martin Friedland's history of his alma mater and long-time professional home is a massive but very readable and endlessly suggestive account of an institution born in controversy, hounded by scandals of various sorts, haunted by the "spectre" of faculty unionizing, stunned by catastrophes such as the University College fire of 1890 and the human cost of two world wars, but able through it all to serve many generations of students well. This much-needed update of the history of U of

T (the last one was published in 1927) revisits the past in light of seven decades of scholarship on academic disciplines, departments, and eminent individuals, before taking the narrative up to the present via interviews, analysis, and personal recollections. The work begins with the royal charter for King's College in 1826, and concludes with a section bracingly entitled "Raising the Sights." In between, one gets a shrewdly synthesized account of the routine and the dramatic, as university education and teaching become less of a bourgeois Christian male preserve while never shaking off or resolving for long the conflict between creativity and practicality. Reading this volume together with A. B. McKillop's *Matters of Mind: The University in Ontario, 1791-1951* (1994) makes one realize the responsibilities and dangers as well as the privileges that come with being a leading force in central Canada. The U of T is not always to be envied, though its example is always worth careful scrutiny elsewhere in Canada as well as internationally. In so far as we can claim to have a just and decent society, significant credit for this can be claimed by our universities, especially the largest one. Where we have come up short, as for instance in the matter of public understanding of what treaty federalism means and what Indigenous knowledge might do for all Canadians, significant responsibility rests with universities, which have done too little to attract, assist, and retain Aboriginal faculty and students, too little to welcome Indigenous knowledge into *all* disciplines.

Friedland is an evenhanded guide through the complexities of social change (including the changing status of women), the outstripping of resources by social expectation and intellectual ambition, the arcana of medical and legal education, or the challenge to the campus environment from greater Toronto's recurrent demolition derbies. He is extremely astute

in his account of academic governance, recognizing the importance of Burwash and Laskin's insights into connections between political and academic structures. Thanks to Friedland, alongside its many firsts, the U of T has to admit to its share of embarrassments and missed opportunities—some the result of top-down management, some the too-timid accommodation of sectarian, anti-semitic, anti-pacifist, or anti-labour currents in Canadian society. Friedland betrays a cautious wit too (“Presidents, it is safe to advise, should not turn firehoses on students”), though his account of the Cold War campus and of the student agitation of the 1960s is too condescending. His concluding walk through campus (a brilliantly achieved passage) should be read in conjunction with Ojibway legal scholar John Borrow's account of Taddle Creek and the Philosopher's Walk in *Recovering Canada: The Resurgence of Indigenous Law* (2002) in order to gauge how far the U of T has come as a built environment and a progressive force, and how far it has still to go.

Creating Carleton is the work of an emeritus professor of history (Neatby) and a secretary emeritus to the Board of Governors (McEown). This story overlaps continuously with the tale of its strongest precursor in Ontario as well as with its immediate neighbour, the University of Ottawa. However, Neatby and McEown's work deserves to be read in its own right, if only to refute such damaging expressions as “last-chance U” and the impoverished notions of value and competitiveness that underlie them. Given its medium size and relatively brief history (founded 1942), Carleton can hold its head up as a strong exemplar of the quality of the Canadian university system, even in especially tight-fisted provinces. Admittedly, Carleton has tried to do too much with too little. But what administrator worth her or his salt would do otherwise?

Stretching the education dollar is in this case more about dedication to the broad public interest than it is about endangering standards or forgetting one's place in the pecking order. And Carleton comes to its social mission honestly, evolving from a junior college with strong ties to the YMCA and a group of influential sponsors, and committed to less affluent and hence mostly part-time students (two-thirds of whom in the first instance turned out to be women). It soon thereafter included a large portion of the war veterans who helped broaden the student complement and thereby transformed teaching and curriculum across Canada. From the outset, Carleton College made the most of its location, aligning itself with convenient evening delivery of a liberal arts curriculum and niche marketing of a public administration program for public servants in the nation's capital (and later through the interdisciplinary Institute of Canadian Studies).

The authors make assumptions which others may resist—whether on the subject of student radicalism, women's and gay liberation, curricular “experiment,” what it means to be a “community of scholars,” or the use of graduate students in research in the natural sciences—but they deserve applause for their fairmindedness, their stress on the advantages of a less credentialist, research-intensive past, and their evocative picture gallery honouring some of the women on whose administrative, secretarial, and human skills universities did and do so heavily depend. The chapters on the 1960s are especially suggestive of the flawed but compelling experiment which is modern Canada, and the role of the self-shaping university in shaping the nation. The creativity and commitment that brought Carleton into being are as valuable today as they were in the uncertain days of 1942, and as vulnerable to co-option.

Art of Translation

Susan Gillis

Volta. Signature \$12.95

Carol Malyon

Colville's People. Mercury P \$14.95

Ellen McGinn

From Dark Horse Road. Blue Lake \$16.95

Reviewed by Tanis MacDonald

What is the nature of the attraction of one artist to another artist's aesthetic? In two of these three books of poetry by Canadian women, writers take up another artist's work as their guiding principle, translating visual art into written text or moving archaic thematics into a contemporary mode. The possibility of creating poetry from existing art has a definite attraction, though sometimes art that is inspired solely by a separate aesthetic can be oddly wearing on the reader. However, in the hands of a skilled poet, such writing can yield that ever-fascinating beast, the familiar object rendered strange. At their best, such artistic "translations" conflate homage and aesthetic reconfiguration to produce a fraternal, unexpected twin by the side of the original, a new visual or written text born of artistic parthenogenesis.

The poems in Susan Gillis's *Volta* work primarily with the electric current that galvanizes people in a romantic relationship, but the poet extends that metaphor further in order to explore the connection between two writers. The text offers two types of poems: contemporary lyric meditations on love accompanied by a sense of impending (but delicious) doom, and poems that Gillis calls "translations" of the Earl of Surrey's fifteenth century sonnets of court intrigue. Without Surrey's poems at hand, it is easy to read Gillis's translations as contemporary lyrics, and they work very well indeed as love poems. But Gillis displays her understanding of the sonnets by how far she is willing to go to translate the spark

of fateful court romance into a modern idiom, and the arc of her leap is as intriguing as the result. Gillis rewrites Surrey's "The soote season" as "Love as Extended Care," in which she takes care to gloss the original sonnet's use of pastoral renewal as hope for a return of love. By juxtaposing urban effluvia to bucolic splendor in her translation, Gillis creates a love sonnet that doubles as an elegy for a disintegrating culture. "The Sufficiency of Love," a reimagining of Surrey's "Set me whereas the sonne," takes the form of an unrhymed sonnet, complete with a couplet that proposes a final paradox. Translating Surrey's trope of unrequited love as an epic journey, Gillis undercuts Surrey by refusing the bitter peripatetic pleasure of such a journey, and suggests instead that unrequited love is a painful rap on the emotional knuckles. It is not necessary to be a Renaissance scholar to admire these poems, but it is a pleasure to note the way that Gillis vaults archaic meaning into contemporary concerns. Her brief essay on the process of literary translation between styles and eras, which may seem didactic in other books, is welcome here, largely because Gillis's passion for Surrey's work proves its mettle. As *Volta* implies, poetry is itself charged with currents that travel from person to person, from era to era.

In *Colville's People*, Carol Malyon works with the challenge of creating a verbal text from Canadian painter Alex Colville's love of visual symmetry, what Malyon calls a formula "to keep the world in perfect balance." Her stark and often witty poems echo the geometric precision of the exacting perspective that has brought Colville international recognition. His gift for infusing estrangement into his familiar (and often familial) subjects conveys an illusion of proximity, as though the body of the subject is simultaneously drawn close and held at arm's length. In a series of poems that take their titles from the paintings, Malyon

performs a poetic retrospective of Colville's work, noting "everywhere the contours / of a man and a woman . . . embrace like / interlocking pieces of the sky." Many of Colville's human subjects are caught in the moment before movement, and these poems are fearless in the way they capture melancholy dread or the inevitability of impending violence. Malyon's terse lyrics imitate the painter's lines and curves, and do much to capture Colville's distinctive intimacy of isolation. In addition, Malyon expertly textualizes Colville's obsession with temporality; her concise narratives of youth and aging crystallize the peculiar estrangement of both states. In "two boys playing," she notes the transience of the captured moment by warning the parents not to look away: "they cannot grow up / while we watch." The adolescent girl of "may day" understands that "growing older / is not the answer / to anything," and the woman of "nude & dummy" knows that "adults change into strangers / as we watch." When Malyon writes that the aging "man on verandah" can "see how the air each day / shaves his cheekbones a little closer," she uncovers the tension that haunts Colville's perspective, the dissolution at the edge of his figures. A final set of poems about efficacy of memory completes this accomplished and striking collection.

Ellen McGinn's *From Dark Horse Road* is a first collection of poetry, and certainly the poet can be forgiven for not attempting a translation of anything other than experience. However, *From Dark Horse Road* suffers from the underdeveloped poetics and untrammelled enthusiasm that befalls many first books. The poet has a certain wry tone, and the collection would benefit from more poems with the luminous crackle of "How Anything Happens." Often, these poems are tripped up by their colloquial or narrative choices, suggesting that the author needs to take Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch's advice and "murder her darlings."

Ambitious pieces like the awkwardly titled "Birdwatching for Corpses on the Beach One Fine Day" or "A Poem Interrupted" are crushed by the weight of their verbiage, though "Advice to A Virgin" and "Blue Willow" appeal with their images of childhood memory. Though the best of these poems buzz with manic energy, generally the writing needs more rigor and sharpness.

Re-Presenting Johnson

Charlotte Gray

Flint & Feather: The Life and Times of E. Pauline Johnson, Tekahionwake. HarperFleming \$37.95

Reviewed by Linda Morra

Charlotte Gray's *Flint & Feather* is the most recent in a succession of biographies about the fascinating and enigmatic Canadian writer and performer, Pauline Johnson. Being the child of a mixed marriage—her father was a Mohawk Chief, her mother was British—Johnson found herself increasingly frustrated at the turn of century in Canada when First Nations cultural, social, and political expressions were rigorously circumscribed. A woman of extraordinary strength and passion, Johnson continues to find an attentive audience in part because of her contributions to Canadian poetry and fiction, but also because of her intriguing personality, cultural background, and lifestyle.

Gray's book differentiates itself from other biographies since it attempts neither to establish or revise the record (as Garland Foster does in *The Mokaww Princess*), nor to evaluate the significance of Johnson's place as a Canadian writer. Gray's biography assumes Johnson's literary importance. Nor is her book a scholarly, meticulously documented account of Johnson's life and literary endeavours, as is *Paddling Her Own Canoe*, the biography by Carole Gerson and Veronica Strong-Boag. Although each chapter is accompanied by a brief explana-

tion of sources, biographical details are not precisely noted and the index only partially refers to what the book contains. Also, the writing style is informal: its colloquial approach, which broadens its appeal and renders the material easily digestible, has its difficulties. At moments, Gray delineates scenes with a glibness that undermines what is otherwise an intriguing account of Johnson's life. She describes how Johnson is "escorted from her hotel to her recital, like the praetorian guard around a Roman emperor." This comparison is distracting because it is out of place. These would be conspicuous oddities in an academic endeavour; in a popular account, however, such lapses are easily overlooked.

As in her previous publications, *Mrs. King: The Life and Times of Isabel Mackenzie King* and *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Lives of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill*, Gray is developing Canadian cultural mythology. She is fascinated by narratives of Canadian women and their contributions to the nation. As the result of previous work, she possesses a sound sense of Johnson's historical and social context and provides the reader with a sense of orientation in Johnson's richly populated world. Using both her creative endeavours and the material (letters, diaries, essays and so forth) currently available about Johnson's life, she delineates possible scenarios with such flourish that her audience will be compelled to continue reading. One will also feel enticed by Gray's artful use of suspense and mystery: chapters close with unresolved details or questions. If Johnson's struggle with her cultural legacy, the difficulties involved in straddling the gulf between two worlds, and the mysteries surrounding her personal life (her mother's unopened death-bed letter, or the locket with the portrait of an unidentified young man) assure the reader of a compelling narrative, Gray's vibrant and entertaining mode of telling her story secures it.

Dispatches from the Gender Wars

Terry Griggs

Rogue's Wedding. Random House \$34.95

Rick Salutin

The Womanizer: A Man of His Time. Doubleday \$34.95

Reviewed by Catherine Hunter

From the first page of Terry Grigg's enchanting and rambunctious new novel, the war between the genders erupts in a metaphorical warning of explosive passion. Just as Griffith Smolders is anxiously contemplating the consummation of his marriage to Avice Drinkwater, a flash of ball lightning shoots through the window right into his hotel room, singeing his socks severely. Griffith escapes without his bride, or his shoes, and spends the next 150 pages drifting, sailing, walking, and running as far away from the pursuing Avice as he can get. Meanwhile, in Rick Salutin's *The Womanizer*, Max spends his life running after women, trying to come as close to them as he can get. Or at least he thinks that's what he's doing. In effect, he's running away as surely as Griggs's Griffith is running away from Avice. Max suffers from an advanced and self-diagnosed case of "sex addiction." He's compelled to seduce every attractive woman he meets and doomed to lose interest soon after he succeeds. In both novels, the chase is on, though the genders are reversed. And in both novels, the war between the genders is treated with gentle humour and a refreshing amount of sympathetic insight into the suffering of the troops on the other side.

Why does Griffith run away from Avice? It could be because he's a nervous young virgin, fearful at the prospect of sexual union. It could be because that ball lightning just seems a little too obvious and a little too timely in its role as wedding-night omen. But it's hard to say, ultimately, why

Griffith abandons his bride. Motivation is hard to find in *Rogue's Wedding*. But no reader will search very hard for it. This isn't realism; it's a picaresque anti-romance, a comic and ironically inverted version of Homer's *Odyssey*, with Penelope in charge. The fantastic setting makes anything seem possible; and the narrative delights with its rapid series of unexpected turns. Griggs has created a surrealist version of nineteenth-century Ontario, peopled it with bizarre characters, and energized it all with poetic imagery. When Griffith's wife catches up to him, she attacks him so quickly that he "thought it was the moon, knuckled and white, bunched like a fist, that had flown down out of the sky and popped him one." And wild metaphors are scattered on nearly every page, as in this description of a hotel fire: "Fire, a delinquent guest, more consuming than consummate, loved the little hotel. It toured all the rooms, ran up the walls, blistered the paper, jumped on the beds, cracked the mirrors with one scorching look." Griggs's sentences are full of surprises, her language is fresh and evocative, and the book is sheer pleasure to read.

The Womanizer is quieter and more conventional in its use of language and in its narrative structure. The novel begins as Max, in the throes of physical and metaphorical heart trouble, attempts to address his infant son by telling him the story of his life. It's a life that consists mainly of one desultory, much-interrupted career and hundreds of love affairs, a story somewhat unsuitable for an infant, but nevertheless it's quite amusing and sometimes moving for the adult reader. The narrative action is rather repetitive, limited as it is to the numerous shifts from one to another of Max's girlfriends, who sometimes exist as specific persons for whole pages at a time before sinking back into the shapeless morass of womankind in general. There's a bit of suspense as we wonder which one of them

ends up mothering the son alluded to in the novel's opening. But aside from that, the only real narrative tension is created by the question of *why* Max has become such a "womanizer." Unfortunately, however, aside from vague references to his "destiny," that question is never answered. Until his twenties, Max remains apparently asexual, a virgin who knows nothing about women and refuses even to think about sex. Then suddenly he becomes obsessed with sex and romance, longing to touch nearly every woman he sees. This transformation occurs for no convincing reason. Was it his failed, early marriage? His abusive father? That shameful incident when he was eight years old? Max doesn't know, which is understandable—if he had some insight into his own behaviour, he might actually change. But the reader would certainly like to know, and Salutin might have tried a bit harder to provide some believable clues in this otherwise quite realistic book.

The high points in *The Womanizer* are its moments of irony. Poor Max, who can't imagine doing anything with a woman outside of bed, seems puzzled by one girlfriend who would sometimes "half-heartedly suggest we 'do' something, as if sex was nothing," and he gets close to another by telling her about the "women he has come close to getting close to." Salutin is at his witty best when Max, who has "achieved the status, in his mind that is, of being the world's first freelance economist," wryly documents the shifting trends in economics, politics, gender relations, and technology. (There's probably enough material here for a sociological essay on the effects of telephone technology on dating rituals in late twentieth-century Canadian culture.)

Terry Griggs and Rick Salutin have written two vastly different novels. *Rogue's Wedding* twists and bucks along its rollicking storyline, while *The Womanizer* has a slower, meandering narrative arc. But each one traces a path dictated by sexual desire,

and each one gets its weary hero home at last—though not necessarily in one piece—from the gender wars.

Hope and Remembrance

Barbara Haworth-Attard

Irish Chain. HarperCollins \$15.99

Deborah Ellis

A Company of Fools. Fitzhenry & Whiteside \$19.95

Charles Reid

Hurricanes Over London. Ronsdale \$8.95

Reviewed by Huai-Yang Lim

Stories of adversity and tragedy dominate contemporary media and recur in historical fiction. Historical fiction written for children shows a similar trend in its desire to instill an awareness of catastrophic events and the historical periods in which they occurred, and the three novels under consideration succeed in evoking the past through their young protagonists' viewpoints.

In *Irish Chain*, Barbara Haworth-Attard explores the effects of the tragic Halifax explosion of December 6, 1917 through the life of Rose Dunlea, a thirteen-year-old who attends a Catholic girls' school in Halifax. Offering a sensitive portrait of a girl who struggles with dyslexia, Haworth-Attard also depicts daily life during that period, and both the sense of community and the hardships. Rose's dyslexia leads to low self-esteem and a belief that she is, indeed, "dumb." She feels isolated from her peers, several of whom cannot understand her disability. Sister Frances cannot comprehend her disability either and rebukes her for her empty scribbler, on which she was supposed to have written her story for class. Yet, Rose is not simply an ineffectual victim who needs sympathy. Her problems with reading and writing are compensated by her extraordinary talent for storytelling, which she uses to evoke her great-grandmother's experiences. Aunt Ida tells her, "Never let anyone

tell you you're not smart, and if they do, don't believe them. You are special."

The book's turning point occurs when two ships collide in the Halifax harbour, creating a massive explosion that results in widespread destruction and death. However, despite its horrific effects, the tragedy's aftermath affirms that something positive can come out of it, both communally and personally. It inscribes a vision of communal cooperation that transcends personal grievances. Among her peers and surviving relations, it is Rose who possesses the resilience and determination to bring her family together. In this context, the narrative thread of Rose's great-grandmother and her Irish Quilt is significant. While Rose cannot fully comprehend the meaning that she should take away from this tragedy and wonders if she ever will, she carries on her great-grandmother's legacy by positioning herself as a storyteller. The Irish Quilt symbolizes Rose's genealogical inheritance, as each quilt square contains a story from her great-grandmother's past that expresses her strength. Rose is numbed by the tragedy and its impact on her family, but her reactions parallel her great-grandmother's strength as she uses her storytelling ability to give survivors hope and comfort. Like her great-grandmother, Rose decides that she will create her own quilt to preserve her own experiences for future generations.

Deborah Ellis's *A Company of Fools* expresses a similar message of hope. Set in the Middle Ages, the narrative unfolds in Paris, France during the years of 1347-1348, when the Plague rapidly spreads throughout Europe, indiscriminately claiming thousands of victims. Against the backdrop of the Plague, the narrative revolves around some choirboys' lives in St. Luc's Abbey. Capturing their daily tasks and humorous antics, Ellis also individualizes the choirboys and the adult monks with distinctive traits that make them memorable characters,

which enhances the tragedy when some of them succumb to the Plague. She depicts the choirboys' tragically naïve, yet understandable, reactions to the disease when they either disregard its dangers or listen to swindlers who claim to offer them protection against it. The Plague's progression leads to an increasingly somber mood in the Abbey and surrounding towns, and exposes the desperate measures that some will take to save or cure themselves and the selfishness of those, such as the monk Father Prior, who abuse the situation for personal gain. Even the boys are not immune to this selfishness. Young Micah, a former thief whom the Abbey had taken in and who possesses an extraordinary singing ability, succumbs to peoples' desperation for a cure and takes advantage of their willingness to pay him for his singing. Only after his singing fails to cure people does Micah realize the unethical nature of his actions.

Depicting the Plague's horrors and the tragic futility of trying to stop it, the novel nevertheless ends on a hopeful note that thematically circles back to an earlier part of the story when the Abbey sends out a "company of fools" to bring laughter to the villagers. Speaking from a later time, Henri believes that the world can learn from the Plague. The mutual recognition of death and its effects, as well as the fleeting and uncertain nature of life, can foster a new set of ethics that emphasizes mutual sacrifice and communal responsibility over actions driven by selfish motives: "Having seen so much suffering, we will never again cause others to suffer."

Focusing on World War II, Charles Reid's *Hurricanes Over London* also speaks to the ability to cope with adversity. However, unlike the other two novels, its narrator Jamie does not actually live in that historical period as he is looking back upon it. He finds his deceased grandfather's diary and discovers what his life was like during that

time. Charting the war's debilitating effects on himself, his friends, and others in his community, Jamie's grandfather witnesses the physical destruction and death. In its early stages, the war was something unreal that they could disregard and talk about arrogantly and playfully, "leaving us to brag about what we were going to do to Hitler and revel in silly songs like 'We're going to hang out the washing on the Siegfried Line, Germany's defence line.'" Eventually, Jamie's grandfather would also lose his close friends Sammy and Puddy to the war.

By framing the narrative from the present, Reid portrays how Jamie comes to appreciate the past and to recognize that he has a responsibility to keep it alive. When Mr. Brannigan asserts, "That part of our history is being forgotten too easily these days," Jamie agrees. Jamie acquires the missing control parts for the Hurricane aircraft's reconstruction at the Calgary museum, which symbolically concretizes his reconnection with the past. The war has permanently scarred the generation who lived through it, but the novel testifies to the resilience of those who survived. Moreover, it hints that Jamie will preserve his grandfather's experiences, much like the protagonists' retention of the past in Haworth-Attard's and Ellis's novels.

These books affirm the importance of remembering and discussing the past. While the past may be unpleasant and traumatic, the ways in which survivors have coped can provide some valuable lessons for ethically addressing our contemporary problems.

Darkness Visible

Gail Helgason

Swimming into Darkness. Coteau Books \$18.95

Reviewed by Kristjana Gunnars

Gail Helgason is the author of *Fracture Patterns* (1995), which won the Alberta Book Award and the City of Edmonton

Book Prize. *Swimming into Darkness* is her first novel, an excellent and deeply considered work. Since Helgason, of Icelandic descent, grew up in Foam Lake, Saskatchewan and graduated from the University of Saskatchewan, she knows the territory of her novel exceedingly well. This double-narrative tells two stories simultaneously, one of which takes place at a Saskatchewan lake in the 1960s, the other in contemporary Edmonton.

The narrator and protagonist, Thora Sigurdson, is a historical archaeologist who is directing the renovations of the homestead of an Icelandic-Canadian poet named Markus Olafsson (a thinly disguised mask for Stephan G. Stephansson.) She is in the final stages of rebuilding the homestead, and there is an opening in two weeks. While engaged in this project, she recollects a summer in her childhood spent at Whitefish Lake in Saskatchewan. Thora's best friend and neighbour is Gretchen McConnell, the daughter of the town doctor in Gilead. This is the summer of 1962, during the Saskatchewan Doctors Strike that divides the population of the province. Talk of creeping socialism surrounds the issue, stirring up intense passions.

Dr. McConnell (Mac) is caught in a bind regarding his patients. He is not allowed to attend to them during the strike and they must be transported long distances to the few hospitals that remain open in major centres. A tragedy inevitably occurs, which has repercussions among the teenagers. That is, the children act out their parents' political activities, and become just as cruel and violent—perhaps even more—about the issues. Helgason's protagonist Thora is a bit of a mealy-mouth and blunderer, and she lets things happen that should not take place. She continues into her fifties with a huge amount of guilt.

The lyricism of this novel rests in the fluid use of metaphor, which serves to deepen the impact. This is a double-layered novel

that tells an interesting social and political story, but also focuses on a more diffuse emotional tale. The centre of the novel is the interior development of the narrator, and how the doctors' strike in the 1960s, and the tragedies concerning her friends, relate to the refurbishing of the Olafsson homestead. Since Thora is Icelandic-Canadian, she has something personal at stake in this historical project, and she has something to learn about her people and about herself. The narrative shows the teenagers learning to swim, and also describes Thora engaged in building a miniature of her grandparents' farmstead at the lake, which has fallen into ruin. These are symbolic of her work later in life, and also of what she is doing with the narrative in general: constructing a miniature of something meaningful and delving underneath.

The narrator of *Swimming into Darkness* makes a rather grisly discovery at the poet's homestead during her renovation work. Thora has enough understanding of Icelandic culture and mythic/symbolic thinking to figure out what the discovery means, but the experience is nonetheless troubling. As the novel progresses, more and more dark material pertaining to Icelandic culture in Canada is revealed, which Thora shrugs off in her protestations that the immigrants were rationalists and positivists who abandoned superstition. Nonetheless, ancient beliefs have remained, but are hidden.

This novel is carefully written and skillfully structured. Helgason smoothly shifts between 1962 and 1998. The older narrator makes perfect sense and is a natural outgrowth of the younger self. How Helgason handles the powerful issue of guilt is very real: she touches on a cultural nerve realistically and carefully. However, she has left out the original irony and dark humour in the dreadful tales of the long-ago in Iceland and its superstitions (volcanic eruptions, toxic clouds, and resultant starvation). The idea of ghosts and spirits that will not rest

is an enigma for Thora, which she wishes to dismiss at the same time that she is facing her own ghosts. The psychological explanation takes some of the magic away. Overall, though, this is a fine novel that is deeply moving and very illuminating on both a dramatic and historical level.

Whiteout

Frances Henry and Carol Tator

Discourses of Domination: Racial Bias in the Canadian English-Language Press.

U of Toronto P \$27.95

Reviewed by Marilyn Iwama

Here is a titular challenge to the notion of media objectivity, the promise of a book that might expose the fundamental racism underlying the “core assumptions, hypotheses, and world views” of the English-language press in Canada. Not quite. What Frances Henry and Carol Tator do undertake in *Discourses of Domination* is the task of demonstrating just how certain media folk conduct their business—of reporting, editorializing, managing and owning the production of “the news”—in racist fashion. In this safer endeavour, the book does not disappoint.

To show where the media have recently been going “wrong rather than . . . right,” Henry and Tator present five case studies with the aid of Critical Discourse Analysis, or “CDA”: the mistaken airing of CTV news reporter Avery Haines’s “joking” aside about employment equity; *National Post* editorials and reporting on (mostly) Tamil immigration; *Globe and Mail* editorials concerning employment equity; the sexual assault of a First Nations woman by politician Jack Ramsay and the dispute over Mi’kmaq fishing rites at Burnt Church, New Brunswick; and two restaurant shootings—the “Just Desserts” case and “the Chinese Restaurant Slaying.” The authors provide a chapter review of the literature on racism in media,

an overview of discourse analysis and quantitative illustrations of, for example, the number of racial minorities working in media, and the databases compiled for each case. The book also features a discrete chapter by Sien Hier and Joshua Greenberg on Chinese migration to Canada.

Discourses of Domination contributes significantly to the literature on racism in Canada. Its discussion of interviews with “minority” journalists provides an insider perspective on the workings of race in the mainstream press. Journalists tell how media management makes use of them—as evidence of their newspaper’s or broadcasting station’s non-racist policies and as “cultural interpreters” (that is, the legitimate source of all things ethnic). Interviews highlight occupational obstacles that “visible minority” journalists encounter, such as being passed over when major story assignments and job promotions are awarded. Also by way of a counter discourse, the authors detail reaction from within Toronto’s Tamil community to the *Post*’s linkage of Tamils in Canada with the “terrorist Tamil Tigers.”

Each argument supports the conclusion that racism is deeply embedded in mainstream Canadian media discourse—and that media representations of race exert a powerful negative influence in the daily realities of marginalized citizens. The authors bolster their position by discussing ways in which headlines and editorials become supportive data in the drafting of legislation. Should readers still require it, the chapter on the racialization of crime is a convincing portrait of the liability of dark skin, especially if you happen to be a criminal suspect.

However, to encompass the “forms and practices” with which CDA concerns itself—those power relations between dominant and subordinate groups that maintain impermeable borders—analysis must extend beyond the accumulation of case

studies to the systemic relations that support inequities, as the writers insist. By identifying the rhetorical strategies evident in selected excerpts, Henry and Tator well support their argument that “some members of the Canadian press give voice to racism.” This is a critical first step in discursive analysis. As such, *Discourses of Domination*—purged of its distracting dependence on italics, careless copyediting and unnecessary repetition—would be a useful tool in media and cultural studies at the high school or undergraduate level.

Within these analytical limits, though, *Discourses of Domination* still reinscribes some “commonsensical” notions about what it is to be “Canadian.” Without a whisper of irony, Henry and Tator claim a “national” perspective for their analysis because, they say, it includes stories from “national” newspapers. Thin claims to national status aside, the authors confess and defend their regional bias by characterizing Ontario as “one of the main sites of antiracism struggle in Canada.” Relative inattention to media discourse outside of central Canada compromises their analysis, as their own contrast of local and national coverage of the Ramsay case illustrates. Any attempt at understanding where the Canadian media “go wrong” demands a more representative sample. *Discourses of Domination* would only have benefited from a hard look at, for example, the troubling history of western media constructions of “Asian” immigration, coverage of the protracted political conflict within Sikh communities or the rapid increase in aboriginal populations on the prairies.

Discourses of Domination leaves significant questions unanswered. Henry and Tator note that oppositional discourses, such as those offered by “ethnic” presses, reveal and challenge the racist discourse of dominant media. Why, then, have they depended solely on “journalists of colour” from within dominant ranks? Why argue

against generalization by using unexamined stereotypes such as “neo-conservative” and “boat people”? Where is the promised historical context? Had Tator and Henry opted for deeper discussion of fewer case studies and focused less on individual reporting (“Diane Francis’s Discourse on Immigration,” for one) these questions may have been addressed.

The chapter by Hier and Greenberg also suffers from careless editing and the occasional lapse into generalization. What, for instance, are the “racist stereotypes that all Canadians hold about the Chinese”? And who are these Canadians that hold them? On balance, however, Hier and Greenberg argue solidly their thesis that mainstream media manufactured a discursive crisis over the arrival of illegal Chinese migrants in Vancouver in 1999. The concept of “moral panic” is particularly relevant, since Hier and Greenberg considered only headlines and “hard” stories, those media forms purported to be “objective.” Given contemporary moral panic regarding terrorism and the SARS “crisis,” *Discourses of Domination* is a handy companion for the morning paper.

Nothing Like That

Paulette Jiles

North Spirit: Travels among the Cree and Ojibway Nations and their Star Maps. Anchor Canada \$21.00

Reviewed by John Moffatt

Originally published in 1995, *North Spirit* is Paulette Jiles’s account of her years as a broadcaster and journalist in the Ojibway and Cree communities of Northern Ontario between 1974 and 1983. By turns humorous, tragic, spiritual, and satiric, the narrative reflects the volatile nature of the cultural dialogue the book explores, and in which Jiles implicates the reader: “You, the reader, are on this story road as well . . . You may be in search of wise elders, the

ancient mysteries of shamans, but here you are, in an unforgiving climate, suspended in a flight machine that is pouring itself in a deep slant toward snowpacked ice." The elders and shamans and the bleak depiction of the descending aircraft reveal a conflict at the heart of Jiles's creative non-fiction. Many myths shape the expectations of both author and reader in *North Spirit*, including tongue in cheek references to old Hollywood westerns, literary allusions, and indigenous traditional narratives. However, if these are the landmarks on our journey, we meet them in the context of cold and distance and seemingly insurmountable linguistic and cultural barriers. We need maps, Jiles says, and her subtitle, *Travels among the Cree and Ojibway Nations and their Star Maps* reminds us that all maps encode a mythology and a cosmology; *North Spirit* argues that recognizing territory as unfamiliar requires us to seek out new maps and all they bring with them.

Jiles often uses humour to show how far she is off, or rather between maps, but her meticulous ear for dialogue keeps the gravity of her point within reach. When she tells a friend that using a radio phone will be "Just like a Somerset Maugham story. Did you ever read 'Rain'?", he replies, "No, but this is nothing like it. I saw *North to Alaska* when I was out to college in Toronto. It was nothing like that, either." In fact, there is "nothing like" *North Spirit* Rapids and its people. Jiles describes both as "composites" of actual places and people, but the originals retain a uniqueness and indescribability to outsiders. Jiles, however, also emphasizes that the act of communication, while imperfect, is transformational and mythic; she describes moments in the life of a small Northern radio station or newspaper, not simply to point out differences in attitude towards modern media, but to show how learning to perceive those differences is transformative. For example, when Jiles attempts to

"translate" a tragic shooting into "hard news", believing that "At last I had something to teach" the volunteers at the station, she is told "The elders are going to take care of this. We just leave the radio station." Instead of crafting "copy" from the event, Jiles listens "as the solemn voices in Ojibway spoke on and on. They prayed for the soul of Billy Bluecoat, and for the recovery of the young girl. They sang 'Amazing Grace' in Ojibway . . . This was how the Anishinabek handled hard news."

Such acts of stepping aside are common in *North Spirit*, and reveal both self-deprecation and determination to engage with the cultural barriers. "I was becoming the village idiot," she says of her efforts to learn Ojibway, a thought-provoking if often amusing process within the book. However, as she puts it, "all you had to do to get along in a new culture was to endure your own ignorance, say stupid things, flush with misery and embarrassment, and then rebound, stay cheerful, keep trying." This rather Beckett-like spirit of "failing better" also informs her approach to Aboriginal myth and narrative. While Jiles refers to traditional stories throughout *North Spirit*, she is always part of an audience, listening. Her one attempt to tell one of the stories is a disaster; a creative writing class in Toronto greets a ribald narrative with "silence and even hostility." Jiles doesn't agonize over issues of ownership or appropriation; instead, her embarrassment itself conveys the problem with utter clarity; she internalizes a point that the elders in *North Spirit* make to the town's white teachers: "the children had to learn that learning by experience was learning."

Ultimately, this is a book about learning. The beauty of Jiles's prose, her essential sympathy and good humour make the reissue of *North Spirit* welcome, but the memoir's greatest value rests in its generous embrace of the problem of how people try to learn about one another.

Dissecting Disciplinarity

Eva Kushner

The Living Prism: Itineraries in Comparative Literature. McGill-Queen's UP \$29.95

Peter Swirski

Between Literature and Science: Poe, Lem, and Explorations in Aesthetics, Cognitive Science, and Literary Knowledge. McGill-Queen's UP \$24.95

Peder Anker

Imperial Ecology: Environmental Order in the British Empire, 1895–1945. Harvard UP \$99.00

Reviewed by Rachel Poliquin

The Living Prism collects twenty-seven essays previously published or presented by Eva Kushner, each of which investigates Comparative Literature's current role and responsibility "to serve all cultures in ways that will ensure and enhance their membership in the world system of literatures." Kushner claims Comparative Literature is ideally located to negotiate the plurality of voices, the fragmentation and the epistemological doubt present in contemporary academic discourse. Its youth, experimental impetus and identity crisis have not impaired the validity of Comparative Literature, but rather have prepared its students to cope with our increasingly complex and multivocal "global village."

Kushner calls for "de facto openness and diversity of the field of literary history," methodological and epistemological flexibility, and most importantly dialogue among models of interpretation and among cultures, disciplines and theoretical approaches. She advocates typology as an alternative to classifications of discourse that imply *a priori* centres, hierarchies, pre-established models. Typology calls for "inductive research into literary relationships within a given culture set in a given socio-historical situation, and from there into relationships among comparable cultures existing under similar conditions, without positing a preconceived unity."

Kushner posits the contemporary rereading of the early modern period as a model exhibiting certain exemplary impulses for literary history in general, enabling us to look for difference and heterogeneity by listening to voices that previously have been neglected, and confirming how much the rewriting of history is "avowedly a historical discourse of our own time."

Taken as a whole, *The Living Prism* is somewhat dizzying in scope and aim. The essays admirably evince Kushner's expansive knowledge of theory, literature and historiography, and it is precisely the author's erudition that inspires and enables her vision for Comparative Literature. While her project is immensely appealing, its accessibility is limited somewhat to academics possessing a capacious scholarship similar to Kushner's. Yet, despite its intellectual idealism, *The Living Prism* presents a positive vision of what scholarship could and should be as the humanities struggle to come to terms with diversity without losing communication and unity. We are rewriting and rereading, Kushner explains, "because we are rewriting and rereading ourselves as humans."

Peter Swirski's *Between Literature and Science* tackles the works of Edgar Allan Poe and Stanislaw Lem in a manner somewhat like an intergalactic voyage for traditional literary studies, periodically landing in philosophy of science, game theory, pragmatics, futurology, bitic literature, cosmology, template programming and computer cognition—since according to Swirski, only a "genuinely interdisciplinary analysis, sympathetic to the speculative freedom of literary fiction and the analytical rigour of science" is able to capture the full breadth of Poe's and Lem's cognitive projects. The six essays cover a lot of ground, but are held together by Swirski's contention that literature, philosophy and science are "inseparable manifestations of the same creative human instinct."

Chapter one investigates game theory in Poe's "The Purloined Letter." For Swirski, game theory is a theoretical model of the reading process, and can therefore be extended to the larger "game" of literary interpretation, whereby the reader must be attuned to the author's reflexive intentions; as such game theory accentuates the pragmatic side of aesthetics and can be used for resolving the problem of truth in fiction. Swirski next turns to Poe's revolutionary epistemology in *Eureka*. Critics have focused on Poe's superb rhetorical skills to gloss over enigmatic points in his theory and have taken the text's inconsistencies, and misconceptions as evidence of Poe's ignorance of philosophy. However, Swirski claims *Eureka* demonstrates an unequalled cognitive project, "testimony to the almost boundless fertility of its author's philosophical imagination," a treatise that privileges poetic intuition and inspiration over deductive and inductive methods of inquiry.

Swirski continues his focus on the limitations of scientific reasoning by examining Lem's critic of epistemology in *The Invincible*, a futuristic adventure that pits scientists against the enigmatic Black Cloud on Regis III, a desert Earth-type planet abounding with unsettling mysteries. The scientists' inability to adapt Earth-based patterns and their insistence on anthropomorphic models accentuate the insufficiency and inflexibility of scientific inquiry when encountering the alien: new and innovative solutions are not sought out and the contingency of all scientific models is not grasped.

In his last two chapters, Swirski embarks on an analysis of Lem's "A History of Bitic Literature" (1984), which leads into a discussion of broader issues pertaining to computer thinking, learning, authorship and autonomy. If computers are able to spontaneously produce literature how do we need to redefine the limitations or largeness of authorship, authorial intention, lit-

erary meaning, and artistic creativity? What are the implications of computerism for academic communities, specifically literature departments? The answers to such interpretative and epistemological questions lie between literature, science and philosophy, and as long as fences continue to demarcate and divide these fields of inquiry, our increasingly sophisticated world of intellectronics, in which robots build robots, computers win chess matches, program and reprogram themselves, will remain opaque.

A century ago, ecology was likewise a new and nebulous arena of concerns, straddling economics and life sciences, botanical morphology and race relations, and struggling to establish a language and methodology. Ecology, Peder Anker explains in *Imperial Ecology*, was not a pacifist quest for edenic harmony but emerged from and for imperial social and environmental administration in the first decades of the twentieth-century, expanding beyond botany to economic policies, population settlement and social control. Ultimately ecologists' success depended on their ability to demonstrate links between disciplines, entangling the aims of a national economy with an economy of nature, marrying environmental, economic, social, political and colonial management into a united discourse that engaged and acquired imperial patronage.

Anker effectively argues that the history of British ecology is best understood as a product of debate between two patronage networks: British mechanists who thought the economy of nature could and should be planned and South African idealists who believed nature's economy was fixed. Anker crystallises the debate by focusing on the lives of a few highly influential scientists and politicians: their personal preferences, biases and disappointments, the technical limitations with which they struggled and the unprecedented and profound psychological impact of the world wars.

Imperial Ecology admirably displays Anker's flair for biographical research, artfully evincing the significant and formative weight of individuals' idiosyncrasies, capricious historical circumstances, and political agendas in shaping ecology's maturation into a scientific discipline. A rightful winner of The History of Science Society's Forum for the History of Human Sciences Prize, *Imperial Ecology* is history and history of science at its best.

Quebec Political Ideas

Yvan Lamonde and Claude Corbo

Le rouge et le bleu: une anthologie de la pensée politique au Québec de la Conquête à la Révolution tranquille. Les presses de l'université de Montréal \$34.95

Reviewed by Kenneth Munro

This book is a compilation of government documents, religious pastoral letters, press clippings, speeches and written manifestos pertaining to the political thought in Quebec from the Conquest (1760) to the Quiet Revolution (1960). The philosopher and historian Yvan Lamonde, who teaches literature and history at McGill University, and Claude Corbo, a political science professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal, are a good complementary team, well suited to assemble these documents. Lamonde has completed a study analysing the thought of Quebec intellectuals during this same period. These award winning and well respected intellectuals have clustered the political ideas around six principal themes: the monarchy and republicanism, liberalism, national emancipation, nationalism, cultural ideas, and social thought.

There is much to praise in this carefully thought-out anthology. The authors have brought together in one easily accessible source much of the seminal material which touches upon the continuing themes in French Canadian political thought. For

example, La Fontaine's *Manifeste électoral aux électeurs du comté de Terrebonne*, *Le programme catholique*, Laurier's speech on *Le libéralisme politique* and Abbé Lionel Groulx's *Notre avenir politique* are all present. Many important, but less noted and less accessible documents are also included; for example, Robert Nelson's *Déclaration de l'indépendance*, Jean-Charles Harvey's *Un peu de franchise et de courage* and Monseigneur Joseph Charbonneau's *C'est le devoir de l'Église d'intervenir*.

Despite its many good and helpful attributes, this assemblage of documents curiously lacks other items. Surprisingly, although the book spans the period 1760 to 1960, the first and last documents do not touch upon the Conquest, as would the "Articles of Capitulation of Montreal, 1760," or the Quiet Revolution, as would the editorial from *Le Devoir* on 1 August 1960 that discussed the "Thirty days that shook the Province" and others called a "Quiet Revolution." Such documents would seem to be natural book ends for this anthology.

There are some omissions that seem peculiar; for example, "The Quebec Act, 1774." In the post-Confederation section, there is no mention of the "Papal Zouaves." Inclusion of extracts from Bishop Laflèche's speech on the occasion of the departure of the Zouaves in February 1868, in which he asked young men to go and fight for the Pope to fulfill French Canada's providential mission of safeguarding the Kingdom of God in the New World, would be useful. This oration explains why young men enthusiastically enrolled for combat half way around the world. They accepted the French Canadian ultramontane belief that if the Pope were under attack, French Canada was under attack, and French Canadians had to go to fight the unification forces on the Italian peninsula who were threatening the Papacy.

There is also no mention of Quebec opinion with respect to the trials and tribulations

of French Canadians outside of Quebec, such as during the Riel affair of 1885. Excerpts from the speeches by Adolphe Chapleau and Wilfrid Laurier would have given expression to the opposing viewpoints on this issue. Excerpts from speeches by Henri Bourassa in the House of Commons during discussions of the creation of Alberta and Saskatchewan would have indicated concern in Quebec to preserve the French fact in the West.

Nevertheless, this compilation of documents is especially useful and accessible for anyone interested in French Canadian political thought.

Romans québécois post modernes

Luc Lecompte

Rouge malsain. Les Herbes rouges \$16.95

Robert Baillie

Boulevard Raspail. XYZ éditeur \$19.95

Comptes rendus par Georges Desmeules

Rouge malsain constitue le second roman de Luc Lecompte, surtout connu pour sa production poétique. L'intrigue se déroule dans un futur imprécis. Malsain est le nom donné à un quartier délabré d'une ville flottante que le lecteur présume être un Montréal dévasté. Le narrateur, un docteur en philosophie devenu enquêteur privé, évoque sa rencontre avec un jeune homme maintenant décédé. Il lui avait confié le mandat de retrouver une femme dont il était amoureux et qui a été enlevée et assassinée.

On retrouve bien sûr ici les principaux traits constitutifs du récit policier. La rencontre du détective avec ce jeune homme, qu'il appelle René, peut-être dans un élan romantique, le plonge dans un univers sordide, peuplé de gens mystérieux et de pratiques étranges. Tandis que la femme, qui s'appellerait Isis, pratique la prostitution sado-masochiste, René est un comédien dont le seul rôle consiste à mimer

son suicide, de façon de plus en plus élaborée, dans le but de convaincre les clients de la boîte où il se produit de faire de même.

Le récit se déroule suivant la logique du cauchemar. L'intrigue et les lieux évoquent bien sûr un univers post-apocalyptique, mais les rencontres se déroulent toutes dans une atmosphère incertaine, qui défie souvent la vraisemblance et qui sert l'expression de fantasmes sexuels de toute nature. Qui plus est, des références croisées se retrouvent à travers tout le roman et renvoient tant à l'Ancien Testament qu'à la mythologie égyptienne. Ainsi, les protagonistes se rencontrent d'abord et reviennent ensuite fréquemment près d'une statue évoquant l'échelle que Jacob, le personnage de la Genèse appelé à assurer une descendance au peuple juif, perçue en rêve et sur laquelle des théories d'anges montaient et descendaient du paradis à la terre. René périra d'ailleurs électrocuté en tentant à son tour d'y monter, comme si, dans la dimension symbolique du récit, toute rédemption lui était interdite.

De même cette histoire sordide dévoile les pratiques quasi surréalistes d'un groupuscule ésotérique, Anubis (nom du fils d'Osiris), autour duquel aurait gravité Isis. Ses membres pratiqueraient l'embaumement à la manière égyptienne et un des leurs prélèverait même les rêves à l'aide d'une technique à mi-chemin entre fantastique et science-fiction. René évoque à de nombreuses reprises un rêve très révélateur, qui étoffe justement cette nouvelle référence. En effet, celui-ci raconte comment il a perçu, comme s'il flottait au-dessus de lui-même, son corps démembré. Isis reconstitua ensuite les diverses parties de son anatomie, à l'exception de son sexe. Ce rêve correspond en tout point à la légende égyptienne. En effet, l'Isis légendaire parvint à reconstituer le corps d'Osiris, assassiné et démembré par un rival jaloux, le phallus mis à part.

Cette profusion de détails étonnants

provient des recherches de l'enquêteur, fasciné par cette histoire délirante, mais également amoureux du jeune homme qui élit provisoirement domicile chez lui. Si ce dernier se révèle le coupable qu'il demande justement au détective de démasquer, ce n'est que pour mieux refermer cette histoire sur elle-même. Ce dédoublement de personnalité, cette perte des fonctions de création et de reproduction se prêtent peut-être à une analyse nationale, Lecompte puisant dans les mythes et les thèmes décadents pour créer un roman riche en symboles, qui combine les aspects saillants du genre policier avec des traits dystopiques propres à une certaine veine de la science-fiction.

Écrit dans le cadre d'un séjour dans le studio du Québec à Paris, *Boulevard Raspail* de Robert Baillie est construit quant à lui autour d'une série de références à quelques-uns des romanciers et des poètes québécois les plus célèbres. Benjamin Sulte, alter ego de l'auteur fictif et parfois substitué de la narration, traverse ce qui se révèle au fil du récit être une profonde dépression. En effet, on apprend, bien après l'avoir deviné, le malheur arrivé à sa compagne : Rafaela Rinaldi repose dans un état végétatif après une chute du haut du balcon d'un condominium de Sea Isle, au New Jersey. En plus de vivre en couple depuis une quinzaine d'années, l'homme et la femme pratiquaient l'écriture à quatre mains et comptaient quelques titres à leur actif.

Désormais seul, Benjamin Sulte se retrouve dans un petit studio parisien et rappelle les souvenirs des premières amours et de son existence quotidienne avec Rinaldi. Il rencontre toutefois de nouvelles compagnes de passage, dont une homonyme de Gabrielle Roy et une Anne très hébertienne. Il fait également un séjour à Rome qui l'aide apparemment à surmonter son penchant suicidaire. D'ailleurs le roman qu'il écrit et lit à Rafaela met en

abyme celui que signe Baillie lui-même.

Ce faisant, il évoque la poésie de Saint-Denys-Garneau et les univers romanesques de Ducharme, Hébert, Godbout, et Aquin parmi tant d'autres références. Baillie expose d'ailleurs son projet formel par le biais de son protagoniste, alors qu'il écrit que «[l']écriture est une saison qui échappe au temps. Le millénaire s'achève, je ne vivrai aucun jubilé. Le meilleur de ma vie s'écrit dans un roman sans auteur, une partition sans chef. Comment vivre et écrire à la fois la symphonie perdue?»

Une des particularités du roman de Baillie réside dans cette fluctuation narrative. Benjamin Sulte, en plus d'être un poète et historien canadien-français, est un personnage dont l'histoire s'impose au narrateur. Il occupe également et parfois sans transition le rôle de narrateur auto-diégétique, sans que la démarcation entre les deux fonctions soit toujours clairement établie. Bref, à l'instar de celui de Lecompte, ce roman met lui aussi en scène le thème de l'altérité.

Chacun à sa façon, Luc Lecompte et Robert Baillie livrent des récits marqués tant par le proche passage du millénaire que par des références à la littérature et à la culture québécoise et étrangère, et s'inscrivant tous deux, de façon étonnamment similaire, dans la veine postmoderne du roman québécois.

Needing to Forget

Norman Levine

The Ability to Forget. Key Porter \$21.95

Steven Manners

Wound Ballistics. Gutter P \$24.95

Reviewed by Sara K. Crangle

"I seemed to have reached a point where I wanted to take a look backwards and sum up an epoch in my life, so as better to go forward." This assertion, in the second story of Norman Levine's *The Ability to*

Forget, encapsulates the volume's artistic project. The book's title is both ironic and true: the stories are largely autobiographical reminiscences, but, as one protagonist acknowledges, returning to the past is inevitably falsified, mere tourism. However, forgetting can also be poignant, as in the misrememberings of World War II in the title piece, or when the boy narrator of "Feast Days and Others" recalls his grandfather's soiling himself in a rush to catch a train. It is his grandmother who enables his grandfather to forget both his humiliation and all its witnesses: "Gran said she loved him, and kissed him again. And they forgot that I was on the platform as the train began to move and disappeared quickly into the mist."

Most of the stories in *The Ability to Forget* align to some degree with the brief biography of Levine detailed next to its title page. The work is thus a potentially self-aggrandising account, a possibility neatly curtailed by Levine's carefully maintained narrative distance and constant self-deprecation. Thus, it is in tones both romantic and suspicious that "A View on the Sea" describes the post-war, pre-1960s revolution lives of artists living at St. Ives in Cornwall. Amongst the surfing and swinging couples hover hints of bulimia, fears of artistic ignominy, and the desperate lives of locals overrun by tourists who claim their beachfront to glean "a wonderful"—if false—"feeling of possession of confidence." Falsity is similarly explored in "A Maritime Story," in which Max Bleenden is a frustrated artist and predatory academic who cheats on his wife, and ultimately himself, with impunity. Again, self-absorption is contrasted with harsh local reality via the description of a nearby Indian reservation where it is "[a]s if everyone inside was lying fully dressed on a bed, not sleeping, in the middle of the afternoon."

The more fictional accounts, such as "A True Story" and "The Man with the

Notebook," are less resonant than the autobiographical stories. "The man with the Notebook" is a post-modern commentary in which an author finds that he kills the people he writes about; his eventual suicide is predictable. This delving into the fantastic diverges from Levine's adherence to "the small details of everyday life"—a description of his work included in "Gifts." The woman who compliments his ability to render these details tells him he should write fantasy. He shouldn't. "Gifts" is fantastic because it maintains the spare, dry understatement of pieces like "A Maritime Story." Levine fares best when he does not, in his own words, "mak[e] too much of being a writer."

This is a dictum Steven Manners would also do well to follow. Manners's *Wound Ballistics* is as overstated as Levine's work is understated; his volume of short stories opens with the firing of five shots into a skunk believed rabid, and this machismo, most unfortunately, sets the ensuing tone. Manners's fiction is meant to explore what one of his characters describes as the "insecurities" that are "always worse when a lover is leaving, or when she is planning to stay." The male perspective here is significant; instead of being a passionate and erotic exploration of coupledness—and there are numerous hints that this is what Manners hopes to achieve—these stories form an extended male fantasy, in which each and every female protagonist tends to, at some point, "compl[y] willingly and with dispatch."

"Telescope" briefly stands apart in that it is deliberately overdone, and mercifully calls attention to its sheer preposterousness. This story is unusual in that it almost mocks its narrator, a figure who remains unchallenged in every other story, and who could use a large measure of Levine's self-deprecation. "Telescope" represents a moment of large-scale change, in which a lover leaves, taking everything, and her ex

vacuums their shared space into oblivion upon her departure—except for a telescope, which he finds and uses to begin spying on her again, for she has moved back to the apartment where he first met her at a voyeuristic distance. And so the cycle repeats itself. In “His Image in Her Eyes,” the change is small-scale—a beard is shaved off—and a relationship, as a result, evinces a similar self-defeating cycle. This futility is endemic; from it, all that emerges is a fascination with past lovers that torments present couples, as in “On a Beach, a Sound Far Off” and “That Last Day in Paris.”

Were it in any way reflective, the adolescent fantasy that is Manners’s writing might be read as ironic. In this regard, his Gothic reliance on black (black dresses, underwear, hair, and cars surface throughout), his quickly routine voyeuristic turns, and his continual enforcement of the phallic appeal of guns and cigarettes could proffer commentary on nauseatingly clichéd tropes of “dangerous” sexuality. Instead we return only to the bravado of the first five shots, and to overblown endings like this, from “Thinking I Would Remember Those Words Forever”: “Our history is fabrication, desire a cold stone, memory a cheat. I have forgotten even our first kiss a moment ago.” Manners should perhaps attempt to incorporate Levine’s own ability to forget.

Lyrical Arguments

Tim Lilburn, ed.

Thinking and Singing. Cormorant \$24.95

Reviewed by Jamie Dopp

The essays in *Thinking and Singing* are by turns lyrical and thoughtful, stimulating and provocative. They are even, in one or two places, funny. I found myself arguing with Lilburn and his contributors as much as agreeing with them, all the while enjoy-

ing the position, as reader, of being the sixth (or seventh) point in an ongoing conversation.

Dennis Lee’s “Body Music: Notes on Rhythm in Poetry” gives expression to the ideas that have shaped Lee’s understanding of poetry and the world since, at least, “Cadence, Country, Silence”: the world is polyrhythmic, and the best of poetry “tries to recreate the cadence of how things are, through the nitty-gritty of craft.” I was impressed by the precision of Lee’s analysis of the more particular aspects of rhythm in poetry and by an enabling playfulness that helps to embody his ideas in the “whiplash dynamic” of words. I was inclined to argue against Lee’s larger claims, such as the idea of a rhythm in the world that can be intuited with “no identifiable mediation,” which has a naively 1960s feel to it (rather like bp Nichol’s early infatuation with Palongawhoya). But the energy of Lee’s writing is winning nevertheless.

Don McKay’s “The Bushtit’s Nest” is the most compelling piece. In it, McKay offers a well-nuanced exploration of the writer as “a citizen of the frontier,” a creature who cannot but use words even as she attempts to write of what words cannot adequately capture. This claim leads to a fine definition of a poem: a poem, or poem-in-waiting, contemplates what language can’t do; then it does something with language—in homage, grief, anger, or praise. For McKay, metaphors are “entry points where wilderness re-invades language, the place where words put their authority at risk.” In metaphor you have an example of language’s bravura, its power to explain and name, at the same time as an implicit recognition of the limits of language to represent the world.

Jan Zwicky’s “Dream Logic and the Politics of Interpretation” throws clear light on the relevance of Freud’s major insights to the practice of philosophy and poetry. Zwicky argues for the value for philosophical

thinking of what Freud calls the “primary” psychical process, a process more traditionally identified with “creative” activities like poetry. “We have forgotten that the question of what constitutes philosophical clarity is a question,” writes Zwicky. “Civilization’s discontent [is] . . . the repressed knowledge that it is able to understand primary process without translation.”

One moment in Zwicky’s essay struck me as odd. After establishing primary process as a liberating “renegade mental activity,” Zwicky argues that the greater enemy of such activity is not “analytic” philosophy but rather poststructuralism. She identifies Derrida’s now infamous catch-phrase *il n’y a pas de hors-texte* with a “blithe nihilism . . . that most profoundly exemplifies the exclusion of non-linguistic thought.” Odd, since Derrida’s argument for the primacy of “writing” over “speech” is so dependent on a view of language that insists on the importance of what traditionally have been considered “non-linguistic” elements. Derrida’s own texts, so riddled with word play and neologisms and rhythmic repetition of ideas, try to foreground the very renegade elements that Zwicky champions. Indeed, the poets I know who read Derrida regularly (such as Stephen Scobie, who has a fine essay on Derrida in *Signature, Event, Context*) tend to read his texts more as poetry than philosophy.

All this leads me to the first of two general arguments I had with *Thinking and Singing*. In his preface, Lilburn suggests that there is “disagreement in what follows,” but in fact the essays all ultimately unravel a similar thought: that the truest strand in both thinking and poetry comes from a wakeful state rather like the one brought on by Buddhist meditation (what Lilburn calls “an alert emptiness”). All of the essays are anti-postmodern and anti-poststructuralist; they all celebrate a reality beyond language that is apprehensible as such, in a state of immediate, Buddhist-like

or phenomenological apprehension (though McKay is careful to keep an eye on the paradoxes of such a position). Not that I necessarily agree or disagree with this idea. Just that there seems something incomplete about a collection subtitled “Poetry and The Practice of Philosophy” that has so little engagement with what are arguably the most influential philosophical practices of recent years.

Which leads me to my second general argument. I found that the essays in this collection were better at making a case for the use of poetical thinking in philosophy than the other way around. To my mind, this turn avoids the greater problem—namely, that so much contemporary poetry is anti-intellectual. One of the more difficult tasks of those who, like myself, teach both poetry and philosophy, is to persuade beginning poets of the need to grapple with the intellectual currents of their time, to read and read widely, not just other poets and fiction but philosophy itself, even texts that they might find off-putting and difficult (like Derrida). Though the essays in this collection are by no means anti-intellectual themselves, the endpoint they all more or less arrive at, the idea of a world that can be intuited with “no identifiable mediation” is not much help in the task of persuading anti-intellectual poets of the value of ideas. To put it rather glibly: poets of the anti-intellectual kind do not need arguments about the value of “alert emptiness”; “alert emptiness” defines their natural state.

My arguments with *Thinking and Singing* should not be read as a sign of weakness in the collection. Though I disagreed with various strands of thought unravelled in these essays, the essays provoked and stimulated me: they made me care enough to shape my disagreement into an argument. Thus it is with the best of conversations about both poetry and philosophy.

Two Weddings and a Funeral

John MacKenzie

Shaken by Physics. Polestar \$18.95

Rob McLennan

Manitoba highway map. Broken Jaw \$13.95

George Slobodzian

Clinical Studies. DC \$14.95

Reviewed by Andre Furlani

Studies, physics, a map: George Slobodzian, John MacKenzie, and Rob McLennan are evidently after more than mere poetry. The son of a Saskatchewan doctor and a nurse, Slobodzian is a wry researcher into the vicissitudes of the flesh, writing a hymn to “our lady of excrement,/ of multiple comings/ and goings, generation/ and decay, perpetual/ motion, wholly cloacal.” In physics the Prince Edward Islander MacKenzie finds such decay writ cosmic, from entropy and the Heisenberg principle to the periodic table: “As if on a lave, the earth turns and turns/ Against the sun.” Driving across the prairies the Ontarian McLennan charts the decline of rural Canada, “the disappearance /of the prairie/ grain pool, elevator totems/ between long flat winds.” Disintegration may fascinate all three, but they write about it in distinct ways. Slobodzian offers a colloquial stanzaic verse, as direct as Catullus in bed or Frank O’Hara at lunch; MacKenzie prefers a formal and gravely meditative style, a poetry of statement, while McLennan writes in sparingly punctuated, imagistic abridgements.

McLennan’s *Manitoba highway map* is the most intriguing of these three books but the least accomplished. The sequence records a 1998 cross-Canada reading tour undertaken with four other young poets to promote their Broken Jaw Press anthology *Open 24 Hours*. Free verse in a variety of typographical arrangements, the brief fragmentary poems are justified to the bottom

of the pages, accentuating space and culminating in two blank (Shandyesque?) pages. McLennan inserts found materials (e.g., rig stickers, billboards,), clichés, word games played in the poets’ car, and lists, among the discontinuous reveries, diatribes, and distillations.

McLennan is “making poetry from something/ that is already there”—out of the routines, distractions, exhilaration and ordeals of the road. From Basho’s *Narrow Road to the Deep North* to Whitman’s “Song of the Open Road” and John Ashbery’s “Grand Galop,” this form evokes the cacophony of mundane particulars interacting with a larger intuited concord. Basho’s is a particularly relevant comparison, especially given the haiku-like condensation attempted in much of McLennan’s sequence, and the fact that Basho too crossed a large stretch of his native land in the company of a fellow poet.

McLennan drives through a more diffuse, less intelligible world than Basho walked, larger and yet more homogeneous. The contemporary pilgrim seeks not a church but the “temple / of the golden arches”—and in Canada the pilgrim need not search long. Note is regularly made of what, in another lame pun, McLennan calls “a sigh of the times”: potash lines are “a wound / across the prairie,” while forces unnamed are “exploiting saskatchewan / number one resource, / people // strip mined / & broken / into bits.”

McLennan declares “every moment in here, a re/ learning, re/ vision,” but whatever is learned in the car does not make it to the page. The banal civic laments (e.g., jeremiahs about the airport improvement fee at Vancouver International) punctuate a sequence that is primarily impressionistic, expository, and elliptical—not unlike most undistinguished apprentice poetry. McLennan, however, is the author of several volumes of poetry, as well as the editor of *Written on the Skin*. “I make out of every-

thing, a whole / lotta something, / not nothing," he declares, yet as the noun *whole* pivots into a Led Zeppelinesque-adjective, the prospect of a Basho-like intimation of imminent pattern recedes before mere profusion. "Words happen/ in no particular order." This too is an order, of course; as much as McLennan hazards.

George Slobodzian is, if anything, a more unillusioned materialist than McLennan, but he is a much more pungent, funny, and visceral poet. His faith in the guarantees, welcome and unwelcome, afforded by genital, oral, and anal constants could not be confused with prurience, and lends an unblushing integrity to *Clinical Studies*.

In "Art Class" the poet has "trouble with the vulva," but what he can't paint he will venture, usually with a salty humour, to describe: "Entering You," goes the title of one punning poem, "is like visiting a country / with no indoor plumbing, / a small corrupt police force, / cultic activity to the South, / exotic cuisine, friendly / though stand-offish natives . . ." In another comic allegory the speaker guides us through an exhibit of age, "with the young Polyp having / his freshly circumcised glans / cauterized at the hands / of the old crone Arthritis." The tang and tangibility of his verse do not falter before death. Ignoring the bishop's prayers at his mother's interment, he thinks of "her body / acquiring, degree // by slow degree, / its new / ungodly temperature." In a graveyard fantasia he and his child fail to find a trace of the dead, "so I changed her / on my mother's grave and left."

All the putrefaction should not mislead, for Slobodzian exuberantly affirms "this wretched world." Overhearing teens filling out a *Cosmopolitan* questionnaire, he realizes that "love must be / a stalwart beast / to haul such crap / and remain intact." Graphic, profane, and caustic, *Clinical Studies* (which is dedicated to his family) is in fact a tender book, children, parents,

extended relations, and lovers filling its pages with their heat.

While on his desert island Slobodzian's "Castaway" welcomes gravity—"in the morning/ my bowels say hello/ to the familiar tug/ of gravity and all/ is not so bad"—on Prince Edward Island, John MacKenzie stoically deduces that it is "gravity's gift. . . /to turn us into dust." That marked difference of sensibility persists. In *Shaken by Physics* (especially the modified sonnets of its title sequence) he conjures the implications of subatomic physics with the existential agony of Hardy's sonnet "Hap." In a grim anti-theophany, faith is a crude transposition over "ubiquitous hydrogen": "We tore the stuffing out of nothing/ And said we'll make a face . . . of God upon/ The unmarked grid of coordinated space." Ignorance defines us: "We are/ Caught between water and sky. Unable to know/ Both." When, in the coda to the skillful sequence of thirteen-line "dissonnets," relief comes, it takes the form of disbursements and forfeitures:

When gravity pushes your face to the
ground
And pulls all the water from your eyes
To the sea,

And all the words you have left behind
are scattered
Like bones of small animals
For time and inclement memory to strip
of meaning,
To leach out minerals and rhythm,

You will know the voice of God.
It is this silence you have felt stalking you
Like a cat,

Each flick of its tail marking off
Days relentless as a pendulum.

MacKenzie's attitude to language oscillates between irrepressible confidence in the bounty of its powers to anguished resignation before its impotence. Words work feverishly to convert experience into meaning, but those very meanings often chastise

the poetry for its pretensions: “The poem, caught/ Between thought and word, shatters/ Against the anvil of itself.// The shards rust/ on the page.”

In one of the fine “Black Feather Poems,” MacKenzie finds the ideal implement for delineating the island in the bloody feather of a dead crow. It is the totemic creature of *Shaken by Physics*. “Three weeks/ Since illuminations harsh as sandpaper or/ A crow’s morning voice showed how/ Anything we make, crumbles.” The bird both embodies poetic sense and sets a limit on that sense. His crow is both Dickinson’s ascending Hope (“the thing with feathers”) and Yeats’s foreboding falcon (“turning and turning above autumn’s baring”), and it tries, with surprising success, to avoid the atavistic anthropomorphism of Ted Hughes’s famous precedent. But, for all its vigour and clarity of expression, MacKenzie’s poetry risks a monotonous earnestness. He is as absorbed in the pitiless inferences drawn from physics as Slobodzian is in those drawn from medicine, but he is without the latter’s gusto and cheer. An epithalamium ends on a typical note of masochism: “If I need to (I have decided) / I will burn out my eyes looking / Into the sun / For you.” At a wedding this strain must be as discordant as performing “I Want to Know What Love Is.”

Slobodzian has a more festive epithalamium, celebrating his father’s remarriage, beginning: “Observe the old bull / in his winter meadow, / balls hanging low and blue.” What mars Slobodzian’s verse is the mawkishness that incongruously accompanies his corrosive and comic fascination with the body. The poem ends: “In his heart// he is thinking/ of spring.” This is a bit too close to “We’ve Only Just Begun.”



Texte(s) et intertextes

Roger Magini

Styx. La Pleine Lune \$17.95

François Désalliers

Amour et pince-monseigneur. Québec Amérique

\$22.95

Comptes rendus par Georges Bélanger

Tout en conservant leur originalité et leur singularité, les romans qui font l’objet de la présente recension possèdent une caractéristique et un trait communs : le processus de création est lié d’une certaine manière à l’intertextualité et à l’intertexte (Michael Riffaterre), ou la transtextualité (Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes*), ainsi définies dans les grandes lignes : « L’intertexte est la perception, par le lecteur, de rapports entre une oeuvre et d’autres qui l’ont précédée [...] ou encore, tout ce qui met (un texte) en relation, manifeste ou secrète, avec d’autres textes. » Rapports et relations que le lecteur ne tarde pas à observer dans ces deux romans—ils se traduisent et se manifestent par des transformations, des adaptations, des influences et/ou d’autres voies d’emprunts, inspirées d’autres sources (textes)—et que Roger Magini et François Désalliers, chacun à sa manière, fondent intentionnellement pour créer leur propre texte, et, le cas échéant, une « signification » propre. La transtextualité peut alors s’imposer comme une sorte d’instrument, de moyen—parfois impossible à contourner au risque de trahir l’oeuvre—voire de code, d’une approche, pour aborder un texte spécifique et en définir le mode de perception; elle pose du même coup un certain défi au niveau de la création de l’oeuvre, et de son interprétation.

Un défi que Roger Magini relève avec succès dans *Styx*. Ce roman établit des relations et des rapports manifestes et soutenus, en particulier avec un autre texte, un roman, *La Voie royale* d’André Malraux, et, pour tout dire, avec l’ensemble de

l'oeuvre de cet auteur. Les connecteurs (ou signaux textuels) à *La Voie royale* sont nombreux et variés, il y est fait mention entre autres, et par exemple—ce n'est pas le lieu ici de procéder à un inventaire exhaustif—du titre de ce roman, du nom des personnages principaux, Claude et Perken, de leurs préoccupations, de leurs réflexions et de leurs pensées, et de certains événements ou éléments empruntés à ce récit. Ces signaux ou références n'échappent pas à l'attention du lecteur qui ne manque pas d'interroger leur présence, dût-il effectuer quelques recherches complémentaires sur ce roman et André Malraux. De fait, ce roman de Roger Magini procède de l'hypertextualité (selon Gérard Genette) : d'un texte premier (hypotexte), *La Voie royale*, qu'il adopte, il emprunte à ce texte, un certain nombre de « complexes de représentations » aux formes diverses, qu'il transpose et intègre dans un texte second (hypertexte), *Styx*.

Ce court récit raconte comment vit Lambert depuis qu'il a choisi, il y a trente ans, après avoir connu les horreurs de la guerre dont les souvenirs ne cessent de le hanter, de vivre à Sainte-Luce-sur-Mer, où il a pris la relève d'un ami qui l'a beaucoup marqué, Flanagan. Réprouvé, reclus et solitaire, Lambert vit en marge des gens de ce petit village mais en étroite association avec le fleuve Saint-Laurent—ce fleuve, le Styx et d'autres fleuves évoquent un puissant symbole dans ce roman : le Royaume des Ombres, l'idée du passage de la vie à la mort, etc., car il est ramasseur d'épaves, travail qu'il accomplit avec l'aide d'une jeune montagnaise, Coré. Tous deux « n'espèrent plus rien des hommes ni de l'existence ». Ils vivent de la mort et sont habités par elle. Un lendemain de tempête, ils recueillent un naufragé, Palino, skipper mortellement blessé et condamné, qu'ils décident de garder sous leur toit, à l'insu de tous, jusqu'à sa mort, quelques jours plus tard. Entre-temps Lambert et Palino auront

des entretiens sur la vie et sur la mort : des réflexions sur l'action, le rêve, la liberté, l'amour, la solitude, et l'angoisse. L'écriture, recherchée mais simple, très lyrique, et bien maîtrisée, s'inscrit très bien dans ce contexte. Par le choix des représentations que Roger Magini retient du texte premier, les deux romans, *La Voie royale* et *Styx* se rejoignent étroitement, étonnante symbiose, chacun conservant toutefois son autonomie, sa finalité. Ces « complexes » sont à ce point importants que le texte premier oriente la lecture et gouverne l'interprétation du second.

S'il participe aussi de l'intertextualité, il en va autrement pour le roman de François Désalliers, *Amour et pince-monseigneur* : plusieurs éléments, faciles à observer, mettent ce texte en relation, manifeste, avec d'autres textes. Nommons les textes susceptibles d'intervenir, d'orienter la lecture : le roman de Jacques Godbout, *Salut Galarneau!*, celui de Gérard Bessette, *Le libraire*, et plusieurs citations, au fil du roman, d'extraits de poèmes.

À dix-neuf ans, Philippe, après l'abandon de ses études, travaille dans un dépanneur où, pour se désennuyer, il s'amuse à afficher des poèmes un peu partout. Si ce personnage transmet par intervalles un certain malaise, spleen passager—il s'interroge sur les grandes questions de la vie, de l'amour et de la mort—il est logé très rapidement au centre d'un roman qui prend l'allure (détournement de sens!) d'un *thriller* aux ficelles un peu lâches. Meurtre, cambriolage, poursuite, vol, accident, sang, enquête, disparition, les événements se multiplient, et le lecteur passe, à la dure, par la gamme de toutes péripéties. Le récit accuse lacunes et faiblesses sérieuses : manque d'unité, il éclate de toutes parts, accumule invraisemblances et imbroglios, et il est desservi par l'écriture. Même s'il existe bel et bien une relation entre *Amour et pince-monseigneur* et d'autres textes, sous forme d'emprunts, de ressemblances, de citations, etc., elle n'est pas

déterminante; les rapports sont sans impact. Et la liste interminable des noms d'auteurs, de personnages, des titres d'oeuvres dont l'auteur parsème le roman, ce qui, soit dit en passant, éprouve sérieusement la patience du lecteur, n'ajoute rien à cette relation.

Styx de Roger Magini et *Amour et pince-monseigneur* de François Désalliers font état de relations intertextuelles soutenues : dans le premier roman, croyons-nous, au point où elles conditionnent l'oeuvre; dans le second, elles ne constituent que des références à d'autres textes, sans autre effet marquant ou conséquence véritable. Au-delà de ce trop court compte rendu, il serait intéressant d'y regarder de plus près.

Strong Voices

Keith Maillard

The Clarinet Polka. Thomas Allen \$32.95

Guillaume Vigneault

Necessary Betrayals. Douglas & McIntyre \$22.95

Bill Gaston

The Cameraman. Raincoast \$21.95

Reviewed by Allan Weiss

Three recent novels nicely illustrate the power of narrative voice. *The Clarinet Polka* and *Necessary Betrayals* are first-person narratives about men coping with recent traumas, while *The Cameraman* reproduces the textured voice of the protagonist as he struggles with his involvement in an apparent murder.

Perhaps the strongest voice here is that of Jimmy Koprowski, the narrator of *The Clarinet Polka*. He is an Air Force veteran who returns home in 1969; although he has served no closer to Vietnam than Guam, he has still seen much death and suffering. One of his buddies is killed in action, and the news sends him into a self-destructive cycle of alcoholism and a loveless affair with Constance Bradshaw, who feels trapped in her middle-class marriage. Jimmy provides her with a secret life of

uninhibited passion. But Jimmy lives in the tight-knit Polish-American community of South Raysburg, West Virginia, the fictional industrial town which Maillard has covered before, and where no such affair can remain secret for long.

Meanwhile, Jimmy's sister Linda starts up an all-female polka band, whose feature performer is Janice Dluwiecki, the daughter of a prominent figure in the community. Polka music represents the shared culture that unifies all members of the community—even Janice's father, who at first considers such "peasant" music beneath him. For Jimmy, Janice becomes the incarnation of his first love, an embodiment of his innocent high-school days before death, alcohol, and his cynical relationship with Constance began to drag him down. Jimmy must hit rock bottom before he can be fully redeemed; his salvation can only come through rediscovering his family and community roots, and accepting Janice's love for him.

Jimmy's voice is clear, familiar and colloquial, but his sentimental tone becomes a bit cloying toward the end. Also, at five hundred pages, Maillard's novel is rather long for the fairly simple story it tells. But the novel does not *seem* long, as the engaging voice carries us along easily and we are anxious to discover whether Jimmy will permit those who are trying to save him to break through his walls of guilt and alcohol. The novel's strengths are its vivid rendering of the South Raysburg community and its memorable portrait of the narrator through his unmistakable voice.

Vigneault's *Necessary Betrayals* is also about a young man dealing with loss: in this case, the end of his marriage to Monica. Jack is beset with guilt over an affair he had with an art dealer, and a crash he feels responsible for while he and Monica were flying in his private airplane. Like Jimmy Koprowski, Jack tries to drown his pain in alcohol and builds walls around himself,

notably through his photography, as his camera becomes his shield against direct experience of life. Jack visits Tristan, his ex-brother-in-law, in the psychiatric ward of a hospital and agrees to help Tristan escape; they then embark on a cross-country drive without any clear destination. The trip, of course, symbolizes both men's lack of direction in life. Jack obsesses about his lost love, especially once he learns that Monica is pregnant, while Tristan begins a relationship with Nuna, the hitchhiker they meet.

Jack conveys his pain more directly, more poetically in parts, and less colloquially than does Jimmy: "Maybe my apathy and my growing indifference were the signs of an unstaged dive, a drop, a plummeting down so smooth that all impression of movement was lost, dissipated somewhere just below the surface, where most marine life is found, where pain, anger, rancour and vicious sharks reside, swimming back and forth overhead."

Bill Gaston's latest publication is a revised version of a novel first published in 1994. The title character is a cynical movie-camera operator working for his high-school friend, Koz, a mysterious figure with no certain background or even name. Koz is a brilliant director who specializes in documentaries and uses a "Funtroom" to capture candid images with a hidden camera. He employs Francis to film what seems to be his murder of a young actress. Francis is drawn into an odyssey involving questions of guilt and innocence, the mysteries of Koz's background and role in Francis's life and loves, and above all the blurred lines between art and reality. Like Vigneault's narrator, Francis uses his camera to distance himself from life. But in the world of documentary film-making, it is often difficult to tell the difference between truth and fiction. In its foregrounding of these blurred boundaries between the real and constructed, the novel is self-reflexive and thus the most postmodernist of the three

novels. As Francis strives to make sense of what his friend has done, his faith in Koz's brilliance is shaken, and his already fragile confidence in his romantic relationship with Beverly, Koz's ex-wife, is made even less secure.

Gaston deftly handles the novel's themes and plot through parallel narrative lines, one set in the present during Koz's trial and the other giving a history of Francis's friendship and professional association with Koz. Gaston effectively depicts the world of film-making, providing a solid social context for his characters, and conveys a strong sense of Francis's personality, dreams, fears, and confusion through tight control of point of view.

Family and Forever

Lee Maracle

Daughters are Forever. Raincoast \$21.95

Althea Prince

Loving This Man. Insomniac P \$19.95

Review by Michelle La Flamme

The dedication to Maracle's novel, "To my daughters Columpa and Tania—you so deserved the best," hints at its central themes: maternal guilt and intergenerational trauma. The novel follows the mother Marilyn's need for closure and closeness to her daughter despite the maternal guilt and pain she experiences because of her failings as a parent.

The dysfunctional family dynamics are framed by a larger mythic time. Depictions of traumatized land post-contact frames the story that unfolds and the universal mythic time affects Marilyn's life story: "Grasses know stillness. Women know the grasses. Grasses feel this knowing." In these passages, there is a timelessness associated with the eternal aspects of nature in the forever time of oral mythologies. The rape and bloodlust of the newcomers is conflated with the physical abuse of Native women in mythic

time and in postcolonial time. In this way the physical, spiritual, emotional and intellectual are linked to past and present.

There is immediacy in the first-person narrative that traces the ways in which trauma seeps into Marilyn's consciousness through specific triggers. The disembodied aspects of Marilyn's narrative provide a cinematic quality to the writing as she experiences herself remembering and responding to trauma and also views this process from a third person perspective. Marilyn's desire not to remember and the ways in which memory forces itself into her consciousness are much like Toni Morrison's techniques.

This novel outlines Marilyn's maternal guilt feeding upon itself and the ways in which her trauma pierces the next generation. Like Morrison's *Beloved*, this novel is replete with the walking wounded; adults filled with distrust and avoidance which inevitably scar the maternal-child bond in the next generation. Systemic analysis of fractured Native families is peppered by images of Marilyn's own drunken stupor leading to her self-accusatory disgust. Alcohol is represented as a perverse and ultimately unsatisfying amnesiac which results in further dysfunction for the next generation struggling to move forward without healthy role models.

This is a matrifocal novel, which examines the role of the matriarch who passes on intergenerational trauma and which suggests the urgent need for matriarchs to heal from the past in postcolonial contexts. Maracle's novel suggests that the results of colonial contact have left "desertion, stillness and bloodletting" as the norm for Turtle Island women. This post-contact world has meant that "the sound of motherhood has changed" as children's bodies "carry memory. This memory of forever." Here the psychic and spiritual memory of colonial contact is compounded with the legacy of intergenerational trauma making one's memory of origin and intergenera-

tional trauma "the really dangerous gifts children possess."

Most important is the novel's declaration and articulation of the idea that "Colonization is such a personal process." Maracle draws on the historical and mythical context to frame this family story, she points to the need for healing between mothers and daughters to break the cycles of intergenerational silence and indirectly challenges a lack of accountability for abuse within Native communities.

In *Loving this Man*, slavery and racism provide the backdrop for an intergenerational exploration of a Black family and their tribulations in Antigua and Canada. Prince has no easy solutions to racism or domestic abuse but offers a clear depth of insight into the emotional impact of the past and the present on the self. Feelings are personified and a sense of their physicality permeates Prince's novel: "Saysshelle could see her Mama Reevah's feelings still making the journey out of the long-long tomb of their confinement. They were scraping a raw passage, using a new space that was tender from holding them in safe-keeping for so long. The words tumbled out, and in their wake, they left ease." These huge emotional issues are embodied in the characters and the novel becomes a somatic text, its attention given to the ways in which memory and experience are encoded and manifested in the Black female body.

The novel is physicalized through a number of bodies that appear in each section, bodies that have been affected by the central mechanisms of racism and sexism: traumatized bodies, racial qualifications decided by looking at bodies, bodies and water, floating bodies, bodies repressed because of pain, bodies longing for another body, beaten bodies, bodies removed from the familiar, bodies eating food, bodies disguising pasts, bodies that spill out of mothers, bodies that become our responsibility. Memories are embodied as are the histories

of the parents' experiences visited upon the children. In Prince's novel it becomes clear that both "good hair" and light skin can provide one with privilege or stigma according to how it is framed within one's community. These fine distinctions between colour gradations suggest a portrait of Antiguan race politics and some of the ways in which racial hybridity and racial qualifications are articulated in post-colonial contexts.

The last section of the novel, "Song of Sayshelle," follows the "one bright light" in the family who leaves Antigua. Sayshelle writes, "I felt a *reverb* as I ricocheted from my life in Antigua to the unknown world of Toronto. And the journey lasted, shaking my body and soul for some time." Echoes from the first half of the novel are felt throughout this passage through such direct and oblique references to postcolonial conditions of isolation, immigration and exile, only this exile is not one caused by slavery but one chosen by Sayshelle.

Prince's depictions of Canada here has to be one of the most damning representations of this country. It is drenched in a blandness and cold reminiscent of Atwood. In Prince's novel, survival is metaphysical and cultural. Sayshelle writes, "Toronto made my spirit poor." Atwood's important motif of survival is reconfigured in this novel to suggest psychic and spiritual survival of the immigrant of colour in Canada. In this novel, Prince's lyrical command of language engages readers in an interiority of the experiences of Black women as colonial subjects and immigrants by focusing on intergenerational links and the mother-daughter dyad. In *Loving this Man*, she exposes the fictions surrounding an essential Black community through evocation of internal and external policing of identity. The postcolonial backdrop to her novel suggests a variety of localized ramifications of slavery and poses a direct challenge to the myth of Canada as a welcoming multicultural society.

Our Mothers' Stories

Hiro McIlwraith

Shahnaz: A Novel. Oolichan Books \$18.95

Kate Taylor

Mme. Proust and the Kosher Kitchen. Doubleday \$34.95

Nancy Richler

Your Mouth is Lovely. HarperFlamingo \$34.95

Reviewed by Katherine Miller

A Parsi intellectual who carries the scars of her mother's manic-depressive episodes; a French translator who sublimates her desire for an unobtainable man by translating the diaries of Mme. Proust; a turn of the century imprisoned Russian agitator who is writing her life story for her daughter—what do these women have in common? The narrators of *Shahnaz*, *Mme. Proust and the Kosher Kitchen*, and *Your Mouth is Lovely* all link their lives with those of their mothers or surrogate mother figures. Only *Your Mouth is Lovely* blends the stories seamlessly; the other two novels display flashes of colour overshadowed by awkward transitions.

In *Shahnaz: A Novel*, the title character recounts the story of her horrific childhood with a brilliant, yet mentally unstable mother. Shahnaz claims that she "can't remember" when she realized that her mother "didn't like children—didn't like my sister and me." The novel veers between two time-frames: Shahnaz's childhood in Bombay and the novelistic present, 1972, when Shahnaz and her husband Shahrugh are in graduate school in Eugene, Oregon. McIlwraith evokes the world of an upper-class Parsi household in vivid vignettes: birthday parties filled with the scent of sandalwood and jasmine; vacations at Udveda, a fishing village, with Perin aunty, a natural storyteller and the girls' surrogate mother. Set against the warmth of the extended family are the unpredictable actions of a mother who smells of dead mouse when

she is in a manic phase, who believes that the CIA and FBI have implanted microphones in the house, who tries to strangle Shahnaz one night. This is the life that Shahnaz wishes to escape, “the chaos that swirls a deadly whirlpool around my mother, threatening to drown us all in its eddies.” Yet even in Eugene, the past touches her new life.

Contrasted with the brilliance and drama of India, the descriptions of life in Eugene are oddly flat. Although the trials of adjusting to life without servants provide some conflict, such as the night Shahnaz and Shahrugh nearly burn down their apartment trying to boil an egg, many of the problems seem manufactured to demonstrate that Shahrugh is a spoiled child. Shahnaz’s thesis supervisor, Patrick, who prefaces most of his comments with “Wow” and “Far out!” functions as an overly obvious romantic foil. Unable to integrate the two sides of her story, McIlwraith ends the novel abruptly. Like Shahnaz’s mother, the novel is bipolar: a manic, absorbing Parsi world contrasted with dull, unbelievable descriptions of graduate life in the U.S.

Mme. Proust and the Kosher Kitchen is another ambitious first novel. Kate Taylor, a theatre critic at *The Globe and Mail*, weaves together three different strands of narrative: the story of Sarah, a Jewish war orphan, whose parents send her to Canada in 1941; the diary of Mme. Proust, Marcel’s Proust’s mother; and the first-person narrative of Marie. Marie has immersed herself in the life of Proust as an escape from her hopeless obsession with Sarah’s son, Max. The frequent shifts in perspective can be jarring; although the diaries are printed in a different typeface, there are no distinct breaks indicating when the narrative voice changes. The sections concerning Sarah’s story, her adjustment to life in Toronto with her adoptive parents, her attempts to create a family, resonate with emotion, yet these are undercut by the transitions back to Marie’s

analysis of her own abortive love affair.

The inclusion of the diary adds more confusion. Initially, I thought that Taylor was structuring the novel as historiographic metafiction. In her acknowledgments, Taylor mentions “fiction’s obligations to history”; however, she “imagined” Mme. Proust’s diary. Minor irritations, like Mme. Proust’s reliance on literary quotations to conclude her entries, can therefore be attributed to Taylor’s erudition. The reason for creating the diary is less clear. Unlike *Flaubert’s Parrot*, this novel does not endear the reader to the foibles of the historical subject. Frequently, the descriptions of the past are like history lessons, lacking the immediacy of fiction. If, as Marie claims, the cure for heartbreak is literature, her focus on the diary becomes clearer, but not why the reader should be interested. Marie calls herself a “fledgling literary translator” who “eyes the far-off treetops where the editors and novelists nest and stupidly thinks that with a bit of flapping she might join them.” Unfortunately, the effort falls short. *Mme. Proust and the Kosher Kitchen* is an intriguing but flawed first novel.

Nancy Richler, in *Your Mouth is Lovely*, demonstrates the heights that a lyrically gifted writer can reach. From the opening paragraph, evoking the coming of spring in “the slow dripping away of the ice that has coated our walls all winter” and “the drifts of smoke as peasants from distant villages burn off last summer’s grasses,” Richler immerses the reader in the world of Miriam, a Russian Jew. Miriam, whose mother drowned herself the day after Miriam’s birth, describes her childhood in a village in the Pripet marshes with her father and stepmother, Tsila, a gifted seamstress. Haunted by the secrets of her mother’s past, Miriam is gradually drawn into revolutionary activities through her friend, an ambiguous young man known as Wolf, and through her aunt Bayla. Imprisoned

after the failed uprising of 1905, Miriam writes her life story for her daughter, whom Bayla has taken to safety in Canada. She wishes to give her daughter “an understanding of who I was, how I lived, how you came to be. A voice from the silence of death.” Brilliantly capturing the details of Miriam’s life, Richler blends elements of magic realism, political history, and Jewish religious observances to create characters who linger in the mind. *Your Mouth is Lovely* is a lyrical and powerful novel, one of the best I have read this year.

Literacy on the Thames

Karin Michelson and Mercy Doxtator

Oneida-English/English-Oneida Dictionary.

U of Toronto P \$175.00

Reviewed by Blair A. Rudes

Several years ago the Government of Ontario embarked on an ambitious program to support the development of dictionaries and grammars of the aboriginal languages spoken in the province. The *Oneida-English/English-Oneida Dictionary* is the most recent product of that program. It is the first comprehensive dictionary of Oneida, a Northern Iroquoian language, as spoken on the Oneida-of-the-Thames reserve near London. The dictionary is a collaborative effort between a linguist who has worked among the Oneidas for nearly a quarter of a century, Karin Michelson, and a native speaker of Oneida from the Oneida-on-the-Thames community, Mercy Doxtator, who taught the language to her people for eighteen years.

The dictionary consists of a preface, introduction, guide to using the Oneida-English section, the Oneida-English-section, a guide to the English-Oneida section, the English-Oneida section, and four thematic appendices. The core of the dictionary is the 818-page Oneida-English section. According to the blurbs, “the Oneida-English portion

includes some 6,000 entries.” A count of the number of Oneida words on a sample of 100 pages of the Oneida-English section produced an average of 18 words per page, suggesting a total of around 15,000 words in the Oneida-English section.

The database is not only large, it is also quite impressive in its breadth of coverage of Oneida vocabulary. This breadth is hinted at by the word lists in the thematic appendices at the end of the dictionary, which cover vocabulary from 50 cultural domains ranging from animals, plants, weather, numbers, colors and shapes to kinship, body parts, perception, speech, cooking, clothing, and recreations.

The authors have done an excellent job of providing accurate translation between Oneida and English. The quality of their translations is particularly evident in the glosses for Oneida morphemes and words, many of which have connotations not readily apparent in the “usual” English translations or undergo shifts in translation when certain inflectional elements are present. The authors elucidate further the meaning of Oneida words by providing example sentences from texts.

For individuals interested in the intricacies of Oneida word-formation, Michelson and Doxtator provide an overview of the basic structure of Oneida words followed by a more detailed discussion of the many elaborations upon the basic structure. Relationships among words are effectively mapped through cross-reference among dictionary entries.

The authors have ingeniously designed the English-Oneida section to function simultaneously as both a dictionary and a thesaurus. The thesaurus function is achieved through a system of generic and specific entry headings. For example, five entries begin with the generic heading “live”: “live; be alive,” “live, go on living,” “live on,” “live; reside; be plentiful,” and “live; reside; drift around.” Each of these

four entries is cross-listed to a different Oneida base in the Oneida-English section of the dictionary. In addition, there are separate entries in the English-Oneida section for “alive, be,” “reside,” “plentiful, be,” and “drift around” that refer the reader back to the “live” entries.

The *Oneida-English/English-Oneida Dictionary* is an important contribution to Iroquoian lexicography that will be of enduring value to speakers and learners of the Oneida language, the Oneida people, linguists, social scientists and the general public.

Exit/Enter bpNichol

Roy Miki, ed.

Meanwhile: The Critical Writings of bpNichol.

Talonbooks \$34.95

Carl Peters, ed.

bpNichol Comics. Talonbooks \$29.95

Reviewed by Kathryn Grafton

For bpNichol, the poet “is a poet always” regardless of “where he moves or which ‘field’ he chooses to work in”; as such, “his creations can always be looked upon as poems.” These two recent collections offer new ways to look upon this poet and his “poems.” As in all his work, Nichol’s criticism and comic strips confront the problem “of finding as many exits as possible from the self . . . in order to form as many entrances as possible for the other.” Roy Miki and Carl Peters both honour these passageways, yet choose different means to facilitate readers’ exploration of Nichol’s creations.

In *Meanwhile*, Miki brings together an extensive body of Nichol’s critical writings from 1966 to 1988, the year of the poet’s death. To enter the critical material, Miki focuses on Nichol’s view of the writing act as “the performance of process in the material conditions of language”; process is so central to Nichol’s work that it sounds its “bass note / plunk it.” Because Nichol’s

writing always remains in process, Miki suggests that just as “Nichol’s own critical thought remains open to readers so readers coming to *Meanwhile* are encouraged to dialogue his language to the conditions of their own present.” Miki facilitates this dialogue by removing himself from the conversation: he presents essays, interview excerpts, reviews, lectures and letters in a seemingly unmediated, carefully crafted manner. *Meanwhile*’s chronological arrangement reveals how Nichol revisits critical concepts throughout his career; as Miki observes, “the Nichol we encounter in *Meanwhile* always keeps returning to the act of writing, circling its complexities to probe and articulate what attracts him to its sites of production” in a manner that insists (*à la* Gertrude Stein) on key ideas such as notation, “pataphysics (the initial diacritic is Nichol’s), and punning.

The text’s reviews and dialogues reveal Nichol to be a writer engaged with and energized by a community of Canadian poets that includes bill bissett, George Bowering, Daphne Marlatt and Fred Wah; as such, *Meanwhile* enriches readers’ understanding not only of Nichol and his work but also of Canadian literature in the 1970s and 1980s. The sense of community in *Meanwhile* affects readers differently depending on their place within this literary sphere. The collection reads as an insiders’ book that addresses those already familiar with Nichol, his creative canon and critical writings. Nichol refers to people often only by their first name, and responds frequently to unheard arguments, yet Miki chooses not to preface or footnote the writings. The collection does not lend itself to easy consulting: there is no index, and therefore to find Nichol’s many references to such topics as comics, the Four Horsemen, and the long poem, readers must read the entire text or, if insiders, know the exact piece to reference. Miki reveals his editorial hand only in *Meanwhile*’s final pages through his

“Editorial Notes,” which groups writings generically and provides contextual and publication information, and his “Editor’s Afterword,” which includes a brief Nichol biography and a description of Miki’s editorial process. In keeping with Nichol’s vow to abandon “that false surface which insists unity and let the unity find its own point of cohesion. / Or not,” readers of *Meanwhile* discover their own entrance into and unity with his creative world.

In *bpNichol Comics*, Carl Peters constructs a three-legged critical scaffolding he navigates “to find and enter the exits that Nichol [has] left for his fellow communicants to enter.” First, he argues that Nichol is a more radical artist than he has been positioned in recent interpretations, and suggests that the formal experimentation and daring expression of faith in Nichol’s comics support this reading. Second, Peters demonstrates the relationship between *The Martyrology* and the comics through their engagement with “pataphysics, faith and a mythic base. Finally, focusing on the existential “Lonely Fred,” Peters shows how comics are another notational system for Nichol to perform “pataphysics and insist on the parallel worlds of the self and other, divided only by the often permeable comic-strip frame. Foregrounding panelogics (the relationship between frames in a comic strip), Peters leads readers through passageways between the frames, between the comic strips, and between the comics and larger Nichol canon (often referring to work gathered in *Meanwhile*).

Peters groups the comics together by characters such as Bob de Cat and Rover Rawshanks. The strips are sometimes complete, occasionally drafts and often interspersed with character doodles. The collection includes letters between Nichol and Margaret Avison and essays such as “Comics as Myth: Notes on Method in *The Martyrology*.” Peters prefaces each section with contextual information,

description of his editorial process, and his own interpretations; throughout, he reinforces panelogics, which he ties insightfully to such concepts as punning and Gertrude Stein’s reading of Cubism. Although his repeated demonstration of the relationship between Nichol’s frames serves as a productive guided tour, it may also limit readers from discovering their own entry points into the comics.

While Miki encourages readers of *Meanwhile* to arrive at their own sense of textual unity, Peters frames Nichol’s comics for his audience. The two editorial strategies are read usefully together: Miki’s behind-the-scenes approach reminds readers of new exits and entrances to be discovered in *bpNichol Comics*; Peters’s tour suggests fruitful reading strategies to seek passageways through *Meanwhile*. Nichol writes, “i place myself there, with them, . . . who seek to reach themselves and the other thru the poem by as many exits and entrances as are possible”; these collections inspire readers to join Nichol in seeking pathways through his canon of “poems.”

Taboo Intimacies

Rachel F. Moran

Interracial Intimacy: the Regulation of Race and Romance. U of Chicago P us \$18.00

Renee C. Romano

Race Mixing: Black-White Marriage in Postwar America. Harvard UP \$35.00

Reviewed by Maya Simpson

In Chapter One, “Insights from Interracial Intimacy,” Rachel Moran writes that “after three hundred years of antimiscegenation laws, it would be surprising if thirty years of official colorblindness have truly rendered race irrelevant in the choice of a marital or sexual partner. In fact, most Americans continue to choose a spouse of the same race.” Moran examines this tension between America’s ideal of a colour-

blind society and the cold reality of continual race segregation. *Interracial Intimacies* looks at this tension of racial segregation through interracial intimacy between heterosexual white couples and Asian, black, Latino, and Native Americans. Moran uses four main frameworks for her arguments. First, she refers to Gregory Howard Williams's autobiography, *Life on the Color Line: The True Story of a White Boy Who Discovered He Was Black*. Second, the 1967 Loving v. Virginia court case which eventually prompted the U. S. Supreme Court to declare all state laws prohibiting interracial marriage unconstitutional. Third, Moran relies on two approaches to racial equality: colour-blindness and colour-consciousness. Finally, she uses three competing notions of race: genotype, phenotype, and social ties. With these frameworks in place, Moran then explores the ideas about interracial sex, marriage, and family. Moran points out how American law and society generally exploited and penalized women for crossing the colour line. When women dated or married interracially, they lost custody of their children, they were shunned by their families, and were labelled promiscuous by society.

One of Moran's strengths lies in her comparison of the attitudes and perceptions of different racial groups to miscegenation. It would have been helpful if she had also explored these differences through the lens of societal and cultural change in 20th century America in greater detail. Moran does not fall into the binary trap of the American racial paradigm of black and white. She does acknowledge that, indeed, antimiscegenation laws were most often used to prevent intimate relationships between blacks and whites in America. However, Moran also points out how American courts used antimiscegenation laws to prevent white-Asian intimate relationships. Through the Williams autobiography and other personal accounts, she humanizes the conflicts of

interracial intimacies. Also, the transcripts of antimiscegenation court cases highlight the connections and disconnections between American law and general American society when dealing with the issue of interracial intimacy.

Moran presents a promising framework for her book but occasionally her argumentative points meander. In the book's title, Moran emphasizes her intent to discuss both race and romance in interracial relationships. Despite Moran's strong analysis of race, her arguments about love and romance require greater clarity.

In *Race Mixing*, Renee Romano seeks to answer several questions about the taboo of black-white marriage in postwar America: "Why were marriages between whites and blacks more difficult for whites to accept than less intimate relationships? What did the continued disapproval of interracial marriage demonstrate about the nature and significance of the racial changes that had taken place in the United States since World War II? Did blacks share whites' misgivings about interracial relationships?" Romano tackles these pertinent questions in a well-organized and informative manner.

Race Mixing presents a thorough look at each decade since WWII. Romano highlights the many cultural and societal upheavals in postwar America including changing attitudes toward interracial relationships. Also, she gives a well-balanced look at black-white relationships in America through the lens of legal, political, and cultural histories. Instead of solely looking at white American perceptions of interracial relationships, Romano is also careful to include black American perceptions.

In her "Prologue," Romano reveals that she is aware of historical and sociological studies and their narrow approaches to interracial relationships. Therefore, she uses individual stories to personalize statistics on interracial relationships. Occasionally she discusses several of these stories at the

same time and it is often unclear which narrative is being analyzed. Romano also relates music (such as jazz and rock 'n roll) and popular culture with the increase in young white Americans who accept interracial relationships in the 1940s and 1950s. Consequently, I expected Romano to explore possible connections between today's attitudes toward interracial relationships and white American youth so enamoured with rap and hip hop music and its culture. Unfortunately, Romano does not tackle this issue.

Both writers avoid falling into the utopian rhetoric of race amalgamation. American society has not solved its race problem. Just as Romano argues "that the erosion of the taboo against black-white marriages cannot be read as a simple sign that America has overcome its racist past . . . recent history suggests that structural racial inequalities can persist despite changes in whites' attitudes about blacks." Both Moran and Romano are cautious in their praise of the end of antimiscegenation laws in America because the reality is that interracial marriage (although on the rise) is still relatively rare, particularly between blacks and whites.

Improving Reading

Heather Murray

Come, Bright Improvement!: The Literary Societies of Nineteenth-Century Ontario. U of Toronto P \$60.00

Reviewed by Margery Fee

In a modern Canada where public education, public libraries and complete adult literacy are taken for granted, it is salutary to read of the determined efforts of settlers to dismantle the barriers to social mobility typical of their former homelands. Given Pierre Bourdieu's dispiriting conclusion that mainstream education serves primarily to replicate social hierarchies, we

shouldn't be surprised that Murray discovers that many early literary societies in Ontario were founded by African Canadians (although I confess I was). The African-Canadian Wilberforce Lyceum Educating Society, founded in 1850 in Cannonberg, near Colchester, in 1850, "has the distinction of being . . . the first mixed-sex literary society in Ontario, and perhaps in all of Canada." Working class men also moved to educate themselves via the Mechanics Institutes, which appeared "to be the only cultural organizations of the period that made a deliberate attempt to target the fugitive [slave] community for public events." Women of all classes used literary societies to gain a liberal education rarely made available to them by public institutions.

Much of this book is simply an account of Murray's discoveries, made in archives all over the province. Although this might sound a bit dull, in fact, fascinating vignettes abound here. I was delighted to learn that Chief John Brant paid a visit to Thomas Campbell (whose lines provide the book's title) to correct the picture created in one of Campbell's poems of his father, Chief Joseph Brant, a literate man if ever there was one.

Murray is motivated to write this history not for its intrinsic interest, but because of her theoretical interest in texts and social change in specific locations. In a roundtable commentary published in 1993, Murray comments "A redefined 'literary history' factors in questions of the construction of the 'literary'; how its examples, and the category itself are produced, received, maintained, and altered over time." She then points to the relations between the "'literary' and the 'discursive'" as a useful site for a postcolonial theorist to work, noting that there are many locations for such work, but that one of them is the specific situations—a town, a region, an immigrant community, or an interface of

different cultures.” This is primarily where we can locate her writing. In her work, she is clearly not only thinking of her own future research, but also reaching out to others in the field, looking at the work that remains to be done. As a guide, she appends an 80-page resource guide that lists hundreds of literary societies that existed in Ontario prior to 1901. Further, she argues reader response theory of the 1970s and 1980s needs development: readers do respond “inside the head” or in writing, but they also use texts to do things, to change their own situation, and to construct social reality itself.

Writing Diasporic Lives

Sandra Pouchet Paquet

Caribbean Autobiography: Cultural Identity and Self-Representation. U of Wisconsin P \$82.00

Wenona Giles

Portuguese Women in Toronto: Gender, Immigration, and Nationalism. U of Toronto P \$40.00.

Reviewed by Wendy Roy

Thirty years ago, Elizabeth Bruss observed in *Autobiographical Acts* that “there is no intrinsically autobiographical form.” This observation is essential to Sandra Pouchet Paquet’s recent exploration of anglophone life writing from her home region.

Caribbean Autobiography demonstrates the diversity of autobiographical works by Caribbean writers through an examination of two spiritual autobiographies, a dictated slave narrative, travel narratives, memoirs, fiction, poetry, a diary, and elegies. Paquet’s book also demonstrates the diasporic nature of authorship in the Caribbean context. What she calls the “self-conscious, often contentious, cultural diversity” of the Caribbean is evident in works by authors as varied as Antiguan slave Mary Prince, expatriate Jamaican writer Claude McKay (who became part of the Harlem Renaissance in

the United States), authors of Indian descent such as Trinidadian V. S. Naipaul, and “white” creole writers such as Jean Rhys of Dominica. Paquet ably argues that while Caribbean autobiography is heterogeneous, some patterns can be discerned, including “displacement and dispossession,” “racial and ethnic self-consciousness,” and “the role of errantry as a site of self-definition and empowerment.”

Paquet makes use of various theoretical perspectives, including autobiographical, postcolonial, and feminist theories, to analyze issues of caste and class, culture and race, and gender and sexuality in Caribbean life writing. The result is twelve discrete essays (each of which focuses on autobiographical texts by one, or at the most two, authors) grouped into four sections. The first section looks at gender and voice in little-known nineteenth-century narratives by the Hart sisters, Prince, and Mary Seacole. The second analyzes exile and otherness in works by well-known twentieth-century male writers Claude McKay, C. L. R. James, George Lamming, and Derek Walcott. The third examines cultural dislocation in autobiographies by Caribbean writers of Indian and “white” creole origins, including Naipaul, Anna Mahase, Yseult Bridges, and Rhys. And the fourth section considers what Paquet calls “cross-gender identification” in elegies by Kamau Brathwaite and Jamaica Kincaid. The essays are for the most part well-written and informative, but because Paquet discusses so many authors she cannot focus on any one in detail, and this overview approach is the book’s major shortcoming. Some stylistic choices are also confusing, such as the way that Paquet consistently refers to both Claude McKay and C. L. R. James by their full names. And I noted a few spelling errors, including the misspelling of Catharine Parr Trail’s name in an endnote.

These are minor problems, though, in a

book that provides many fascinating insights into Caribbean autobiography. I was persuaded, for example, by Paquet's argument that "white" writers should not be interpreted as outsiders to the Caribbean, since "To use their race or color as the cultural or political sign of inferiority or degeneracy is to devalue their contribution on the basis of race and perpetuate their legacy of skin color as a 'visible and natural' object of discrimination." Students will find Paquet's discussion of well-known writers and texts valuable, but I found the most compelling discussions to be of lesser-known writers and innovative texts. Thus Paquet's examination of Prince's narrative, dictated to a young Susanna Strickland (more well-known in Canada by her married name, Susanna Moodie), caught my attention through its cogent discussions of textualized orality. Paquet points out that the text is undeniably shaped by its "coercive or collaborative status" and "the constraints imposed by the genre of the slave narrative." Yet while inequities of race, class, and gender are only partly recoverable, "even in its mediated form Prince's narrative endures as a testament to her life and struggle." I was also fascinated by Paquet's discussion of Brathwaite's poetic diary, which began as his private way of mourning the death of his wife and expressing anger at the lack of access for men to the language of mourning. Paquet concludes that the diary works by "installing the deceased other within the self in a dynamic process of cross-gender identification." This incorporation becomes concrete as well as metaphorical, Paquet argues, when Brathwaite swallows some of his dead wife's ashes in a parody of the Christian Eucharist and the Haitian ritual of *mangé morts*.

While Paquet concludes that the "radical instability of the Caribbean as a cultural domain coincides with the radical instability of autobiography as a genre," Wenona

Giles's book about Portuguese migrants to Toronto demonstrates a completely different way of writing about diasporic lives.

Portuguese Women in Toronto is not a study of autobiography, nor indeed an analysis of biographical narratives of any sort. Instead, it provides a discussion of the lives of female immigrants and their daughters that offers only tantalizing glimpses into their life stories. Each of these women is given a pseudonym, and each is allowed to speak only in short quoted passages about limited aspects of her life. Experiences are represented through statistical details and case studies of subjects such as household relations, employment, and education, but the book never provides a picture of its subjects' lives as wholes.

Portuguese Women in Toronto does focus, though, on an area of current interest to many literary critics: the effects of the nationalist project in Canada on immigrants and their descendents. The book's basic premise is that Canada's immigration and multicultural policies "operate to transform a highly heterogeneous group into the homogenous category of 'immigrant.'" Giles suggests that while multiculturalism was initially introduced as "a means of managing Canadian-born francophones," it has since become "a means of controlling immigrant groups." As a result, she argues, "gender and class differences are masked, and ethnic differences are reified, contributing ultimately to racism." Members of each migrant group are encouraged to continue their identification with their home states, masking the reality "that immigrant workers and their families are indeed part of the nation-state into which they have immigrated."

When Giles turns to case studies of Portuguese women, these introductory arguments become repetitive and are not always borne out by the illustrations she chooses. She repeatedly concludes, for example, that "immigration and multi-

cultural state policies” are at fault for difficulties Portuguese women must overcome, even when the women themselves indicate that other factors, such as traditional family structures, play as significant a role. Giles’s case studies of Portuguese women in Toronto, while often frustratingly abbreviated, sometimes allow her to make astute observations, such as that immigration policy ignores women by defining them as dependents, even though most participate in the workforce after their arrival in Canada, and that immigrant women often do not have access to the Canadian education system, and thus must either be educated in their country of origin or do without. Because of the book’s statistical approach, however, and because it quotes women’s words so sparingly, *Portuguese Women in Toronto* will be of more interest to social scientists than to literary critics.

Amazonia Revisited

Andrew Pyper

The Trade Mission. HarperFlamingoCanada.

\$34.95

Reviewed by Gordon Fisher

In 1848, two British naturalists, Alfred Wallace and Henry Bates, arrived in Brazil to study the central Amazon River area. In 1850, they split up. Two years later, Wallace returned to England. Bates stayed on the Amazon for eleven years. Bates and Wallace both made significant contributions to the development of the theory of evolution.

In Andrew Pyper’s *The Trade Mission*, two brilliant young computer geeks, Marcus Wallace and Jonathon Bates, travel to the Amazon region for a few days of sightseeing as a break from a Canadian government-sponsored trade mission to Brazil. In Sao Paulo, Wallace and Bates are selling Hypothesis, variously described as “a universal human mind,” “an electronic Everyman. Or Everywoman,” and “a com-

pendium of contemporary ethics.” Upriver from the city of Manaus, Wallace and Bates get into deep trouble. They (and their companions) are kidnapped and tortured by pirates; they escape, encounter friendly (or at least, not hostile) natives, and eventually split up. One is saved.

The obvious question that arises is “What is the connection between the earlier and later Wallace and Bates?” Unfortunately, the answer isn’t easy to find. At the simplest level, *The Trade Mission* appears to be a thriller, but it’s not all that thrilling. While there are life-and-death situations to deal with, the unknown threats are (as always) fearsome, the heat oppressive, and the tropical rain thunderous, they are all described in a way that suggests a touch of verbal dysentery—not an unusual experience in the florid environment of Amazonia.

Perhaps Hypothesis is meant to represent a grand new advance in our understanding of human nature, and therefore, our understanding of human evolution. The characters in the novel are faced with serious moral dilemmas, but it’s not clear how Hypothesis would help them make decisions, or explain or illuminate those decisions.

Wallace and Bates are portrayed as wunderkind; they attract attention in the way that young entrepreneurs attracted attention during the recent dot.com boom. But their intrinsic interest—even as they make life-and-death decisions in their escape from the kidnappers—is as shallow as the boom that preceded the dot.com bust. The narrator turns out to be a woman—Elizabeth Crossman, the interpreter for Wallace and Bates. How significant is the name? Does she provide penetrating insights into the character of Wallace and Bates? No.

One clever touch that does work is Bates’s frequent use of a Palmcorder to record events going on around him. Like all the electronic devices promoted to “capture” real life as it happens, it distances the

observer and reduces the experience of real-life to the passive watching of a tiny electronic screen.

In *The Trade Mission*, Pyper follows the pattern of his earlier novel, *Lost Girls*. Both novels begin with a prologue featuring unidentified characters. Uncertainty and mystery permeate each novel. In both novels, characters are distant, alienated, and generally at odds with the world around them. In the end, the anonymity and uncertainty seem unnecessarily coy, and the alienation spreads to the reader.

Is it basically a psychological thriller with an “illustrious” hook? Or a subtle commentary on the evolution of individuals and/or society since the time of Darwin, Bates, and Wallace? Whatever the authorial aspirations, the end result is not quite satisfying on any level.

History Made Interesting

Marilynn Reynolds Ill. Don Kilby
The Name of the Child. Orca \$19.95

Mary Alice Downie Ill. Muriel Wood
Scared Sarah. Fitzhenry and Whiteside \$10.95

Ann Walsh, ed.
Beginnings: Stories of Canada's Past. Ronsdale P
\$12.95

Winds through Time: An Anthology of Canadian Historical Young Adult Fiction. Beach Holme
\$12.95

Reviewed by Lynn Wytenbroek

To interest young people in history, even the history of their own country, is not easy. But a story with an exciting plot, good characterization, and a problem or two to solve will often entice even uninterested readers. Four recent books on Canadian historical topics vary greatly in their quality and ability to interest young readers.

The Name of the Child is a picture book that tells the story of how Lloyd, a scared little boy, battles his way through mud, a thunder storm, and his own fear to save his

newborn cousin from the flu. However, the text is quite poorly written in places, with large unexplained jumps in the story-line and an over-emphasis on Lloyd's fears that makes him initially irritating, rather than sympathetic. The themes of the story are solid: courage means one struggles on despite one's fears, especially when the stakes are high. However, although the narrative is not always as strong as it could be, Kilby's excellent oil paintings depict the story and its setting in evocative detail. While painting faces is not the artist's strong point, the depiction of early twentieth-century rural life is superb. This book would certainly attract pre-school and Grade One readers, giving them a taste for Canadian history as they read about and see the life of an earlier time.

Scared Sarah is a chapter book in Fitzhenry and Whiteside's "New Beginnings" series. However, this book lacks the charm of *The Name of the Child*. Both Downie's text and Wood's artwork are poor. The story is superficial, with minimal plot and little to entice readers to keep on reading. Sarah is a scared cry-baby and utterly unsympathetic. Readers really won't care if she overcomes her fears because she is simply too self-absorbed and tiresome, unlike little Lloyd, whom readers will come to really like. Also the theme of overcoming fear is allowed to dominate historical veracity, when Sarah's Ojibwa friend Bright Fire tells Sarah that his medicine bag has no power, as he made it himself, and that he does not need magic to help him be brave. This section of the story is ill-conceived at best, and comes perilously close to using the First Nations character's voice to dismiss First Nations beliefs. Further, the historical details about living conditions, work, and the home-life of the times are frequently introduced clumsily in big segments of uninterrupted description, which are not likely to capture the interest of young readers. Finally, the artwork is weak, not depicting any of the

few interesting scenes in the book, and showing rather static characters doing sometimes ambiguous things. Overall, this book is more likely to turn young readers off history, than to turn them on to it.

Walsh's anthology *Beginnings: Stories of Canada's Past* is a mixed bag, both in subject matter and in time period. However, the general quality of the material is quite high. Some stories, such as "The Rule of Silence" by Ann Walsh about Canada's youngest prisoner—an eight-year-old who received regular whippings for infractions of the draconian rules of the jail in which he was incarcerated in the 1830s—are, perhaps, a little harsh for an anthology aimed at early teens. Others, such as "The First Spike" by Laura Morgan, where a girl, dressed as a boy and trained to be a smith by her father, is the chosen "man" to drive the first spike in Canada's nationwide railroad, is preposterous in concept, imposing modern "politically correct" ideas onto a historical context in a most ridiculous manner. However, these weaker stories are few and far between in this otherwise well-written anthology. There are exciting adventures as well as poignant tales. Characters are usually realistic, convincing, and sympathetic.

Walsh's other anthology, *Winds through Time*, is also good. Although offering stories by a different set of writers, including some very well-known names such as Lynne Bowen and Andrea Spalding, the storylines are remarkably similar to those in *Beginnings*: boys working in mines where death is a constant danger; early teen girls given against their will in marriage to older men looking for hard-working, young, and pliable wives; attempts, both successful and unsuccessful, in settling an alien and inhospitable land; the dreadful lives of some of the "Home Children" sent from England to find better lives in Canada but often used and abused as slave labour by harsh masters; the gaining of the vote for women in Canada.

As with *Beginnings*, *Winds* has stronger and weaker stories, but most depict clearly the lives of young people in very different times and conditions from the lives and conditions. Such stories, short, intriguing, and well-written, will stir in many teen readers an interest in some aspect of history, or some aspect of life elsewhere in Canada. Ann Walsh has done Canadian history a real service in assembling these two highly evocative and thoughtful anthologies of historical short fiction.

The Natural

Shane Rhodes

Holding Pattern. NeWest P \$14.95

Matt Robinson

A Ruckus of Awkward Stacking. Insomniac P \$12.95

Trish Salah

Wanting in Arabic. Tzar \$16.95

Elana Wolff

Birdheart. Guernica \$12.00

Carolyn Zonailo

The Goddess in the Garden. Ekstasis Editions \$14.95

Reviewed by Laura M. Robinson

Perhaps all new Canadian poetry should abide by one rule: no more nature poetry unless the poet can do something extremely breathtaking with it. These five volumes of poetry, each so different, all position themselves, however uncomfortably, around the seemingly perennial Canadian topic of nature.

The title of Zonailo's *Goddess in the Garden* almost speaks for itself in its gesture towards the universal and the natural. However, the title promises at least a radical feminist viewpoint; instead the volume decries women and celebrates men. Not only do the opening poems wrestle with the problematic relationship of the poet-persona to her mother, but the final poems laud male-female unions in a way that

manages only to support the patriarchal status quo by implying that women without men do not exist:

man without woman
is man without life;
woman without man
waits to come into being.

At times, Zonailo's word choices are unfortunate. In "The Female Nude Lobotomized," for example, she writes, "the heart / a heart-shaped organ." She has a tendency to overstate or explain her metaphors instead of letting her readers delight in their own ability to interpret. She writes in "Blind Man in the Metro," "Given eyes that see, / I have often felt blinded." Her poetry needs focus and a rigorous editing. There is promise in "Stephen, in the Garden" where the poet-persona envisions a man standing in the garden as a Daphne figure. Here Zonailo reverses the male gaze rather than merely reinforcing male power.

Wolff's *Birdheart* also focuses on nature imagery; the bird heart is enviable as it is too small for sorrow. This volume encourages the reader to appreciate the simplicity of daily life:

Nothing matters really
but the soundness of the bench,
the shade afforded by the oak,
the sun-spill . . .

Akin to the romantic poets, Wolff's poetry suggests that in childhood we appreciate the world more keenly: "a sound that once had meaning for me/ now just nudges me awake, passes, / and I fall back into sleep." There is not much new in these poems, except for a strange and disturbing motif of violence: images of a redheaded woman hanging from a bridge, a crow dead from an imagined boyhood dismemberment, and even the imagined stepping on a slug. Here, Wolff could transcend traditional nature imagery, but she stays on a conventional path.

Trish Salah's *Wanting in Arabic* is the only volume of the five that does not explore

humanity through nature. And yet the focus is on what constitutes the natural. A fascinating voice emerges in these experimental poems as Salah tells her story of coming into being as a woman. Salah's transgendered persona is anguished, angry, and triumphant all at once or by turns, breaking with traditional structures in her fragmented and disjointed verse. In "June 15th," she writes about the "making in breaking," which is precisely what her persona's life and the poetry are doing. Not only is Salah recording the transition from male to female, but her persona also then becomes a lesbian, a wonderfully confusing exposure of the constructedness of gender and sexuality. Some of this poetry verges on a cryptic and inaccessible private language. Yet, this may be a strength. Salah forces the reader into an uncomfortable position of voyeur, of outsider, bearing witness to the pain and turbulence of the persona's transition. Similarly, the pronouns in the poems often create confusion. "Fata Morgana (Ferial Mirage)," claims to have "two in a bed" but uses the pronouns, "her," "you," and "my" in short succession, seeming to imply at least three. Again, however, this pronoun confusion throughout the volume helps convey the sense of a bewildering and troubling transition. Salah's poetry challenges the categories of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, especially in her poem "when there are three," which engages with the limits of French feminism when faced with a male-to-female lesbian. The poem "Surgical Diary" is especially poignant.

In *Holding Pattern*, Shane Rhodes employs a quirky, fragmented style that manages to tell multiple stories and deftly sculpt character in few words. These poems convey the sense of existential angst in being trapped in nature. In "Moth Light," for example, the persona watches the moths kill themselves on the lamp and laments that "they leave me here," in life. "Night Storms" sketches the poet's mind as

he contemplates the lives of his ancestors:

My mind mulls over its night catch:
stories, scars, what we carry forward
in our mangled hands.

This is fine, controlled, and deeply resonant poetry. Some of these poems are satirically compelling, such as “Stuff,” a poem that targets contemporary consumer culture: “Like a shirt on a discount rack, I just want / to be free.” Rhodes is particularly adept at rendering sexuality and his poem “Fucking” is a humorous, tender, and bald look at the act that is so often romanticized. He ironically alludes to Yeats’s “Leda and the Swan” in his reference to the Trojan condom: “The walls of Troy unfallen / and unburned. Another piece / of the future slipped by / unproved.” This cleverness brings pleasure to the knowing reader, yet it is also Rhodes’s downfall in the final section of the collection, the title piece, “Holding Pattern.” This long poem is a self-indulgent list of imperatives from the poet-persona to himself, complete with explanatory (only they are not, of course) footnotes in the style of T.S. Eliot’s “The Wasteland.” One footnote slyly and self-consciously mocks the reader’s voice: “Please, poet, we beg you to keep your bourgeois fatalism to your melodramatic self.” The humour falls flat here.

The theme of nature runs through Matt Robinson’s outstanding debut as well, but he creates a tension between the natural and the constructed that ultimately blurs the lines. “parking lot pastoral” and “geranium” evoke the pastoral but not to aggrandize the simplicity and beauty of country life; rather, Robinson celebrates the overlooked beauty of the urban by pairing it with country images:

gasoline swirls. Beautiful
like bruises, leaked
diesel and un-
leaded lakes irrigate
this asphalt.

His poem, “stipling,” part of “notes towards a garden glossary,” is particularly striking in its insistence on the power of the mundane in “the freckle of a malignancy”: “the way the markings of a trout are most brilliant as/ it struggles with the mechanics of death.” Not content merely to invoke Hopkins’s “Pied Beauty,” this poem pushes Hopkins further. Like “stipling,” these poems are not just a celebration of life but, more devastatingly, a celebration of the struggle to celebrate life.

This collection does have its moments of weakness. Robinson tends towards abstraction, losing the stirring detail. In “the morning as continuation,” for example, he resolves the poem by claiming to understand the “idea of instinct, i turn towards this: the/ memory of an incident,” which simply falls flat. Similarly, “fingernails” recalls Sylvia Plath’s dark, tortured poems, only applying them to a banal theme—chewing fingernails—that only succeeds in undermining both Plath and Robinson. These are minor complaints. *A Ruckus of Awkward Stacking* is precisely what poetry should be: evocative, detailed, and fresh.

Écriture et mémoire

Geneviève Robitaille

Mes jours sont vos heures. Triptyque \$17,00

Suzanne Jacob

Rouge, mère et fils. Édns. du Seuil \$25,95

Comptes rendus par Carol J. Harvey

Avec ces deux oeuvres, nous sommes amenés à réfléchir sur le rôle de la mémoire. Non qu’il s’agisse d’analyses psychologiques, mais les situations évoquées par les deux auteurs exposent les multiples dimensions du présent qui sont tributaires du passé. *Mes jours sont vos heures* est la deuxième oeuvre de Geneviève Robitaille (*Chez moi* a paru en 1999) alors que Suzanne Jacob pratique depuis longtemps

et avec beaucoup de succès tous les genres littéraires. En 1984, son roman *Laura Laur* s'est mérité le Prix Paris-Québec et le Prix du Gouverneur Général. Elle a obtenu aussi le Prix de la revue *Études françaises* pour son essai *La bulle d'encre* (1997) et le Prix du Gouverneur Général pour son recueil de poésie *La part du feu* (1998).

Mes jours sont vos heures, oeuvre qualifiée de "récit", relève de l'auto-fiction. Au cours d'un an et demi, du printemps à l'été qui suit, l'auteure (qui est aussi la narratrice) raconte avec candeur les saisons de sa vie. Mais, le corps cassé par la maladie, obligée de vivre au ralenti à cause d'une arthrite rhumatoïde et d'une vue affaiblie, elle trouve la matière de son récit dans ses souvenirs du passé autant sinon plus que dans son quotidien. "Je suis moi, là, comme ça avec mon intemporalité et mes libertés forcées", avoue-t-elle. De ce fait, on assiste à un perpétuel va-et-vient entre le présent et le passé, entre les événements qui se déroulent au fil des jours et les anecdotes remémorées.

En effet, l'auteure est, de son propre aveu, une voleuse des aventures des autres. "C'est en Maude qu'elle imagine ce que c'est que d'escalader des roches avec [s]on amoureux qui sécurise son pas"; le soutien qu'André offre au jeune Johnny, sans domicile fixe, lui permet de mesurer la compassion; et le souvenir de Maurice, mort à seize ans, lui fait sonder le deuil de madame Pomerleau, une mère privée de son enfant. Pour Robitaille, les heures des autres sont ses jours.

Toujours est-il que sa propre aventure ne manque pas d'intérêt. En septembre, elle assiste à une fête en son honneur à la librairie de son quartier; quelques semaines plus tard, elle est interviewée à la télé; elle célèbre l'an deux mille avec le même engouement que tout un chacun. Au salon du livre, elle fait la connaissance de Robert Lalonde et de Michel Tremblay, auteurs qu'elle admire depuis longtemps. Mais l'événement le plus marquant pour la

narratrice, c'est de découvrir Elie Wiesel. L'ayant vu à la télévision, elle lui écrit une lettre, à laquelle il répond en laissant un message dans sa boîte vocale. Pour elle, Elie Wiesel, c'est celui qui "a tant aimé le monde qu'il a pris le temps d'y être."

Mes jours sont vos heures est avant tout un hymne à la vie, aux êtres qui font face à la vie avec courage. Ce courage, Elie Wiesel l'a manifesté au plus haut degré. Et Geneviève Robitaille en fait preuve aussi. En acceptant sa situation difficile et en se consacrant à la vie intérieure et à la création littéraire, elle vit ce mot de Malraux: "l'art est un anti-destin." Ce livre intimiste est à la fois lyrique et émouvant; en le lisant, force nous est de saluer le courage de Geneviève Robitaille.

Alors que le passé aide l'auteure-narratrice de *Mes jours sont vos heures* à accepter le présent, dans *Rouge, mère et fils* Suzanne Jacob met en scène un couple mère-fils paralysé par le passé au point de ne pouvoir vivre au présent. La mère, Delphine, est artiste et professeure d'immersion; son fils, Luc, 27 ans, est en train de rédiger sa thèse de doctorat. Au niveau événementiel, peu de choses se produisent: le retour au pays de Lenny, le "frère" de Luc, qui meurt peu après; le dîner pour célébrer les cinquante ans de son père, Félix; la rencontre avec le Trickster, jeune homme blessé par ses souvenirs du passé, lui aussi, et qui a recours au vol pour survivre. Ce qui constitue la vraie trame narrative du roman, ce sont les histoires entrelacées de la mère et du fils.

Luc est un jeune homme en quête de son identité: pour son père, Luc a la même obéissance sans muscle que son grand-père; le voisin l'appelle "le fils à sa moman". Lui-même voit sa vie comme "un combat de larve contre le cocon qui l'entrave". Hanté par le sentiment d'échec, il interroge son père; il se dispute avec Simon, le dernier amant de sa mère; il déjeune avec Lorne, un autre ancien amant de sa mère; et il tient

tête aux menaces de l'énigmatique Trickster. C'est en cherchant à saisir sa propre identité qu'il bute contre les secrets enfouis dans la mémoire de sa mère. Catherine, l'amie de Delphine, lui suggère que cette dernière aurait tué quelqu'un; Lorne lui révèle que Delphine a avorté de son bébé. Ainsi s'explique la couleur que Delphine prend en horreur, la couleur rouge du sang, synonyme du sentiment de culpabilité qui torture Delphine. Il faudra toute la patience et l'amour de Lorne pour débloquer le souvenir de l'événement qui est à l'origine du drame et pour trouver la clé du mystère.

Autour de ces personnages gravitent d'autres qui, pour être secondaires, ne sont pas dépourvus d'intérêt. Tous trahissent la capacité de l'auteure de créer des personnages pleins de vitalité et de vraisemblance, aux prises avec les dilemmes du monde moderne. Elle sait aussi créer l'ambiance d'un monde où rien n'est stable, où les relations familiales changent et les valeurs d'hier ne servent pas à résoudre les problèmes d'aujourd'hui. Clairement, l'auteure est à l'écoute de cette société en ébullition qu'est le Québec contemporain.

Cependant, il faut reconnaître que le roman *Rouge, mère et fils* n'est pas facile à lire. Les techniques littéraires sont complexes et parfois opaques. Chaque chapitre est focalisé par un personnage différent, les allusions se multiplient, les énigmes laissent les lecteurs perplexes. Mais le jeu en vaut la chandelle, car à travers les questionnements de Delphine et Luc, et leur entourage complexé et souvent angoissé, on retrouve le désarroi du monde contemporain.

Suzanne Jacob est une écrivaine assurée qui sait nous entraîner dans son monde textuel. De son côté, Geneviève Robitaille est une auteure dont la sensibilité et la profondeur ne cessent de nous émouvoir. Mais le dénominateur commun de leurs oeuvres, c'est le rôle de la mémoire, volontaire ou involontaire.

Feminist Critics on Feminist Writers

Caroline Rosenthal

Narrative Deconstructions of Gender in Works by Audrey Thomas, Daphne Marlatt, and Louise Erdrich. Camden House \$90.00

Edward Eden and Dee Goertz, eds.

Carol Shields, Narrative Hunger, and the Possibilities of Fiction. U Toronto P\$30.95

Reviewed by Lothar Hönnighausen

Who is a feminist critic and who is a feminist writer remain the subject of much debate, but both Caroline Rosenthal's study of Audrey Thomas, Daphne Marlatt and Louise Erdrich and the essays on Carol Shields, edited by Edward Eden and Dee Goertz, are proof that feminist criticism, diverse though it may be, has clearly established itself as a major approach to literature. Although Marlatt's feminist commitment is much more intense and radical, Thomas's, Shields's and Erdrich's literary sense of the body—as subject of humorous distortion (Shields and Erdrich) or of ironic wordplay (Thomas)—impacts equally powerfully on the reader.

Drawing on feminist cultural studies theories and offering close readings of Audrey Thomas's *Intertidal Life*, Daphne Marlatt's *Ana Historic*, and Louise Erdrich's tetralogy (*Love Medicine*, *The Bingo Palace*, *The Beet Queen*, and *Tracks*), Caroline Rosenthal shows how these texts “disrupt linguistic and narrative structures not to unearth a *true* female identity . . . , but to bring to the surface a multiplicity of women's identities.”

In studying Thomas's *Intertidal Life* and Daphne Marlatt's *Ana Historic*, her interest is in the narrative aspects of a self that, like gender itself, is tenuously constituted and volatile. Rosenthal is particularly impressive in her subtle and yet succinct analyses of the language games and parodic uses of intertexts that help Thomas, in *Intertidal Life*, to reveal suppressed elements in the

concepts of motherhood and femininity, and enable Marlatt, in *Ana Historic*, to destabilize traditional notions of gender by problematizing instead a lesbian identity as the “monstrous other.” Rosenthal forcefully deconstructs female stereotypes by bringing together different works by authors from diverse backgrounds. She not only draws a nuanced picture of the differences between Audrey Thomas’s ironic *Bildungsroman* and Daphne Marlatt’s lesbian rewriting of the female body, but also juxtaposes these historical metafictional works to the very different tetralogy of the Chippewa-German-American Louise Erdrich. In contrast to the postmodern ruptures of *Intertidal Life* and *Ana Historic*, Erdrich’s four novels seem smoothly realistic until Rosenthal, focusing on the two trickster figures June and Fleur, reveals how the tetralogy is informed by a *narrative tricksterism* that, blending ‘reality’ with the implausibility of magic, destabilizes fixed gender-roles and such Native American stereotypes as the “Vanishing Indian.” Despite Rosenthal’s persuasive reasoning, I have some difficulty appreciating June as trickster-figure: in Fleur the author has a much stronger case. In view of the author’s subtle investigations of puns, parodies, and other linguistic and narrative games, one would have expected her to emphasize more strongly the comic side of the novels. But this is an intelligent and lucid book opening new vistas on three major contemporary writers.

The editors of *Carol Shields, Narrative Hunger, and the Possibilities of Fiction* also reveal in their author—*mutatis mutandis*—a tendency toward narrative dismantling of the unified self and a peculiar feminist fascination with the body—as well as a post-modernist preoccupation with fictional autobiography, narrative ruptures, intertextual connections, and the irony of metafictional games. This volume contains not only nine scholarly essays on Carol Shields, but also opens with a hitherto unpublished

lecture and a sophisticated index, “Narrative Hunger and the Overflowing Cupboard,” by the novelist and concludes with a very competently annotated bibliography by Faye Hammill. Shields gave this lecture in 1996 at her alma mater, Hanover College (Indiana), after she had been awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters. It is not surprising that the editors, Edward Eden and Dee Goertz, and some contributors are faculty members of Hanover College. But there is nothing parochial about this well organized and professional book, offering a wide range of critical views on Shields’s novels from *Small Ceremonies* (1976) to *Larry’s Party* (1997).

Shields’s lecture deals with “narrative hunger” as a basic human need, with the many stories lost because their potential writers are discouraged or illiterate, and with the responsibility of the writer to help readers relate their incomplete selves to a bewildering world. It serves as unifying inspiration for the nine essays which, in their various ways, try to show how Shields’s creative work is a series of attempts to address problems articulated or adumbrated in her Hanover College lecture. Edward Eden and Dee Goertz have arranged the essays in two sections “The ‘Precious Oxygen of Permission’: Shields’s Experiments with Narrative Form” and “To ‘Shorten the Distance between What Is Privately Felt and Universally Known’: Reaching beyond the Word.” The latter deals more with thematics such as autobiography and the body in *The Stone Diaries* (Chiara Briganti), “Deconstructionist Cannibalism” in *Swann* (Kathy Barbour) and motifs such as the maze in *Larry’s Party* (Dee Goertz). The editors have done a fine job arranging the sequence of the essays, for instance, Faye Hammill’s essay on the parodic use of ‘popular romance’ in *The Republic of Love* is followed by Dianne Osland’s study of the ‘Burden of Romance’ and *Jane Eyre* (a major intertext in *The*

Stone Diaries), preparing in turn for the discussion of the problem of fiction/fact—novel/biography/fictional autobiography in Wendy Roy’s “Autobiography as Critical Practice in *The Stone Diaries*” and Melissa Pope Eden’s paper on Carol Shields’s biography of Jane Austen. The cross references go beyond polite acknowledgement, to reflect the intense discussion that must have taken place among the contributors. This is a multifaceted and well structured book, that makes a substantial contribution to the study of Carol Shields.

Meeting Places in the Network

Sandra Sabatini

The One with the News. Porcupine’s Quill. \$15.95

Rachel Wyatt

Mona Lisa Smiled a Little. Oolichan. \$40.00

Reviewed by Hilary Turner

“We are all but part of a whole which has its own, its distinct, its other meaning; we are not ourselves, we are crossroads, meeting places, points on a curve, we cannot exist independently for we are nothing but signs, conjunctions, aggregations.” Though this sentence comes from neither of the books reviewed in this article, it neatly summarizes their common feature. The sentence comes in fact from *The Radiant Way* (1987), Margaret Drabble’s meticulous analysis of English society in the Thatcher era. Both the sentence and the novel stand as a pointed rebuttal of the Iron Lady’s famous assertion that there is no society; there are only individuals. Like Drabble, Sandra Sabatini and Rachel Wyatt are deeply interested in the seemingly random connections between the lives of individuals, and in the strange and unpredictable web of cause and effect, action and reaction, that gives our common life structure and meaning.

Every social experience forges a link. The experiences of a lifetime weave a complex pattern with many ramifications. For this reason, both Sabatini and Wyatt have chosen older characters as their focal points. *The One With the News*, a collection of linked stories, places Ambrose McLean at the centre. His agonizing decline into the mental wilderness of Alzheimer’s exerts a ripple effect upon all whose lives have touched his. In *Mona Lisa Smiled a Little*, a loosely constructed novel, parts of which work well as short stories, the centre of consciousness is Almeida Kerwell. A woman of many experiences, she leaves her husband of forty years because of his curious obsession with carving likenesses of her as she used to be. As Almeida reorganizes her memories, and begins to graft a new network onto what remains of the old, she comes to understand that Joe’s obsession is merely the fashion in which he too is coping with the passage of time and the loss of youth.

As a disease that is “made of tangles” Alzheimer’s is the perfect metaphor for the social intricacies that are the subject of *The One With the News*. While the dementia floor of the Health Centre is not precisely the arena in which one would choose to extend one’s social reach, it is as revealing a microcosm as any literary Ship of Fools. Likewise, the loss of memory that is the most prominent symptom of Alzheimer’s makes an effective device for tracing the connections between the lives that intersect in this work. As Ambrose forgets—not merely that tea cannot be made in the toaster oven, but who he is and what he believes—his wife and daughters are compelled painfully to remember. The very absence, in one mind, of those attachments that create families and communities and classes underlines their collective importance. Finally, the hereditary character of the disease emphasizes that the network is not only spatial but chronological. So concerned is Ambrose’s daughter Alice to

arrest the unspooling of the disease down the generations that she undergoes voluntary sterilization.

At the same time, while Alzheimer's is certainly a compelling symbol for Sabatini, it is also a material reality. The slow death of the partnership of Iris Murdoch and John Bayley is invoked in the final story in counterpoint to the decline of Ambrose's marriage to Peggy. Almost as painful a reminder of the destructive effects of the disease, and perhaps the most brilliant and understated example of perspective in this book, is "Collecting," the story of Stephen, the McLean's paper-boy, who is brutally rebuffed, without explanation, by the man who had once been his favourite customer.

Without quite so powerful a controlling metaphor to sustain it, *Mona Lisa Smiled a Little* must rely more heavily on the inner life of its central character and on her desire to make sense of the threads that comprise her history. Almeida, who figured in Wyatt's earlier work *The Day Marlene Dietrich Died* (1996), is a complex and gregarious personality awkwardly perched between middle and old age. Haunted by ghosts from the past—a sister disfigured in childhood by a shooting accident, an uncle who is probably her natural father, and the happier, more confident woman she was when first married—Almeida sifts through bits and pieces of the past to rebuild her life. Wyatt does not underestimate the difficulty (perhaps the futility) of the task, stressing fragmentation rather than unity throughout. Some of the fragments are weirdly comic: a flight attendant goes berserk, throwing peanuts and cookies to the passengers as if they were seals, shouting "Catch, you bastards, catch!"; mouths fall open in disbelief to form "the shapes of all five vowels;" a young woman brains her abusive husband with a pot of ratatouille; some of the sculpted heads of Almeida, in a fit of economy, are made into a birdhouse. But most of the incidents, though rendered

with a light touch, are among the nastier darts that fate can hurl. One daughter is unhappily married; the other is killed in Rwanda. Almeida's sister takes a cruel, belated revenge. A lifelong friend moves away. Somehow, the threads remain entwined in a discernible pattern.

Though neither of these writers is as politically motivated as Drabble—nor as tortured as she by the class divisions that shape her (rather different) society—both Sabatini and Wyatt are attuned to the general climate of contemporary Canadian experience. In *Mona Lisa*, the grittiness of Toronto in winter is effectively juxtaposed with the landscape paintings of a lonely Chinese calligrapher. More obviously, in the same work, genocide in Rwanda alters lives in Canada. Sabatini, as well, is powerfully aware of the features of class and upbringing that condition what we expect of one another. Though we cannot transcend our limitations, or comprehend the whole intricate network at a glance, both these works convincingly portray the accidental intersections of private lives as the source of whatever meaning we can find in social life.

Reappraisals

Doris Shadbolt

The Seven Journeys of Emily Carr. Douglas & McIntyre \$26.95

Dennis Reid, et al. eds.

Tom Thomson. Art Gallery of Ontario / National Gallery of Canada / Douglas & McIntyre \$65.00

Reviewed by Linda M. Morra

The Seven Journeys of Emily Carr and *Tom Thomson*, the catalogue edited by Dennis Reid that accompanies the traveling retrospective exhibition of Thomson's paintings, both focus on an artist indisputably esteemed as one of the most prominent figures of the English-Canadian modern period of art. Regarded as innovators (Carr

in her style and subject matter, Thomson in his use of colour), these artists have been subject to extensive critical scrutiny, although Carr has received the lion's share of attention because the primary material is more voluminous. Both books make original contributions by incorporating previously unpublished material or applying new methodologies.

Because Thompson rarely wrote letters or other documents, little primary material is available, but the essays gathered in *Tom Thomson* are still remarkable for their fresh insights. The aim, to create "an image of a man more knowing, and more connected to his contemporaries, than we have thus far believed," succeeds because art historians Charles C. Hill, Robert Stacey, and Joan Murray contextualize Thomson's working methods and decisions within broader critical parameters than have been used previously.

Each essay examines a different facet of Thomson's time, career, or life. Andrew Hunter's "Mapping Tom," for example, looks at the artist's approaches to popular myths about "the North" and "untamed nature." Like Allan J. Fletcher's study, "Industrial Algoma and the Myth of the Wilderness," Hunter's essay demonstrates that the "wilderness" to which Thomson was exposed was not pristine, that "the landscape and waterways that [he] navigated were part of a highly controlled space with a significant industrial history." He then maps the various accretions to the mythologizing process after Thomson's death, instigated by members of the Group of Seven and others, and he attempts to disentangle fact from fiction—or, at least, fact from possibility.

The other essays look at Thomson as "applied artist" who "moved between the worlds of fine art and commercial art," as a painter who responded to the "aesthetic prevailing during the period of his . . . first significant engagement with art," namely,

the Arts and Crafts Movement in Toronto and William Morris's ideas about the "despoiling of landscape." The agrarian, urban, industrial, and bush spaces that Thomson inhabited are discussed and the likelihood that, perhaps ironically, his travel to these various spaces was facilitated by modern technology. These are also examinations of his artistic development including his materials and working method. Reproductions of his letters and finely produced colour plates of his sketches and canvases complement the essays.

Shadbolt's book presents a selection of Carr's sketches from the "special cache" of thirteen sketchbooks, now housed at the British Columbia Archives. These are infrequently exhibited, because of their extraordinary fragility. As Shadbolt argues, these works, although not completed artistic objects, are important components of Carr's artistic development. Although only "a fraction of the total number" are reproduced in her book, these sketches are valuable as "an indicator of part of Carr's process of making art and as notes of several significant trips that she made between 1928 and 1930." Specifically, Shadbolt argues that the sketchbooks affirm Carr's accomplishment as a modernist artist and her first-hand observation of the cultures of the west-coast Native people.

The book itself is structured as a series of seven essays that parallel Carr's sketching trips, made between 1927 and 1930, to such places as the Skeena and Naas Rivers and the Queen Charlotte Islands, Nootka and Port Renfrew. The sketchbooks lend themselves to this structure, and are thus grouped "according to the original books they came from." This task was rendered difficult because Carr was lackadaisical in documenting her work and because the books were taken apart when stored to ensure proper conservation. The sketches are ordered in sequence with Carr's sketching but there is no discernible sequence within each trip.

The essays too revitalize the narrative already available on Carr as painter. Although not much is new, Shadbolt makes some intriguing observations. She argues, for example, how the sketchbooks demonstrate that even as Carr was documenting aspects of Native culture, especially the totem poles, she also began to respond to “the various offerings of nature: striking individual trees, dense stands of trees climbing a cliff-side, a rolling line of hills, a pebbled shoreline with a tangle of driftwood.” In other words, Carr was consistent throughout her career: she always painted landscape, or facets of nature, and was intrigued by its details, even when she was fascinated by Native cultural icons. Here as elsewhere, Shadbolt remains the leading authority on Carr.

Subversion by Sound

Sophocles

Electra. Translated by Anne Carson. Oxford
US \$10.95

Reviewed by Chris Jennings

In “The Gender of Sound” an essay from *Glass, Irony and God*, Anne Carson provides a list of the “many female celebrities of classical mythology, literature, and cult [who] make themselves objectionable by the way they use their voice.” Carson’s abbreviated list balances the dangerous erotic persuasions of the Sirens, Helen, or Aphrodite with the hunting “hullabaloo” of Artemis, the Gorgon, and “the Furies whose highpitched and horrendous voices are compared by Aiskhylos to howling dogs or sounds of people being tortured in hell (*Eumenides*).” Based on Carson’s foreword to her translation of Sophocles, *Electra* should make the list. Her defining characteristic is screaming: “Sophocles has invented for her a language of lament that is like listening to an X-ray. *Electra*’s cries are just bones of sound.” In the terms of “The Gender of Sound,” she epitomizes “Woman as that creature

who puts the inside on the outside.”

Screaming is particularly objectionable because “to a patriarchal social order like that of classical Greece, there is something disturbing or abnormal about . . . meaning from inside the body which does not pass through the control point of *logos*, a meaning which is not subject to the mechanism of dissociation that the Greeks called *sophrosyne* or self-control.” This is the power of *Electra*’s screams. They disturb the specific social order she seeks to destroy. The chorus even seems to acknowledge the subversive power of her screaming at one point, saying “Do not make that sound” in response to her cries. Held captive by Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, and unable to avenge Agamemnon alone, *Electra*’s screams are her most physical acts. Because they are sound rather than language, they resist effective translation unless the translator resorts to what Carson calls “some dead phrase like Alas! or Woe is Me!” This is E. F. Watling’s practice in his 1953 Penguin translation. He fills the *kommos* between *Electra* and the Chorus (after the false report of Orestes’s death) with a series of ineffectual ahs and alases. In Carson’s version of the same *kommos*, *Electra*’s screams seem to incarnate the lightning out of darkness that the Chorus apostrophizes.

CHORUS Where are you lightnings of
Zeus!
Where are you scorching Sun!
In these dark pits you leave us
dark!

ELECTRA E E AIAI.

CHORUS Child, why do you cry?

ELECTRA PHEU.

CHORUS Don’t make that sound.

ELECTRA You will break me.
. . .

ELECTRA E E IO.

CHORUS He is a king in the shadows of
souls.

ELECTRA PHEU.

Deaden or elide these screams and you make a key to Electra's character disappear. She refuses to submit her emotion to the rational control of *logos* precisely because she refuses to be folded into the new order. Her screams, like the screams of the Furies (and Sophocles presents Electra as very much like a Fury), will torment with the *sound* of torment.

In his introduction, Michael Shaw emphasizes that *Electra* is about freedom, that "[t]he substantial accomplishment here, is that Argos and the house of Atreus are free"—the first from the rule of the tyrant and usurper Aegisthus and the second from the succession of familial violence and revenge that goes back at least as far as Atreus serving his nephews to their father as stew. Carson's decision not to render the screams as dead phrases captures the way Sophocles turned the conventional portrayal of women as unable to control their voices or emotions to create a heroic woman who will not be silenced by a social order she finds abominable, even though she seems powerless to change it on her own.

A Rhetoric of Its Own

Conny Steenman-Marcusse, ed.

The Rhetoric of Canadian Writing. Rodopi
US \$65.00

Reviewed by Nathalie Cooke

The Rhetoric of Canadian Writing selects papers delivered in October 2000 at a conference hosted by the Association for Canadian Studies in the Netherlands at the University of Leiden and prompted by Conny Steenman-Marcusse's impulse to gain an international audience for discussions of "lesser known" Canadian writers and to share interest in Canadian studies. The book represents a significant contribution to Canadian Studies. However, that contribution—signposting new directions for criticism following a decade of considerable

upheaval in Canadian cultural canons—is neither stated explicitly nor, I suspect, fully realized by Steenman-Marcusse. This is not her fault. After all, how widespread has been the circulation of doubts articulated most recently by Steven Henighan in *When Words Deny the World* when he argues that nothing "memorable" has been written during the 1990s? Always intuitive, Coral Ann Howells here talks of the 1990s as "an especially interesting period for Canada." Implicit in this collection is a related question—what is the form of Canadian critical commentary after a decade of change? The book offers four viable answers, evident in its four critical trajectories—biographical, regional, rhetorical and analytic.

Steenman-Marcusse does not emphasize the very persuasive argument—or rhetoric, to use the book's term—at the heart of her collection. In the introduction, she focuses on points of divergence, rather than of intersection, between the articles. One exception involves the article cluster in which she places her own study of Susan Swan's first novel: a group of articles that challenge the "very rhetoric of Canadianness" (a phrase she never fully qualifies). The various commentaries are organized, presumably, around the sequence of their delivery at the conference. The collection begins with articles derived from the two keynote lectures (by Swan, on the moral conscience as source of rhetoric and by Louise Dupré, outlining the woman-centred and feminist rhetoric of women's writing in Quebec). Next appear two articles on specific subsets of Canadian literature—one on novels set in Quebec City, another on aboriginal writing. After this, articles seem to be organized around a loose chronology of the publication dates of the works discussed. The result is what Steenman-Marcusse rightly calls an "eclectic" collection reflecting an enormous diversity of approach (including literary analysis, theoretical criticism and cultural analysis) and subject

matter (including film, popular song lyrics, celebrity autobiography, poetry and fiction), delivered by a group of scholars representing various academic institutions and cultural organizations from all over the world.

The rhetorical impact of the collection would have been strengthened by reorganizing the articles to reflect those four critical trajectories. A revised collection might open with Swan's meditation on the writer's conscience to introduce a section on biographical contexts. Included here would be Steenman-Marcusse's article on autobiography in Swan's novel, Robert Druce's discussion of Patrick Anderson's life and poetry, as well as an engaging discussion of Stompin' Tom Connors offered by MacLennan and Moffat. The second section might open with Louise Dupré's keynote lecture on the personal and political poetics of French-Canadian women's writing. Other commentaries relevant to a discussion of region include E.F. Dyck's perceptive look at the trickster figure in aboriginal writing, Suzanne James' discussion of the "Indian" in Traill's *Backwoods of Canada*, Eric Miller's look at the role of the picturesque in Elizabeth Simcoe's diaries, Jaap Lintvelt's scrutiny of representations of Quebec City, and Graciela Martinez-Zalce's discussion of filmic representations of urban Montreal.

Monique Dull's close scrutiny of uncanny parallels between *Anne of Green Gables* and Eliza Leslie's *Amelia* (1848) would bridge the previous section (on region) and a third section (on rhetoric). By placing three articles in a specific order—Martin Reinink's "The Rhetoric of Emerging Literatures," Kathleen Venema's "Shifting Rhetorics of Space in English-Canadian Exploration Literature" and Coral Ann Howells' study of Atwood's revisioned sense of nation in her most recent novels—Steenman-Marcusse could develop a position on what she calls the "rhetoric of Canadianness." All three articles push towards the same conclusion:

a heightened sense of the foreign as part of the familiar in recent times, and our consequent need to hear, tell and recover (his)story that renders the foreign more familiar.

The foreign and familiar come together poignantly in Nancy Huston's *The Mark of an Angel* (her own translation of the original, *l'Empreinte de l'ange*) and are underscored in Anna Branach-Kallas's astute explication of the text's thematics. This essay, together with Hans Bak's fine reading of Wayne Johnston's *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams*, would form the fourth and last section of the collection, devoted to close textual analysis. These engaging articles would also prove the value of closer scrutiny of "lesser known" Canadian literature.

Put bluntly, the value of *The Rhetoric of Canadian Writing* is its dissemination of a lively discussion of Canadian literature taking place abroad, one in which Steenman-Marcusse plays an active and pivotal role. Reorganized, this collection might have developed a rhetoric of its own, one that presents and positions an argument about new directions for Canadian writing, rather than just hints at one.

Life-Writing

Verna Thomas

Invisible Shadows: A Black Woman's Life in Nova Scotia. Nimbus Publishing \$17.95

Barbara McClean

Lambsquarters: Scenes from a Handmade Life. Random House \$32.95

Reviewed by Stella Algoo-Baksh

Reminiscent of work by female African Canadian writers such as Carol Talbot, Carrie Best, and Cheryl Foggo, Verna Thomas' *Invisible Shadows: A Black Woman's Life in Nova Scotia* presents a vivid and moving documentation of Thomas's discovery of the "lived history" of black Nova Scotians, in particular of their ascent from lives of slavery, neglect, and exploitation

and of the on-going effects of such experiences on contemporary generations. Thomas's memoir—her personal odyssey—poignantly communicates to the reader the uniqueness and significance of blacks in Nova Scotian society and the social and other deprivations they have experienced in the past and, to a certain extent, still do today. The book, an amalgam of personal experience and oral and official histories, contrasts a romanticised and bucolic past in the Edenic Annapolis Valley with the crippling inhumanity of life in a small urban Nova Scotian community specifically, and in Nova Scotia as a whole.

A Canadian woman of African, Irish and Native descent, Thomas brings to her writing a unique perspective on racism, that of both insider and outsider, a perspective consolidated by the fact that she grew up in the predominantly white community of Mount Denson where she was aware of her colour, though not of racism, but experienced a rude awakening after she married and moved with her husband to Preston. Here she suddenly discovered that “colour had something to do with the way people are treated” and that the “colour bar meant that black people were barred from everything except the barnyard.” As George Elliott Clarke's father (like Verna Thomas, an African Canadian of mixed blood) told Clarke when the latter first encountered racism, “some white-sugar folk don't like brown-sugar folk.”

Written in simple, uncluttered language, which incorporates the homeliness and humour of the oral tradition (e.g., “as sassy as a blue-ass fly,” “backsides”), *Invisible Shadows* foregrounds the history and traditions of black Nova Scotians, recording the “past struggles and successes of our ancestors that helped fashion” the present-day black community. With striking objectivity, however, Thomas notes that, while her life writing has revealed “some shadows from the past and has shed light . . . on the battle

of oppression, racism and neglect which the black community has endured to reach its present stand,” it has also demonstrated to her “the need for ‘self examination’” Apparently unafraid of the controversy such a stance might engender, Thomas espouses a change in focus: the centre should be North America rather than the shores of Africa. She strongly advocates that present generations of black Nova Scotians move on, that they shoulder their “share in the blame” for what blacks have done to one another and that they privilege the “present and future needs” of their communities, rather than “remain at the border between the work of progress and the world of decay reminding others [whites] of the moral and political sins of their forefathers.” Quite importantly, she recommends as well the uprooting of “entrenched jealous hatred” among blacks themselves.

Invisible Shadows, a provocative memoir recording Thomas's daily personal challenges as wife and mother as well as the social and political struggles that have historically generated divisions between blacks and whites and among blacks themselves, is a valuable addition to Canadian history and literature. In many ways, it is a daring exposure of the many obstacles created by both whites and blacks which have stymied the growth of Nova Scotian and Canadian society. Constructively, however, it lights a path to a better future for all.

While Thomas found it necessary to surrender the satisfactions of rural life, Barbara McClean—accompanied by her husband—pursued them with gusto. McClean's *Lambsquarters: Scenes from a Handmade Life* is an account of the quest by the author and her husband “for land, a house, a barn, hill and grass and rocks.” The book is a lyrical paean to pastoral life, describing its joys and sorrows as well as its hardships and rewards. It elaborates, too, on the McCleans' ignorance and discover-

ies, their hopes and frustrations, and their tenacity as a new breed of pioneers following in the footsteps of such notables as Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie, whose “lives course through” their veins “from pre-memory.” The memoir records the McCleans’ intrepid attempt to establish a home of their own.

With a sharp eye for concrete detail, McClean depicts in memorable fashion the “mighty world of eye and ear” which encompassed the newcomers. She records the rhythm of the days, the seasons, and the years. In a collection of moving vignettes, she conveys the excitement of discovering the secrets of the flora and fauna of the environment—the jewel weed, the elderberry, the alfalfa and wild berries which provided the family with magical dyes for their “spun skeins of wool,” wool shorn from sheep they had themselves bought, bred and nurtured. She plunges enthusiastically into the varied challenges of farming—the lambing, shearing and planting seasons and the renovation of their dilapidated house and of a barn that seemed on the verge of toppling over but never did. She delves into such varied subjects as farm tools, plants, weeds, bluebirds, racoons and wolves that threatened the livestock, and turtles “which spoke of time and endlessness and the unknown.”

Lambsquarters certainly does not romanticise farm life, for it highlights demanding experiences confronted by the McCleans. It paints a graphic picture, for instance, of cold winters, sleet, mud, isolation and the trauma of facing still-born lambs or lambs whose mothers had rejected them. Primarily, however, it is a memoir recording the joys of discovery and celebrating the landscape as well as the indomitable human spirit that enables human beings to transcend the most pressing of obstacles. *Lambsquarters* is indeed a book for those with an interest in or love for the land. With well-honed sentences and evocative

language, it denotes the potentially salutary effects of nature on the human being.

Lambsquarters is a fascinating and informative book written with verve and sophistication. It is unfortunate, therefore, that such well-wrought work is marred by certain infelicities of editing and/or printing. Specific sections listed in the table of contents (namely, “School Bus,” “Hay Cutter,” “Bus Box,” “Blue Bird” and “Feasts”) are nonexistent in the text. In their place appear such pieces as “Hero,” “Confrontation,” “Who’s Crazy Now,” “Aftermath,” “Important People,” and “Sabbath Gasbags,” which are unrelated to the main part of the book in theme and content. The occurrence of these exclusions and inclusions is a monumental disservice to an otherwise elegant publication.

The Making of a Quebec Historian

Marcel Trudel

Memoirs of a Less Travelled Road: A Historian's Life. Véhicule Press \$19.95

Reviewed by Louis-Georges Harvey

Born in 1917, Marcel Trudel came of age in the 1930s and was a graduate student in the 1940s, a time when higher education in Quebec was dominated by the Catholic church. He later participated, along with the new generation of historians at the Université de Montréal, in the movement to renovate and secularise the historical profession in Quebec. As a researcher, Trudel published 26 books which transformed our view of New France and early Canadian history, won a number of important prizes, participated in the founding of the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* and helped train a new generation of historians. Drawn originally from a series of taped interviews, Trudel's *Memoir of a Less Travelled Road* retains a conversational tone which may annoy some readers, although all will

marvel at Jane Brierley's translation of this unique and in some ways peculiar work.

The book's rambling first chapter recounts with nostalgia and great warmth the almost folkloric environment which shaped his early childhood, describing a number of expressions, customs, and institutions whose origins lay deep in the past, and thus connected young Marcel to the *Ancien Régime* society established in New France. This world of enchantment contrasts sharply with Trudel's harsh early childhood: poverty and the death of his mother led to the dispersal of his family when he was only five, and Marcel was placed first with relatives before ending up in an orphanage in Trois-Rivières. From there his quest to better himself provides an insight into the social and educational institutions of small-town Quebec in the 1930s, one which highlights the strategies of control and influence exercised by local *notables* and clerical authorities. There is even a cameo appearance by that era's most successful *notable*, Maurice Duplessis, who, just before leaving office in 1939, arranged for Trudel to receive a grant of \$1000 to continue his studies in France.

Unfortunately, Marcel's dreams of the Sorbonne were dashed when war broke out in September of the same year. Through hard work, the encouragement of tough but dedicated teachers, and the patronage of important benefactors, young Marcel finally achieved his dream of attending the Université Laval where he fully intended to pursue a career as a scholar of ancient history. These plans changed when he was recruited to occupy a chair in Canadian history and then duly shipped to Harvard to gain some knowledge of the subject which would dominate his career: the history of Colonial North America and, more precisely, that of New France

While the author's pride in his academic accomplishments is fully justified, his climb into the ranks of Quebec's emerging lay

elite was clearly facilitated by the cultivation of important individuals within the traditional social structure. Trudel admits as much, and traces the roots of his rebellion to his experiences as a researcher faced with parish priests or church archivists who consistently denied him access to critical documents. Situating his rejection of the traditional establishment is critical because Trudel's narrative is structured around a central historical event, the Quiet Revolution. Indeed, the "arrival" or delay in the onset of the Quiet Revolution is a ubiquitous feature of this book, as the epochal change is heralded in one passage, only to be pushed further into the future a few pages later. In this, Trudel's *Memoir* betrays a certain ambiguity which is also reflected in the less personable nature of the thinner chapters covering the period after 1960. Those familiar with québécois historiography will be surprised at the relative absence of information about Trudel's many illustrious colleagues, but then this is primarily a first-person account of a life filled with accomplishments which stretched over a period of momentous change. In the end, the less travelled road mapped in this narrative tells us far more about the life of an exceptional man than it does about the career of one of our greatest historians.

Between Ethics and Politics

M.G. Vassanji

The In-Between World of Vikram Lall. Doubleday
\$35.95

Reviewed by Neil ten Kortenaar

In awarding M.G. Vassanji the 2003 Giller Prize, the jurors recognized the topicality of his latest novel. *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* brings us news of the world, the kind of news that only novels can bring. Vassanji's novel is not just multicultural—

from his rural home on the shores of Lake Ontario, an immigrant looks back on his sometimes disreputable past in a more vivid but also more dangerous homeland—but it is doubly multicultural: the narrator's experience growing up as a Punjabi Hindu in Kenya was already “in-between” before he ever came to Canada. Vikram Lall's grandfather had gone to Kenya during the British Empire to work on the railway; his uncle had participated in the Independence struggle in India; and Lall himself bears witness to the Mau Mau war and the post-independence travails of East Africa. His story thus reminds us of Canada's location in a global story of migration and the mixing of peoples. The novel also expresses the terrible disappointment of the postcolonial African state: Lall is a corrupt businessman, who has been close to Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's first president, who here appears as a character. The parallels to *The Mimic Men* (1967) by V.S. Naipaul, another East Asian from a part of the world far from India, are obvious.

Like Naipaul's Ralph Singh, Lall is caught up in violent events beyond his emotional and psychological capacity to respond to. Lall is, however, a much simpler character than Singh: he has been formed by two experiences, which together have left him hollow and numb. As a member of a racial minority that does not rule, he has always felt that the colonizers and the natives must be more at home in their bodies and in the world than he himself is: “I couldn't help feeling that both Bill and Njoroge were genuine, in their very different ways; only I, who stood in the middle, Vikram Lall, cherished son of an Indian grocer, sounded false to myself, rang hollow like a bad penny.” He is certain that Indians in India must also be more real than he is. Lall has suffered trauma as well: he is unable ever to know love because, when he was eight, he had given his heart to a young white girl who was murdered by the Mau Mau.

The simplicity of the psychology is of a piece with the novel's allegorization of colonial relations. The novel opens with five children, a white brother and sister, an Indian brother and sister, and a Kikuyu boy, whose friendship symbolizes the promise of the nation on the verge of independence. Although the children's friendship is not much described, it is so deep that Lall never overcomes his love for Annie nor his sister Deepa hers for Njoroge, who is also killed but much later, after he and Deepa have bowed to pressure and each married within their own racial communities. (One of the most interesting things about the novel is the way that interracial marriage was possible for the first generation of Indians in Africa but not for their grandchildren: the Masai wife of Lall's grandfather's friend and neighbour now speaks flawless Punjabi and cooks Indian food!).

Using a handful of characters to typify the relations of the races is one of the strategies of the pre-eminent Kenyan novelist Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who is explicitly mentioned. Is there something particular about Kenya that invites such a national allegory? Vassanji's intentions are, however, exactly the opposite of Ngugi's. The bitter fates of his allegorical figures serve to show, somewhat paradoxically, how much the political imagination, by its tendency to allegorization, denies people's humanity. Lall says, “Politics confused me; large abstract ideas bewildered me; and—what was definitely incorrect in newly independent Africa—I had no clear sense of the antagonists, of the right side and the wrong side.”

Lall is currently writing his memoirs, out of a desire to explain himself to Joseph, Njoroge's angry son, who is staying with him, but who never does read the book. We readers are given no reason to distrust his memory or his version of events. He knows himself fully. He was present at all the important scenes in his life, except for

Annie's murder: his mother calls the chronic eavesdropper "the recording angel." His one concern is with the right tone—does he sound too earnest? too self-justifying? how will Joseph judge him?—and the self-doubt is a measure of the humility and decency of the man. Rhetorical questions push the narrative forward and signal to readers the response they should have. Lall inhabits the territory between ethics and politics first mapped out by Graham Greene, but his narrative, in spite of its great ambivalence, is absolutely without irony. In that sense Vikram Lall's narration is not itself "in-between."

Cultural Transmutations

Richard Wagamese

For Joshua: An Ojibway Father Teaches His Son.
Doubleday \$32.95

Heather Hodgson, ed.

The Great Gift of Tears. Coteau \$16.95

J.R. Léveillé

The Setting Lake Sun. Trans. S.E. Stewart.
Signature Editions \$12.95

Reviewed by Albert Braz

The Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz justified coining the neologism transculturation because, he argued, only such a term conveyed "the extremely complex transmutations of culture" he had unveiled in his research. The books under review certainly testify to the degree to which transculturation has manifested itself in Canada. All three works explore not so much the loss of a culture or the transition from one culture to another, the processes Ortiz describes respectively as deculturation and acculturation, but rather the manner in which cultures constantly adjust to new ways of being and seeing.

As its title suggests, *For Joshua* is Wagamese's open letter to his son. Because of his drinking, Wagamese loses access to his only child, who is six years old at the time of the writ-

ing. As he confides, alcohol has controlled his life: "I was a drunk and never faced the truth about myself—that I was a drunk. Booze owned me." Yet, instead of simply accepting the finality of his loss, Wagamese decides to try to reach his son through his writing. The memoir is supposed to be nothing less than the author's way of performing his traditional Anishinabe paternal duty of introducing his child to the world.

The dominant themes in *For Joshua* will not come as a surprise to anyone familiar with Wagamese's previous two novels. Like *Keeper' n Me* (1994) and *A Quality of Light* (1997), the memoir explores the negative impact that cultural and familial disintegration have had on young Aboriginal people and how, after being moved from one foster home after another, they try to fill the void in their lives by (re)embracing Native spirituality. Wagamese tells us early in the text that the problems he faced as a youngster were directly linked to the fact that he had "no idea where he belonged in the world." This dislocation produces a severe crisis of identity because, a wise old man tells him, "To *belong* is to feel right. It's a place where *everything* fits." In the current work, Wagamese is even more forceful than usual in his insistence that the solution to whatever ails First Nations lies in a return to traditional cultures. He writes to Joshua that the lesson he wishes to impart is that "the journey is the teaching." However, this statement is qualified not only by Wagamese's search for wholeness through a vision quest but also by his repeated assertion of his Aboriginality: "I was created to be *Anishanabe-niini*—Indian man. Thus, I was born Ojibway. I emerged onto Mother Earth as a human being gifted with this identity—male Ojibway human being." His journey to self-knowledge begins when he discerns that all the metamorphoses he has undergone are external; he has only changed his clothes, not his Indianness.

For Wagamese, Aboriginal people are natural ecologists and custodians of the land. Still, he does not envisage Newcomers as perpetual sojourners: "You don't have to be Ojibway, Cree, Haida, Inuk, or Blackfoot to love Canada. You don't have to be Native, because the truth is that everyone born here is native to this land." Judging by their works, the playwrights included in *The Great Gift of Tears* seem to be much less certain about such affinities between Natives and Newcomers. Hodgson's collection comprises four plays by three Saskatchewan Native writers: Floyd Favel (who contributes two works), Deanne Kasokeo and Bruce Sinclair. The most impressive of the plays is Favel's *Governor of the Dew: A Memorial to Nostalgia and Love*. Less than twenty pages long, it is a fable about the pernicious effect of cultural contact. Based on a Cree legend, the play enacts a tale about a Beaver who falls in love with a beautiful woman. Despite the opposition to their union by their nations, the couple marries and the woman goes to live with Beaver. When she becomes ill with a sickness for which the Beavers "have no cure," she returns to her people. However, it is too late. The Beavers have become infected with whatever virus the woman carried and, by the end, only the protagonist survives the cataclysm. As he relates: "I recovered, but my family did not. The snows melted; / I buried all of my loved ones, then all of my tribe. / ALL OF MY TRIBE!" So catastrophic has been the contact between the two cultures that the valiant (and now remorse-ridden) Beaver ultimately becomes the governor of his people's bones, the Governor of the Dew.

The other plays deal with more contemporary issues. Favel's *All My Relatives* probes the cultural transformations undergone by Aboriginal people as they move from life in the bush to the reserve and then to the city. One of the inescapable consequences of urbanization seems to be

the loss of Aboriginal languages, a phenomenon that a female elder interprets as an apocalyptic omen, a "sign of the end." Kasokeo's *Antigone* is an updated version of Sophocles's play. Set on a reserve, it focuses primarily on the political conflict between the band's corrupt leaders and their traditionalist opposition. Sinclair's *Mary of Patuanak* gently parodies the story of the Virgin Mary as it dramatizes a young Dene woman's quest for emotional wholeness by combining Christian, Dene, and Cree spiritualities. None of these plays, though, has the impact of *The Governor of the Dew*. In *Antigone*, Kasokeo begins to broach the culture of dependency that characterizes reserve life, in which people rely on the government to replace an item as basic as a toilet. But almost as soon as she raises the matter, she drops it. Similarly, Sinclair states that when he was growing up in northern Saskatchewan, he "became aware of the discrimination against the Dene [like his protagonist] by the Cree and the Métis of the area." However, he does not explore the subject to any degree.

J.R. Léveillé's *The Setting Sun Lake* is about cultural contact, but of a slightly different kind; not between Aboriginal people and Europeans, but between a young Métis woman and an older Japanese poet. Narrated by an aspiring architect named Angèle, the novella documents her encounter with the somewhat mysterious Ueno Takami, a dalliance that takes place in Winnipeg and at Setting Sun Lake in northern Manitoba. In addition to its proclivity to attributing people's behaviour to their ethnonational background, the central problem with Léveillé's work is that it is hard to fathom why Angèle is so captivated by Ueno. His observations certainly seem less profound than the text suggests: "What a wonderful surprise," said Ueno. "Frank told me there would be a visitor today, but I never imagined . . . You look good with your hair in a ponytail. And I

like your shoes.” Léveillé’s book, which was first published in 2001 as *Le soleil du lac qui se couche* and is beautifully rendered into English by S.E. Stewart, is less than 100 pages long. Its slightness resides not only in its length.

Mennonite Masterpiece

Rudy Wiebe

Sweeter Than All the World. Knopf \$35.95

Reviewed by Barbara Pell

Rudy Wiebe, one of Canada’s finest writers, winner of two Governor General’s Awards for Fiction, has returned to his Mennonite roots to write his best novel so far: the epic story of a marginalized people, persecuted over five centuries and four continents, courageously maintaining their faith in God, and witnessing the power of “enduring” family love.

For the contemporary protagonist, Adam Wiebe, born on an isolated Alberta homestead in 1935, “everything spoke, and it spoke Lowgerman.” But Adam learns English, leaves his Mennonite community and faith behind, and becomes a wealthy doctor. When his casual affairs destroy his marriage and cause the disappearance of his twenty-five-year old daughter, Adam becomes obsessed with discovering his ancestral history, seeking in the stories of Mennonite suffering and faithfulness the meaning and integrity he has lost.

In ten chapters interspersed with Adam’s contemporary pilgrimage, Wiebe depicts the epic trials of a religious minority driven from Flanders and Friesland to Prussia and Russia, then to Asia, South America, and (if fortunate) Canada. In roughly chronological order the novel presents horrific first-person narratives of suffering, most often from a female perspective: the sixteenth-century women Weynken Wybe and Maeyken Wens, with silencing screws on their tongues, burned at the stake for their Anabaptist

beliefs; the nineteenth-century Anna Wiebe, sacrificially serving her family on the brutal trek to the Russian steppes to save her brothers from Prussian Army conscription; the ninety-year-old Katarina Loewen Wiebe, in 1941 recounting all of her family dead in a lifetime of Ukrainian wars and ghettos; and, most terribly, Elizabeth Katarina Wiebe’s story of the rape and murder of nurses caught in East Prussia in 1945 when the advancing Red Army took its revenge. The men’s tales are more political and indicate their relative power in a patriarchal culture even under persecution: Enoch Seeman, exiled by his own church’s narrow legalism, who finds success as a portrait painter in London; and—framing the novel—the story of the earlier, archetypal Adam Wiebe (Wybe Adams van Harlingen 1584? –1652) whose engineering inventions saved the city of Danzig and earned him, if not equal citizenship, at least a comfortable life and future hope for later Wiebes.

In his prosperous present, the new Adam Wiebe has to repossess his past, translating his historical voyeurism (symbolised by his obsession with *The Bloody Theatre or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians*, 1660) into personal commitment and family love. He finally does this at his sister’s funeral, making himself vulnerable when he confesses her love, forgives his brother, and begs his wife for absolution. At the end of the novel he buys his parents’ homestead, shares his family history with his son, and reunites his “family” with his returned daughter. They embrace in a circle, “Trying to feel every bone in every individual body, and feeling at last their hearts beat the conviction of their enduring love.”

The theological themes of the novel go beyond the power of human love. They explore the complex and irresolvable connections between sin, suffering, grace, and (Wiebe quotes Graham Greene) “the appalling strangeness of the mercy of God,” with biblical archetypes of the first and

second Adam and the story of Cain and Abel. Wiebe also connects Adam's pilgrimages to European shrines with his arctic expeditions with aboriginal friends; in Chapter 4, a Dogrib elder foreshadows Adam's final lesson: "to live as good a life as the Creator has given us, live it until we die." The title, echoing the old Mennonite hymn, expresses the essence of Wiebe's theme, and the source of love:

Christ will me His aid afford
 Never to fall, never to fall . . .
 Sweeter than all the world to me . . .
 Sweeter than all, sweeter than all.

There are two potential problems, however, with this novel. First, there is an enormous cast of characters over five centuries, most of them named Wiebe or Loewen (even Adam's wife, Susannah Lyons, turns out to be a closet Loewen). But it is not necessary to work out all the genealogical intricacies; the point is (as any Mennonite will tell you) they are all related. The second difficulty is the graphic—but not exploitative—depiction of human brutality and suffering. One answer, of course, is that such brutality is known and experienced by most of the world. The other is that this novel is an embodied argument for Mennonite pacifism. Wiebe has written his finest, most mature work yet.

The Road Home

Tim Wynveen

Balloon. Key Porter \$24.95

Sweeter Life. Random House \$34.95

Reviewed by Christine Lorre

In "The Road Home," an essay collected in Camille R. La Bossière's *Context North America*, Russell Brown argues that the linked themes of road and home recur differently in American and Canadian fiction: in contrast with American stories of "the land of the open road," Canadian works of

fiction often come to "an ending that affirms the domestic world over the world of adventure." Brown also observes that home is generally synonymous with a family that has no idyllic quality: in most cases, it is not an idealized unit, but a re-formed family. Although they are set a few decades apart and in different social worlds, Tim Wynveen's second and third novels, *Balloon* and *Sweeter Life*, are both narratives of finding one's way home—in or near Toronto—to a re-defined family. In the process, the protagonists undergo or resist transformation, and end up wiser than they were.

Balloon spans a year in the life of Charles Parker Martingale, a successful Toronto-based computer programmer and businessman, who enjoys stable, happy relationships both with his partner, Mersea, and old friends, who are also business associates. Not much in his life seems to hold true anymore: "The heart of his world—and surely he could give that name to Mersea—had slipped away so easily, allowing a chaos of characters and calamities to race into that vacuum. How could he even hope to organize his thoughts again, let alone his life?" Parker's healthy, perfect, measured life contrasts with his father's passionate temper and past lifestyle as a musician on the road with the Duke Kenny orchestra. On the first anniversary of his mother's death, during a ritual trip to the island where her ashes were scattered, Parker is told by his father of his intention to remarry. Olivia, his bride-to-be, is none other than the mother of Parker's illegitimate half-brother, born shortly before Parker, who had always thought himself an only child. At the same time, Parker's relationship with Mersea seems to have gone stale, and he is drawn to Laurel, a young woman who works at the local doughnut joint. You might call it a mid-life crisis.

Parker's mood is meditative: he is often found questioning his life, or taking trips "down memory lane." The balloon of the

book's title is an encapsulating metaphor standing for Parker's life in general, which at middle age is fully inflated and gone adrift. Wynveen uses the motif heavy-handedly: it also stands for Parker's desire for Laurel (for whom he is full of longing, "like a balloon fully inflated") or his physical condition ("the mysterious malady that ballooned inside him"). The analogies reflecting Parker's quest for order hold no surprise: he finds echoes of his malaise in his country—the government seems unable to keep it from falling apart—and even, in a sort of millennial angst, the universe. He is a lonely figure, and it is never long "before his inner voice [rises] up to join him in conversation." He is generally better at inner monologue than conversation with others: you read twice in the space of a single page that Parker remained "in awkward silence" in the company of Laurel. Altogether, despite his sensitivity, Parker remains a hesitating, slightly clichéd questing male.

In *Sweeter Life*, Wynveen develops a more complex plot and cast of characters whose lives are intertwined but whose destinies and trains of thought are followed individually. After a childhood of hardships, Isabelle, Hank, and Cyrus Owen lose their parents in a car accident on the day Hank commits manslaughter. They are adopted by their uncle and aunt, Clarence and Ruby Mitchell, who live on a farm, Orchard Knoll, in Wilbury, where Clarence tends apple trees. Over the years, Isabelle's marriage breaks up and she turns into a ruthless and thriving real-estate dealer in her home town; Hank is crippled and wheelchair-bound after a fight in prison. As for Cyrus, he leaves home and his girlfriend, Janice Young, for life on the road as a guitarist in a band, the Jimmy Waters Revival. He reconstitutes a family for himself with the members of the band around the father figure of Ronnie Conger, whose Revival functions first as a "healing machine," giv-

ing its various members a chance to rebuild their lives and accomplish a kind of rebirth. They achieve some success as a band when they play in the United States, but when a tour of the UK is planned, Cyrus leaves his musical family, preferring to stay behind with his lover and thinking, wrongly, that he can pursue a career of his own in Canada. Years later, an attempt by Ronnie to restart Cyrus's career almost succeeds, but Cyrus's hand is harmed beyond recovery. He is left with little except the feeling of having betrayed his real family, the people of Wilbury, during all those years spent away, pursuing selfish dreams of stardom. Meanwhile, Janice has become a talented sculptor. She is articulate about her art, declaring to a journalist about one of her sculptures, "Hollow Men": "Nameless, faceless, [the hollow men] carry inside them a fractured history, an archeological jumble out of which they must piece together a personal narrative. To know who they are, they must first puzzle out who they were. . . . Only art can tell them the whole truth." *Sweeter Life* is largely about the healing potential of art and explores the connections between art, faith, and ordinary life. These connections are epitomized in the epiphanic image of Ruby listening to the organ in church, reflecting on her former daily life with Clarence at Orchard Knoll. In the simple beauty of its dailiness, the farm emerges as a sort of unidealized, earthly paradise recreated after the Owens have encountered various hardships. The plot finds its resolution in home, as do the characters' wanderings, physical and mental. Isabelle, Hank, Cyrus, and Janice all end up in Wilbury, where eventually they seem able to come to terms with the difficult art of life.



George Elliott Clarke's Othello

Diana Brydon

"After Howlin' Will Shakespeare, Blind Jack Milton, and Missouri Tom Eliot, I'm just one more dreamer to hoist a guitar and strum Sixhiboux Delta Blues. Oh yes" (Clarke 1990: 53)

Although "Howlin' Will Shakespeare" leads Clarke's list of precursor-dreamers and bluesmen, he is far from alone. Some might think it perverse to single Shakespeare out from among the crowds of famous writers who jam Clarke's work.¹ Indeed, my first reaction on reading *Whylah Falls* was to imagine Clarke as a PhD student in English literature who had spent far too much time cramming for comprehensives and drunk far too much coffee in the process. That effect, the anxiety of influence that haunts modernism and postcolonialism in different but related ways, emerges as one note within the polyphonic structure of the whole, but it is often drowned out by the exuberance and inventiveness of Clarke's play with the different traditions that he has inherited. Published interpretations of *Whylah Falls* have paid little attention to the Shakespearean intertext as such, preferring to focus on elements of the poem's formal constitution or its thematic engagements with Nova Scotian place and history. Ultimately, I do not see the "anxiety of influence" strongly marking Clarke's aesthetic.² Far more powerful is Clarke's desire to write his people and his place into his-

torical memory, through creating a literature that proclaims itself as conscious mythology. The urgency of this task is palpable: "I feel I am constantly writing against our erasure, and yet the erasure continues" (Moynagh 73). Part of this task involves writing against "received notions of blackness" (Moynagh 75). Some of the most powerful of these are articulated in Shakespeare's *Othello*. But another part of that erasure is the forgetting of what Clarke sees as an important fact: "African-Canadian literature has always been international" ("Eyeing" 1997: xv).

In *Whylah Falls*, one might easily conclude that the citations of other writers drown out the sole note signalled by the naming of a single character "Othello." Most articles on the text barely discuss it. Yet I will argue that this naming and the story of Othello Clemence lie at the heart of this book and its later transformation into drama. In attending to the function of invoking *Othello* in George Elliott Clarke's *Whylah Falls*, I am acutely aware of Chris Bongie's doubled set of warnings: against "spasms of high seriousness" and against yielding to postcolonial anxieties about popularity and value, without investigating their fraught relations to the canon and to questions about the role of art in community. Clarke himself addresses these issues in interviews, suggesting that his work exists "in two different modes": the "print-oriented" and the "speech-oriented" but that he tries to mesh the two to reach a wider audience (Foster and Ruprai 20),

thereby satisfying Canadians' unfulfilled desire for "some kind of public speech that has true resonance" (Ibid.15).

How do Clarke's invocations of Shakespeare's Othello create such speech? What do they reveal about the local uses of Shakespeare in creating communal identities under contemporary conditions? Where does Canada fit within the international dialogue now developing between Shakespeare studies and postcolonial studies?³ For the critic working on Canadian dialogues with black Atlantic traditions, further questions emerge. How does one talk about belonging in a multicultural nation and within contexts of diaspora, which may homogenize more than differentiate different origins and trajectories of movement? George Elliott Clarke, Dionne Brand, Marlene Nourbese Philip and Rinaldo Walcott, among others, have been influential in bringing such questions to a national audience, and another generation of scholars is now emerging with an expanded set of questions.⁴

At an earlier stage in postcolonial criticism, during the 1980s, critics were tempted by Salman Rushdie's notion of a postcolonial "writing back" against the monuments of empire. That model is now complicated by Babelian investigations of the ambivalences and complicities of such citations, investigations particularly appropriate to the fraught contexts of settler-invader societies, an insight that Clarke makes much of in all his work. The "ghosts of slavery" (Sharpe) further challenge the discourse of civility embraced by Canadian settler nationalism, but in Clarke's analysis, less to discredit it than to hold it to its promise.

Language is Clarke's site for negotiating these realignments. Although Clarke readily embraces the postcolonial model of "answering back," he incorporates it within a "polyphonic poetics" (Fiorentino) which mixes Shakespearean echoes with those of various black cultural traditions. About his

use of Elizabethan language in *Beatrice Chancy*, Clarke says: "I don't apologize for using Elizabethan language in a work about Canadian slavery . . . I see the flavour as absolutely appropriate. I felt compelled to go there. I am answering back to Shakespeare and to Dante and to Shelley" (Nurse 30). But what does it mean to answer back to Shakespeare in *Whylah Falls*?

For Clarke, it seems partly a matter of self-validation, partly homage and partly a way of writing his own place into the great tradition, but on his own terms. As Ted Davidson suggests, he writes himself into the lineage of "father-poets" (206) who form the canon, and he writes "against the threat of white cancellation" (267), the fate of every poet confronted by a blank page but one with special resonance for the black poet who sees white cancellation as manifesting a potent but sometimes silent racism. *Whylah Falls*' form of answering back, then, recovers Canada's active moments of white cancellation and the voices it silences, redefining home and exile, the erotics of desire and epithalamium, and weaving them into a narrative that teaches the apparently universal lesson of "How Beauty honeys bitter pain" (152). The death of Clarke's Othello forms the pivotal moment in his text, making erasure visible and delaying, possibly indefinitely, the realization of desire. Michael Bristol's chapter, "Race and the comedy of abjection in *Othello*," can be read in dialogue with Clarke's *Whylah Falls*, to illuminate the Canadian readings of Shakespeare's *Othello* that each author provides. Bristol situates *Othello* within a tradition of great stories that "express the collective bad conscience of our civilization" (175). *Whylah Falls* invokes that collective bad conscience but shifts the terms of address from Shakespeare's implied English audience to a multicultural and contemporary Canadian one. In the process, much of the painful challenge of the original story is softened,

yet echoes remain. Bristol reads *Othello*, less as a tragedy than “as a comedy of abjection that depends on a background of racial hatred and violence” (175–6). One might say the same of *Whylah Falls*. I read *Whylah Falls* as an anti-modern and romantic text in the Canadian Red Tory tradition, celebrating the survival of a beleaguered community in a context of racial hatred and violence, which accuses the state of failing to guarantee its promise of “peace, order and good government” to all its citizens.

In interpreting “*Othello* as a carnivalesque text in the Bakhtinian sense” (179), Bristol suggests that the play may be read “as the carnivalesque derangement of marriage as a social institution and of the contradictory role of heterosexual desire within that institution.” I find this focus on the institution of marriage a helpful complement to Dorothy Wells’s examination of Clarke’s revisions of Petrarchan and Elizabethan sonnets and of pastoral poetic conventions in *Whylah Falls*. Clarke describes the derangement of marriage, most notably through the tragic figure of Saul Clemence and his incestuous affair with his stepdaughter Missy, which contributes to Shelley’s distrust of men and the language of love, but as Maureen Moynagh argues, Clarke’s love story appears to have a happy ending, with X and Shelley together once more (2000: 217). Clarke celebrates heterosexual desire and particularly the beauty of black women as the object of black men’s desire through the twinned courtships of X and Shelley and Pablo and Amarantha, and through the brief affair that X enjoys with Selah before returning to Shelley. Yet there is also a thread of homosocial desire linking the poem’s three male poets, X, Pablo and Othello, forming a strong undercurrent to the poem’s explicit courtship story. One might argue that the violated body of the dead Othello forms the true heart of this tale.

Clarke’s story is set during an economic

depression. He pays close attention to the material realities of his characters’ lives. In speculating about how a contemporary audience might have received Shakespeare’s play, Bristol suggests that *Othello* may have functioned “as an adaptation of the social custom, common throughout early modern Europe, of charivari” (180). This same social custom, still practiced in rural communities in Canada today, is immortalized in such Canadian texts as Susanna Moodie’s *Roughing it in the Bush* and Lawrence Hill’s *Any Known Blood*, where it is explicitly employed to police interracial marriages. Through invoking charivari, and Moodie’s account of it, Bristol reads *Othello* as staging “a ceremony of broken nuptials” and “the unmasking of a transgressive marriage” (180). Clarke’s writing back to *Othello* may be clearest here.

Although charivari is not explicitly evoked in *Whylah Falls*, I think it haunts the text’s delicate negotiation of communal taboo, reinforced by its images echoing scenes of lynchings. But by redefining Othello’s character, the circumstances of his betrayal and especially of his death, and by placing his murder in the middle of the narrative rather than at the end, Clarke succeeds in enabling *Whylah Falls*, that “ebon Muse/Whose Word is Liberty” (72), to triumph over the “chronic violence of the envy-jealousy system,” and of its racist permutations, as invoked by Shakespeare’s play.

Like Djanet Sears in *Harlem Duet*, Clarke takes on Shakespeare’s Othello “to exorcise this ghost” but while her “rhapsodic blues tragedy” (14) tells the absent black woman’s story, Clarke’s text takes up the challenge of redefining and rearticulating the black man’s desire, through the living voices of X, Pablo (who is described as “Moorish” [93] and more easily fits the role of Shakespeare’s “extravagant and wheeling stranger” [I.i.135]) and Othello, and through the post-death testimony of Othello and those affected by his murder. Indeed, Clarke’s O is described

as “muscled Othello, Shakespeare of song” (83)—clearly a figure of desire. If Shakespeare’s *Othello* concerns “a black man isolated from other black people” (148), as Ania Loomba, among others, argues, then Clarke’s rewriting reinstates Othello among his people. Relations within the black community become more important to Clarke than relations between black and white, as Clarke takes the actual story of the unpunished murder of a black man and embeds it within the broader dynamics of the Whylah Falls community and its larger black Atlantic connections, explicitly placing this rural Nova Scotian community within circuits connecting black experience in Paris, Cuba and Birmingham, Alabama, throughout the twentieth century.

This global context is highlighted even more explicitly in the play, which begins in Paris, with the chorus and then Pablo remembering “how Othello got killed and how his killer got away” (223) and with X explicitly addressing the black man’s dilemma: “My father’s life insurance is freedom, / But my name’s still ‘Coloured,’ ‘black,’ ‘nigger,’ / So, wincing, I crawl, this barbed globe of pain” (226). Othello too speaks lines in the play that more clearly reference Shakespeare’s imagery:

Mary had a little sheep
 She took it to bed with her to sleep.
 The sheep turned out to be a ram,
 And Mary had a little lamb (227).

A defiant reshaping of Iago’s notorious speech to Desdemona’s father in Shakespeare’s *Othello*, “Even now, now, very now, an old black ram/Is tuppung your white ewe” (I.i. 88–89), the rewritten nursery rhyme “signifies,” in troping black tradition on this persistent stereotype, as does the bluesy “King Bee Blues” (but without explicitly invoking *Othello*) in the poem.⁵ The play reshapes the poem’s material for dramatic focus, so that, perhaps especially when read in light of the play, the poem’s

engagement with *Othello* becomes clear.

Bristol notes that “Something real is at stake for the audience of *Othello*, even though the actual performance of the play depends on recognition of its status as fiction” (199). Clarke too addresses the real through foregrounding the performative qualities of language. Bristol’s analysis helps make sense of the ways in which *Whylah Falls* weaves the story of the murder of Othello Clemence into the other plot strands, centred on heterosexual desire, that bind this community, threaten its survival and link it to the natural and human worlds. When seen in this light, all the variants of desire and the ways in which they shape community and isolate from it, become frames built around the murder of Clarke’s Othello and the failure of the authorities to punish the murderer. The racial identity of the murderer may be less important (although his whiteness is heavily stressed in both poem and script) than the failure of the justice system to punish the crime. (Clarke is reported to have changed the identity of the murderer from a white man to a black man, for financial reasons, in a Halifax stage production, declaring “My poetry is about what beautiful black people have done, not what awful white people have done to us” [Workman C9].) Nonetheless, Clarke’s “Preface” to the poem invokes a setting of oppression and struggle, describing Whylah Falls as “a snowy, northern Mississippi, with blood spattered, not on magnolias, but on pines, lilacs, and wild roses.” His “Admission” declares: “These poems are fact presented as fiction. There was no other way to tell the truth save to disguise it as story.” A memorial to Graham Cromwell, murdered in Weymouth Falls, follows, suggesting the centrality of the unpunished murder to the poem. Cromwell’s unavenged death, Clarke implies, can only be told through Shakespeare’s *Othello* and the exorcism of its legacy. The success of this exorcism may explain the poem’s near

victory in the 2003 CBC Radio Canada Reads competition. Clarke's story, like Shakespeare's, expresses "the collective bad conscience of our civilization," disguising truth as story, by resituating the murder of Graham Cromwell within an earlier time period (the 1930s) and reimagining it through the lens of Shakespeare's *Othello*. Clarke was profoundly affected by the failure of the justice system to convict Cromwell's killer. His article describing the case, "The Birmingham of Nova Scotia: The Weymouth Falls Justice Committee vs the Attorney General of Nova Scotia," declares: "Consider this a blues cry, a Black witness, for Justice" (17). The article begins and ends with lines of poetry from *Whylah Falls*, suggesting the intimate twinning of the two. Yet the real that is at stake in this poem depends on its recognition as performative fiction.

In *Whylah Falls*, the renaming of the murder victim as Othello, invokes broader western cultural traditions beyond the political events played out in the southern United States and echoed in Nova Scotia. (Although it is interesting to note that W.E.B. DuBois's maternal grandfather was also named Othello [Johnson 143].) Whereas certain commentators locate the tragedy of Shakespeare's Othello in his desire for whiteness until he actually begins to forget that he is black (Johnson 155), Clarke's poem is suffused with extravagantly articulated expressions of a desire for blackness. Othello Clemence is comfortable in his blackness, belligerent in his defence of his sister Amarantha's honour, and an artist who expresses himself through music. In Clarke's story, the threat of a black man having sex with a white woman becomes merely a vicious lie, but a lie powerful enough to prompt a murder, which Clarke explicitly terms a "martyrdom" (89). (Such imaginings, rumour suggests, infected the popular folk interpretation of Cromwell's murder as well.) The poem's

Iago, the Liberal politician Jack Thomson, maliciously tells S. Scratch Seville that Othello is having an affair with Seville's wife, Angel. In fact, Thomson himself is involved with Angel. He has also been threatened by Othello for approaching Othello's sister, Amarantha, and finds the lie a convenient way to combine revenge with camouflage. The complexities of Shakespeare's Iago are sacrificed here to pit artists against politicians as masters of the word. Thomson's words deal death. The poet's words live. As X claims, "My poems, thrown to the creek, gleam, wriggle, leap" (25). Suffering is transformed into beauty and survival is proclaimed: "Angered by whip and lash of joblessness, maddened by gun and jail of politics, these souls clap hands and sing, 'What did I do/To be so black and blue?'" (126). The echoes of slavery, Yeats's late romanticism,⁶ and blues vernacular combine to "blacken" the English of Clarke's inheritance while suggesting that art transcends politics and social inequities—a comforting conclusion to a troubling performance. My argument has attended to the trouble rather than its transcendence, while noting the tensions between the two.

Clarke's open letter to Derek Walcott states: "I thank you for pioneering a way of blackening English. . . . You cannibalize the Canon and invite your bretheren and sistren to the intoxicating, exhilarating feast" (17). I find this metaphor more appropriate to Clarke's work than to Walcott's, but as a metaphor describing Clarke's art, "cannibalizing the Canon," captures the aggression, the fraught politics, the edgy humour and the exuberant excess of his achievement, turning one of the more potent justifying metaphors for imperial racism back on itself and enabling appropriation, digestion, transformation and elimination to replace direct protest against the injustices of the world. *Whylah Falls*, unlike "those skinny, / Malnourished poems that professors love"

(79), according to Clarke's sceptical Shelley, has gorged its full on the bounty that language provides and spilled it out generously with the shock of the real.

NOTES

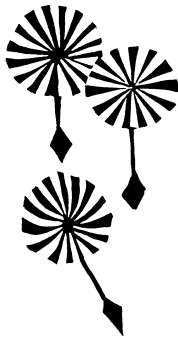
- 1 I am using the 1990 text of *Whydah Falls* for this discussion. References to the 1997 play will be indicated in my text. I am grateful to Jennifer Drouin and Susan Knutson for inviting me to participate in the ACCUTE panel on Shakespearean/Canadian Intertexts at the Winnipeg Congress in May 2004. A lengthier and revised version of the paper is being prepared for the book they are planning based on this session. Comments from participants at this session and from my colleagues, M.J. Kidnie and Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi, and the warm openness to dialogue of George Elliott Clarke are also gratefully acknowledged. Jessica Schagerl provided prompt and helpful research assistance, as did Barbara Bruce when I first began this project. Students in my graduate course on "The Black Diaspora," especially Helene Strauss, Heather Snell and Lori Walter, also provided compelling insights.
- 2 Jon Paul Fiorentino identifies this concern as crucial to Clarke's aesthetic.
- 3 Irena Makaryk and I raised these questions in our co-edited collection, *Shakespeare in Canada*, but they are far from resolved.
- 4 Good introductions to this foundational work and that which is following it may be found in Clarke's *Odysseys Home* and in Walcott's *Black Like Who?* as well as in their various edited collections. For a fuller discussion of this aspect of my argument see my article "Black Canadas: Rethinking Canadian and Diasporic Cultural Studies" *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingeleses* 43 November 2001: 101–117.
- 5 See Henry Louis Gates's *The Signifying Monkey* for an explanation of this important tradition.
- 6 Yeats's "Sailing to Byzantium" claims that "An aged man is but a paltry thing, / A tattered coat upon a stick, unless / Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing / For every tatter in its mortal dress" (104). Clarke harnesses the energy of Yeats's poetic resistance to mortality in the service of a historically and racially specific protest against racism, violently shifting the visual image from the "tattered coat upon a stick" to that of a black congregation swaying in the spirit. The final lines of this stanza, "Nor is

there singing school but studying/Monuments of its own magnificence," may be considered a further comment on the ways in which Clarke has made Shakespeare's *Othello*, together with Africadia's other international inheritances, his "singing school."

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Les Lieux de mémoire

Eva-Marie Kröller

In the wake of the publication of Eric Hobsbawm's *The Invention of Tradition* and Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (both 1983), it was *de rigueur* to declare that nations and their ritual were "products of such recent forces as capitalism, bureaucracy, and secular utilitarianism." Lately, however, the tide has shifted toward a greater recognition of "natural, long-standing forms of human attachment" and of the ways in which the "popular classes" can shape public memory. Alan Gordon's *Making Public Pasts: The Contested Terrain of Montreal's Public Memories, 1891–1930* (McGill-Queen's UP) is no exception. Gordon looks at monuments, at the installation of historical plaques, at festivals and parades. In the monuments erected throughout the city anglophone and francophone versions of history stare each other down; the book provides maps to indicate the clustering of sponsorship, event or person commemorated by language group. However, such "contested terrains" also exist within each group. Thus large segments of Montreal's population—the Irish and Italians among them—had little access to public memory, although in the late 1850s a monument was raised to remember the 6,000 Irish who died of "ship fever" on their way to Canada or shortly after landing, and a bust of Dante Alighieri was erected in Lafontaine Park in 1922. Within the francophone group, the memory of the Patriotes was ideologically divisive, and vigorous "sanitation" of the 1837 Rebellion was necessary to craft it into a unifying myth. Literary scholars will find much interesting material in this book, including portraits of such figures as William Douw Lighthall, editor of *Songs of the Great Dominion* (1889). Lighthall emerges as a zealous amateur historian engaged in a large-scale anti-modern project of preservation,

but also as an energetic individual for whom history and municipal business were inseparably intertwined. Mayor of Montreal at the beginning of the century, he was involved in a wide range of boards and organizations dealing with the establishment of parks, libraries and tourism. He studied a prehistoric burial ground in Westmount, knew a great deal about Ramusio's sixteenth-century plan of Hochelaga, furthered biculturalism (albeit with a folkloric French Canada in mind) and was named honorary "Iroquois Chief" in recognition of his work for the federal Indian Department and in appreciation of the historical romances he wrote featuring Native people. Gordon also has a great deal of information on Lafontaine Park, named after Louis-Hyppolite Lafontaine, who was celebrated at the unveiling of his monument in 1930 as instrumental in assisting his ally Robert Baldwin in bringing "responsible government to Canada," but was better remembered by French Canadians for staunchly defending French language and culture in the wake of Lord Durham's infamous Report. Prominently featured in Michel Tremblay's *Les Chroniques du Plateau Mont-Royal*, the Park emerges from Gordon's discussion "as a hallowed national site" where Saint-Jean-Baptiste parades and Corpus Christi processions assembled before wending their way through the neighbourhood and where *plein-air* masses, speeches, and bonfires marked the festivities. Here too, however, a process of sanitation had to ensure the unifying function of the site: graves of British officers originally located at the eastern end of the Park were moved in 1944, and "[t]he removal of these tombs cleansed the park of images inconsistent with official French-Canadian memory." It is ironic that a book which pays such careful attention to Montreal's two language groups has not been proofread more carefully: one of the illustrations depicts the "Dollar des Ormeaux monument" while another shows the "First Patriote's monument."

Work like Gordon's makes for interesting reading alongside the monumental project of *Les Lieux de mémoire*, directed by Pierre Nora, editorial director of Gallimard and *directeur d'études* at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales. Published between 1984 and 1992, *Les Lieux* has inspired similarly encompassing projects in the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Germany, and the United States, and it undertakes to "achieve a close link between a *general* problematic of memory with the *particular* thematic of 'places.'" The idea is to create a national inventory of the *lieux* themselves, but also of the propagandistic uses to which they have been put. The result is painstakingly documented work, drawing on everything from the most "respected" historical sources to such royalist magazines as *Point de vue*, the whole presented in an engaging juxtaposition of archival sobriety and critical tartness. Volume 1 of the University of Chicago Press's translation of *Les Lieux de mémoire*, entitled *Rethinking France*, is devoted to "The State," and covers such topics as "The Center and the Periphery," "From the Boundaries of the State to National Borders," "The King," "Versailles: Functions and Legends" and "Memoirs of Men of State." The titles alone of the first two chapters proclaim their relevance to the Canadian situation, and many of the anecdotes have poignant equivalents in the history of this country. For instance, it is difficult not to think of residential schools when one reads, in Maurice Agulhon's chapter, a section documenting the homogenization of language in France. Agulhon relates that "a child 'guilty' of having uttered a word of dialect in school must keep [a coin or wooden shoe] until he passed it on to another 'guilty' student denounced by him, with punishment reserved for the last student caught at the end of the day, creating an oppressive atmosphere of surveillance and denunciation among the students themselves." In a more positive vein, the

astonishing significance and prestige of the “Dictée des Amériques” to this day has its equivalent in a dictation from 1896 on “La Langue française” which “served a double purpose [as] both a spelling exercise and the vehicle for a useful message.” The volume is richly illustrated, including some delightfully eccentric images. My favourite is a nineteenth-century graphic chart of French grammar, in which a waterfall of vowels and consonants becomes the source of tributaries, confluences and deltas through which flow verbal tenses, modes, and every other imaginable grammatical category, the whole surrounded by the *mer idéographique* and the islands of *sylepse*, *ellipse*, *pléonasmie* and *inversion*. Anyone wanting to know the origins of the *fleur-de-lys* in Quebec’s flag or the cult of Saint-Louis among nineteenth-century ultramontanists will find abundant material in this book, and Anne-Marie Lecoq’s comments on the mnemonic function of royal pageantry, in her chapter on the “Symbolism of the State,” lend historical perspective to such events as the St.-Jean-Baptiste parade (including her insistence that the complex allegories used in such displays sometimes baffled both ordinary citizens and royal onlookers so that the intended political message was missed). Determined not to be mistaken as royalists, some contributors inject a sharply contemporary note in their reflections. For example, Hélène Himmelfarb’s prodigiously documented study of Versailles compares the “annual return [of the court] from Fontainebleau in the fall” to the students’ “return to school after the building has been completely cleaned and emptied of human smells during the summer vacation” and it mocks American tourists’ mistaken conceptions about Versailles when they ask: “Where did they kill people?”

Although it attends to Gabrielle Roy’s iconic status in both francophone and anglophone literature, Montreal filmmaker Léa Pool’s documentary on the writer,

Gabrielle Roy (distributed by CinéFête and winner of a Gemini Award for Best Documentary in 1998 among other awards), traces a more personal network of memory than either Gordon or Nora’s *équipe*. Roy’s achievement is assessed by biographer François Ricard, scholar Paul Socken and publisher Alain Stanké, but the voices of women provide a counterpoint so strong that the entire film becomes a celebration of Roy’s relationship with her mother, female colleagues, and friends. Fellow authors are also included: speaking from her office at the University of Winnipeg, Carol Shields acknowledges Roy to have been an important model and praises her strong sense of the prairie landscape and communities, her luminous style, and the determination with which she tackled the difficulties of writing at a time when there was little encouragement for women authors. The companionship Roy found among women is poignantly captured in a scene in which the actors playing the young Gabrielle and a friend laughingly recite *Macbeth* alongside John Barrymore’s reading on a gramophone record, creating an idiosyncratic rendition of their own in the process. Likewise, while Ricard repeatedly corrects the facts and interpretations of Roy’s autobiographical writing, the female commentators on Roy’s life and work in turn modify the men’s assessments, sometimes subtly, but sometimes quite extensively so. (As we do not hear the interviewer’s questions, it is not clear whether these modifications are in direct response to what they are told others in the film have said or whether these are simply different answers to the same questions.) For example, while Ricard reads the author’s preoccupation with her mother as an expression of guilt, Carol Shields calls the mother-daughter relationship an inexhaustible source of inspiration. Pool’s lyrical sequence of Roy watching her mother wade into prairie grass (and into her memories) endorses

Shields' interpretation rather than Ricard's and it would be interesting to compare the filmmaker's understanding of Gabrielle Roy with Pool's adaptation, in *Lost and Delirious* (2001), of Susan Swan's novel *The Wives of Bath*, a literary text also preoccupied with female companionship. Some scenes from Roy's life are staged, but there are numerous interviews with people who knew her. Now a well-coiffed matron, one of Roy's students remembers her as a teacher in a 1930s prairie school, while a landlady in Britain tells of the time the writer spent in her house, never suspecting that she too featured in the stories her guest was composing. The most poignant testimony comes from Roy's friend Berthe Simard who—dressed to the nines like all those interviewed in this film—sits in the rocking-chair on her porch, remembering their walks, the flowers they picked together and the “grand silence” that followed Roy's death. The narrative of the film is gently textured with images of railways and rivers to capture the restlessness and purpose in Gabrielle Roy's life. I recommend showing it to a class well prepared by reading some of Roy's fiction and autobiography, and by studying some of the complexities involved in documenting a female author's life. Micheline Cadieux's essay on her work with Léa Pool in researching the film provides useful background material; it may be found in Marie-Andrée Beaudet's collection *Bonheur d'occasion au pluriel* (1999).



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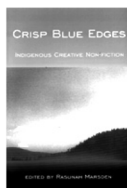


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**Word Jazz 5:
Lorna Goodison Leaves Off Miles Davis**

Kevin McNeilly

Jamaican-born, world-travelling poet Lorna Goodison has taught at the University of Toronto, and her most recent collection *Travelling Mercies* was published in 2001 by McClelland and Stewart (\$16.99, paper). Her lyric invocation “Miles in Berlin” occupies a middle ground between homage to the influential jazz trumpeter Miles Davis and invective. Despite the blunt preposition in the title, it’s hard to position the subject of this poem, as Goodison swirls and destabilizes both historical and geographical recitations. The phrase “Miles in Berlin,” for instance, recalls a recording of a 1964 performance in the German metropolis, significantly one of the first to feature Wayne Shorter with Davis’s quintet, but the poem lists the music “he piped” as “Kind of Blue, Time After Time”—the first, his famous 1959 album (and not the name of any tune), and the second a Cyndi Lauper pop song he covered in 1985, a jump of almost thirty years, involving several major shifts in performance style and aesthetics for Davis. Collapsing these three distinct periods in Davis’s career suggests inattentive or uninformed listening, that the music is just being used for poetic effect and that the actual textures and vicissitudes of Goodison’s source material aren’t especially relevant. (In 1991, in the final months of his life, Davis did once revisit his early work with a re-assembled group of sidemen, but that

concert took place in Paris.) Such blurring can be politically problematic, inasmuch as it tends to generalize the complex specifics of class, race and gender in any given Davis performance into the figure of a generic “rudeboy,” who offers at every turn an uncompromised, enlivening black magic. But Davis, in particular, is a figure of multifarious negotiations, and his work is laden with aesthetic and cultural compromises, revisions and tensions: he called what he did, after all, “social music” or “directions in music,” always unsettled and unsettling. If Goodison merely wants another shaman or mage for her work, Miles Davis (if you think about it carefully) is a poor choice. However, I don’t think this is quite what Goodison is up to in this brief text. While she asserts his figural identity with categorical pith—“This was Miles,” period—that declarative is compromised by a series of destabilizing refusals and gestures outward; the voice, for instance, addresses itself not in the first but the second person:

You’re in the aisle seat
every seam leaking
dark light. Granite love
urging you to drink from
the crystal skull
sacrificial bowl.
But your refusal to imbibe
is another rhyme.
This was Miles.
Prince of horn come to charm
you out of yoke and bit. (33)

Charms, spells, potions, invocations: the poem never explains its personal magic, a disclosure reserved for “another rhyme,”

never specified or perhaps even written, but the liquid pressures of Goodison's language, the leaking sibilants that permeate her clipped lines here, suggest a body breaking free of constraint, a voice wanting release or expression.

The "aisle seat" offers a clue as to location in a poem that mixes Berlin wall, Siberian wind, Biblical Egypt (in "Joseph's coat") with a Jamaican lexicon (that rudeboy): you are on a plane, listening to one of the channels of piped-in music, a retrospective maybe of a few famous Miles Davis tracks: you are travelling, temporarily unplaced. What grounds you, what you look to for consistency, for a centred grace, is the exiled and aggressively irresolute sound of Miles Davis's trumpet, the kind of blue notes that never allow themselves to resolve, to close, but remain restless, time after time. Occasioned by Davis's dislocated music, the forced limits of the listener's body, "held hard," finally give way, and "your strained / seams split and let fall / long water, vital heartwash." ("Falling Water," interestingly, is the name of a Gil Evans/Miles Davis collaboration from the late 1960s.) Goodison isn't a poor listener at all. What she wants in this poem is to draw a temporary, shifting map of displacement, of the poetic trajectories and aesthetic strategies that become available "[b]ecause boundaries are in dispute," transmuting what she names the "territorial imperatives" of making—the winging drive to stabilize, colonize, possess, and overwrite—can transmute into forms of "wingless" predation: reiving, squatting, scavenging, pilfering, all the portable, temporary gestures of habitation and use (28). Davis doesn't exactly charm you, in Goodison's poem: a roughed-up vitality surges from within, pushing through the seams and stitchwork—to borrow a metaphor from Stuart Hall—of national, cultural or racial identity; his music calls out life as challenge, as eruption, as rhythm, as alterity. The "travelling mercies"

Goodison's writing seeks, as her poems "row in rough barks / walk foot, or wing // in silver gaulins" (3), are these moments of heartwash, of contingent comfort, of home amid both wilful estrangements and forced middle passages.

As with her double-edged response here to Davis—levelling his contradictions into a coherent identity even as she dwells, poetically, in those instabilities and displacements—the poetry in *Travelling Mercies* often reaches toward creatures of loss, the artists of edges and dissolves, in an effort to clasp, however ephemerally, the vital wash of alterity: Marpessa Dawn's Eurydice; "Mrs. Lot" ossified as "solid eyewater" in an eternal—Orphean?—backward glance; the contemplative alchemy of Thomas Merton; Mary Magdalene, one of "love's substitute nurses"; Marcus Garvey as a prophet betrayed by his own ideals. Her translation of the Brunetto Latini canto from Dante's *Inferno*, in a move that extends the revisionist directions of Robert Lowell's confessional version, has the travelling poet encounter her old "Teacher Brown" in hell, who assures her that she is "a true poet, God-blessed," her vital work envied by "that bad-minded set, those parasitical keepers of our country's gates": "take care," he cautions, "to uproot their grudging ways from your heart" (26). The vocabulary of homing and displacement, of radical grounding and necessary uprootedness, mix in the master's praise; but lest we assume that Goodison is indulging in self-aggrandizement, we are reminded of the master's own sins, not the sexual transgressions of Dante's original but the mistaking of writerly fame for success in life: "Hear what I say, don't cry for me or/ pity me. Read my books, they vindicate me. In my words/ I am alive and am no duppy." Reassurance is undermined by egotism and pretense, and the poem closes with Goodison's Dante reminding herself of Mr. B.'s delusion, seeming like a runner who finishes first but in actuality having "come

in dead last.” Again, the displaced voice, addressing both Goodison and her readers as interlocutors, as that “you,” at once affirms—however dubiously, however pretentiously—a poetic identity at the same time as it destabilizes its own subject position and that of its listeners, its dupes, its unwilling duppies. Goodison neither refuses the deluding affirmations of poetic craft, as the well-turned conceit of her closing lines confirms, nor does she accept its closures at face value. Rather, her poetry homes in on, as her Mr. B. asserts—in reported, second-hand speech no less—a dialectic of going astray and “finding myself” in words.

One last example: her “Crossover Griot” takes as its matter a latter-day bride kidnapping and miscegenation: “The jumpship Irishman/ who took that Guinea girl/ would croon when rum/ anointed his tongue” (74). Both of them sing, he the nationalistic ballads of the late William Butler Yeats (“I am O’Rahilly”), the rough public music of a cynical Romantic nationalist and self-styled bard, and she the folksy ululations—Goodison’s word—of popular calypso: “since them/ carry me from Guinea/ me can’t go home.” She becomes a kind of *griot*: the central African singers of national epics, a role usually reserved for men. But her music knows no home, and occupies instead a crossover language, an inflected English of neither here nor there (much like, strangely, the uncomfortable English of Yeats, who despite his folkloric mythologies only wrote and spoke the language of his country’s colonizers): thus, perhaps, an ululation, a moaning, vestigial syllabary. Her girl-child, emblematically, is “mulatta,” racially melded or blurred. But rather than sing to reclaim a lost identity, rather than replacing herself in words (a key task of the griot, arguably), her music defeats stable epistemologies and given meanings, inhabiting an interstitial space, a middle ground. Asked to make sense of herself, she cannot, offering up “no known

answer.” Poetry affirms only its own inability to know, its essential dispossession: “Still they ask her/ why you chant so?/ And why she turn poet/ not even she know.” This isn’t a cop out; instead, Goodison reminds us that poems are about an open-ended kind of listening, an unknowing. Writing offers no answers or pronouncements; instead, it seeks to inhabit rhythmically, lyrically, texturally, the dynamics of exchange and poetic gift, the cross-talk, the in-betweens where communication, where community, might actually happen. The sing-song rhyme and homey inflections of this last stanza participate, certainly, in the public voicing wanted by Goodison’s Mr. B., but importantly, they also confront, question and unknit the troubling affirmations of an all-too-easy magic: bound homeward and unable ever to return home, they coax us astray into the necessary, vital heartwash of unknowing.



Articles, Opinions & Notes

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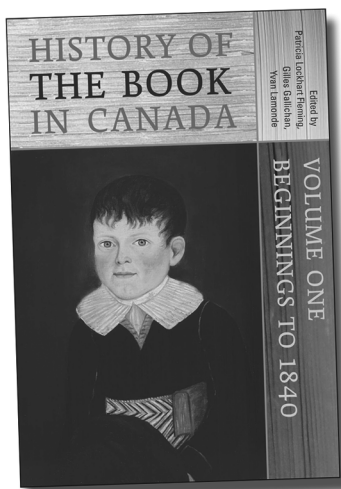
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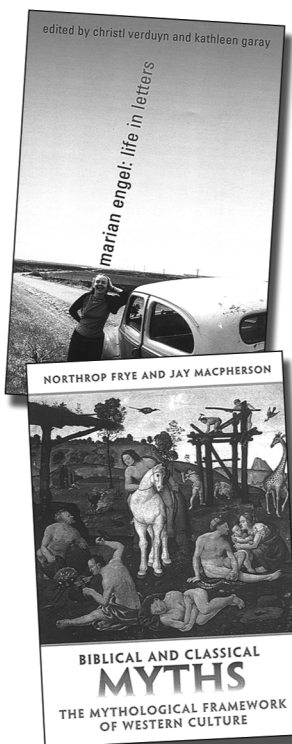
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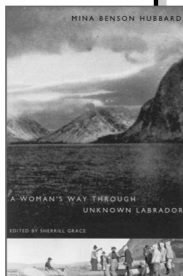
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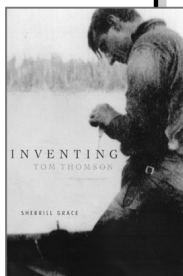
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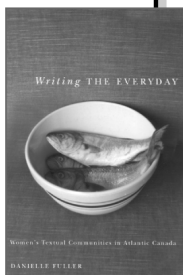
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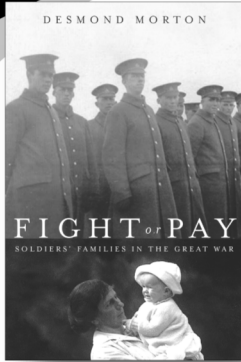
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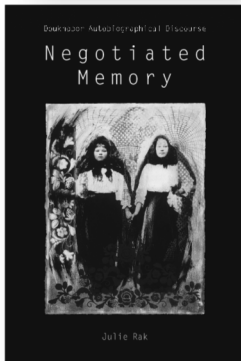
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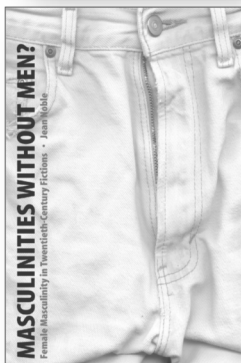
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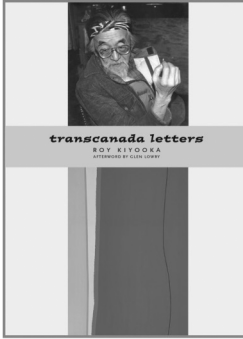
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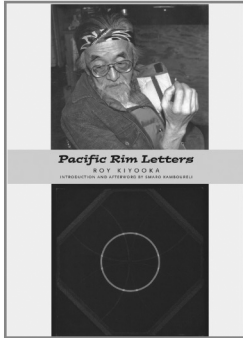
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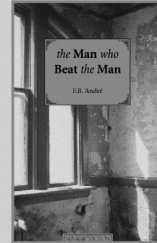
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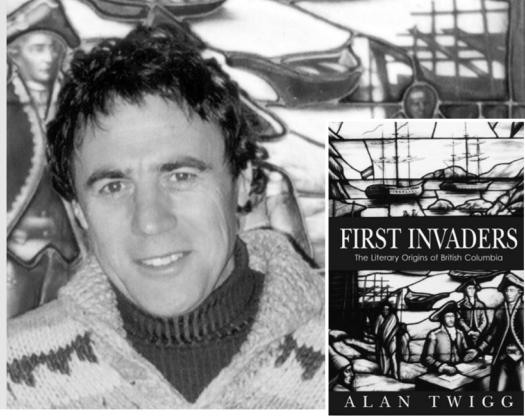
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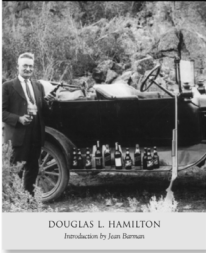
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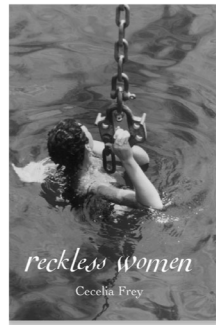
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