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In 2007, we overhauled the design and functionality of the website to improve accessibility and provide more resources on Canadian literature. The navigation menu has been completely reworked, our search engine is faster and more useful, pages are accessible to the visually impaired via screen readers, and French translations are available for all static pages. Additionally, new book reviews appear randomly on each page, our list of Canadian literary journals/magazines has been updated, and we have added an ever-growing list of Canadian publishers.

We hope you will enjoy the new site and welcome any feedback you might have.

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Editorial

Pla(y)giarism

Laurie Ricou

I have yet to see Auguste Renoir's "La Balançoire [The Swing]" (1876); the painting is in the collection of the Musée d'Orsay. But as I was readying the material in this issue for the press, I kept remembering it. "The Swing" is compelling because I have "seen" it, except in tiny, poor reproductions, only through reading and teaching George Bowering's "The Swing."

Bowering's lines swing across the page in short arcs: the swing he contemplates is more aesthetic perch than playground challenge. The poet imagines character, and response, and connection. The girl on the swing—she is standing and wears a full-length dress—provokes two male onlookers, apparently painters, toward appreciation and interpretation. The fourth figure, the child, is perhaps the true critic, for whom artist and subject are an undifferentiated whole. In Bowering's interpretation she is the centre of attention, and model, because she alone is not self-absorbed. I love how I can see this painting I have not seen. Its simplicity registers in spare vocabulary, especially in Bowering's affection for terms of speculative imprecision (Impressionist perhaps?): "seem," "could be," "some kind of." The poet *sees* the unity of forest floor and girl's dress—but his writing reads a difference as "blossoms" morph into "new flowers." Back and forth in the middle of the poem, mood and perspective swing:

> She leans coyly
> or thoughtfully away
> from the two men
> with straw hats

Bowering reconsiders, allows two possibilities, drawing the viewer/listener into whole realms of speculation. He takes us beyond beauty and vignette,

outward in circles of speculation, into depths of motivation, into a making of story from nothing but the clasping of empty hands. Because the swing as proposed by Renoir and intuited by Bowering is a place to pose, perhaps to preen, Bowering's poem is a word-study (and work of art) about a work of art about a work of art.

The anxiety of influence is both Bowering's subject and its prompt toward the comic—a game, an acrobatics, a pleasure of visual/textual intersection. In a term that seems to originate in Raymond Federman's novel *Take It or Leave It*, it's pla(y)giarism.

Such is often the case in Bowering's concern with the possibilities of art. He looks to re-examine the most ordinary human speech to revive its undetected poetry; he likes to do so with a celebrated visual artist looking on, or back at him. His most recent book is titled *Vermeer's Light*.

Kerrisdale Elegies is the most extended poetic example. Consider Elegy Five. It was written last, recognized by Rilke as the poem which completed the whole, completed it by being placed at the swing point, at the poem's pivotal, balancing centre. For a discussion of Bowering's playfully free translation of Rilke, it also seems to be the essential poem, because in Rilke's Elegy Five clowns and angels meet and greet one another, and in this elegy Rilke's own relation to, and parody of, another work of (visual) art is most overt.

Wer aber sind sie, sag mir, die Fahrenden, diese ein wenig
Flüchtigern noch als wir selbst, die dringend von früh an
wringt ein wem—wem zuliebe
niemals zufriedener Wille? Sondern er wringt sie,
biegt sie, schlingt sie und schwingt sie,
wirft sie und fängt sie zurück; wie aus geölter,
glatterer Luft kommen sie nieder
auf dem verzehrten, von ihrem ewigen
Aufsprung dünneren Teppich, diesem velorenen
Teppich im Weltall.

But tell me, who *are* they, these acrobats, even a little
more fleeting than we ourselves,—so urgently, ever since childhood,
wrung by an (oh, for the sake of whom?)
never-contented will? That keeps on wringing them,
bending them, slinging them, swinging them,
throwing them and catching them back; as though from an oily
smoother air, they come down on the threadbare
carpet, thinned by their everlasting
upspringing, this carpet forlornly
lost in the cosmos.

(Leishman and Spender translation)

For a few hours,
for a summer,
we think we know them,
these young men in three-coloured caps,
playing
the game of boyhood,
brief on our eyes.
Do they play for us,
or are they performing
the ancient demands of their decorated bodies?

They wear their names on their backs,
but they wear costumes designed a century past,
of gentlemen meeting of a Sunday on the grass.

The white ball acts upon them as a stone in a pool.
They run, they bend, they leap, they fall
to the patchy green carpet,
walled away from the factory city.

Like his particular improvisation, Bowering's general strategy in Elegy Five honours and counters his source text: Rilke reads a work of art in another medium, Picasso's *Les Saltimbanques* (1905), but Bowering reads a remembered composite artwork made of several baseball games, "the game of boyhood." Static artefact versus vital, continually changing experience. Yet Bowering's choice of detail—"three-coloured caps," "decorated bodies," "costumes" (not "uniforms")—implies the clowns in the painting, as if he is in some way reading Picasso too. The possible freedom of the acrobats is everywhere curbed in Rilke's version of the painting. In Bowering, the note of the elegiac persists, but repeatedly he sees them in a kindlier light. He calls them "young men" with no sense of the homeless that hovers in "*Fahrenden*"; he introduces them not with a question that implies their lack of identity, but with a sense of shared experience: "we think we know them"; the baseball players may be "brief in our eyes," but they are not themselves "*Flüchtige*." Most significantly Bowering's young men are not passive mechanisms, but in response to the "white ball" they are multiply active: "they run, they bend, they leap, they fall." Rilke's cosmos, here, seems something of a factory, with its "oily/smoother air" whereas Bowering's baseball "Diamond" is an ecstatic contrast to the "factory city" (66).

One of the most haunting features of *Les Saltimbanques* is that none of the acrobats looks at one another, nor, apparently, at the viewer of the painting. (Again, the characters in "The Swing" come to mind.) And Rilke, as Marion

Faber writes, similarly "isolates them, treating each one in disjunction from the others." So Bowering seems to do for a time, with the "third base coach," and for much of the section devoted to "the young shortstop." But at the focus of the pivotal Elegy Five Rilke places the punning Latin phrase "*Subrisio Saltat*," "acrobat's smile." For Rilke it is the culmination of another complicated conceit, but the main importance for me is its reminder of the figure of the clown in *Duino Elegies*. "On the young acrobat's face the smile is a defiance of pain, a wondrous affirmation," writes Faber, but it is a smile not a laugh because the "smile encompasses a valuable trace of pain midst ultimate affirmation."

Bowering's Elegy Five ends with the possibility of a "satisfied smile," and his shortstop "play[s] thru [his] injuries" until his "sore body grins" (69). Where his model smiles, Bowering smiles and tries another way. His Latin inscription is "Extra/basis," a "thin fine" pun on the baseball term "extra bases," describing unexpected and unusual progress made in the game, and bases gained other than off the bat. In this single phrase, too, lingers the baseball metaphor that figures Bowering's composition of the *Elegies*. He has an extra-ordinary foundation in Rilke's poem. At the same time he is outside, even beyond the scope of the poem on which his composition is based.

> I sit in section nine and sometimes wonder why,
> but know I am at ground zero
> where art is made,
> where there is no profit,
> no loss.
>
> The planet lies perfect in its orbit. (73)

When the acrobats achieve their finest trick, Rilke detects, so the usual interpretation goes, the nullity of a perfection which is rehearsed into habit. Bowering again goes beyond his basis. Zero is read as that point directly beneath a nuclear explosion, that point which must be part of any postmodernist's middle-aged elegy. But the section ends with the planet's perfect orbit. The difference between Rilke's acrobats and Bowering's baseball players may here be implied. In baseball the endless practice prepares the player not for the emptiness of a routine trick, but so that he might with spontaneous finesse execute the play that has never been made before. So, too for Bowering in the game of poetry, which is life.

Pla(y)giarism, as it is often celebrated in poeming of the visual arts, is another form of stealing bases. Writing is an infinite series of translations. And translation finds the language of icon and image growing into worded language and back again.

Reciprocally, one of Rilke's most quoted phrases makes an appearance in Lawren Harris' notes as he looks for words to understand the reading of his work:

> Works of art are of an infinite
> loneliness and with nothing so
> little reached as with criticism.
> Only love can grasp and hold
> and fairly judge them.

* * *

As I complete this Editorial in the first week of July 2007, the Editor's privilege has just passed to Margery Fee. The same week, her exceptional scholarship was recognized by selection as Distinguished Scholar in Residence at the Peter Wall Institute of Advanced Studies. Margery's work focuses on Canadian English, Aboriginal studies, and postcolonial studies. Students of Canadian literature are very fortunate that a scholar of such range and accomplishment has agreed to take on the responsibility of editing Canadian Literature *as it now approaches its 50th anniversary (2009).*

I would like to thank the hundreds of colleagues who have helped during my term as Editor. The Editorial Board has been generous with time and advice. Réjean, Laura, Kevin, Glenn, and Judy—our Associate Editors—have done so much to keep the journal vital and changing, although their contributions are usually invisible to readers. I especially want to thank the staff members who have made my job much easier, but also who filled it with good humour—particularly Kristin, Laura, Melanie, Beth, Matthew, Susan Fisher, and our exceptionally dedicated Managing Editor, Donna Chin. —LR

A. Mary Murphy

Red Mitts to My Elbows

People are amazed, think I'm mad to leave the land of the Chinook to come here, to Winnipeg. People ask how things are in Winterpeg hahaha, and I say listen, I grew up in Alberta when winter was still winter. I did not walk to school uphill into the wind both ways. But I remember red mitts to my elbows and fifteen-minute recess when we laced up our skates just to have five minutes on the ice. I could see my breath in my upstairs bedroom. I remember fifty below where Fahrenheit and Celsius don't matter and a spring calf frozen to the fence, my brothers taking turns getting frozen eyes trying to get the cattle in. So spare me. I am not afraid of Winnipeg.

Travis Mason

Placing Ekphrasis
Paintings and Place in *Stanley Park*

> The places that haunt one's dreams and to some extent define one's character can range from versions of actual places to the utterly fictitious.
> LAWRENCE BUELL
>
> In the end, what we see is neither the painting in its fixed state nor an artwork trapped in the co-ordinates set by the museum for our guidance.
> ALBERTO MANGUEL[1]

The opening pages of Timothy Taylor's *Stanley Park* reveal chef Jeremy Papier's preference for locally grown ingredients. They also reveal his desire, as proprietor and head chef of a Vancouver restaurant, "to remind people of something. Of what the soil under their feet has to offer. Of a time when they would have known only the food that their own soil could offer" (23). Throughout, Jeremy seeks a simple contemporary and local truth by resisting the fusion of globalized menus, but neither his obsession with local food nor his sense of place is simple; Taylor complicates what can easily be read as a clichéd local/global binary by writing the possibilities of place ekphrastically. Over the years, critics have sought to extend definitions of ekphrasis beyond the common notion of a literary representation of visual art.[2] Indeed, as Tamar Yacobi notes in "Pictorial Models and Narrative Ekphrasis," "[c]onceptually, empirically, [and] genetically, ekphrasis makes an assorted and open-ended bundle of variables, all free except for the constant minimum of literary reference to visual reference to the world" (618). For my purposes, Claus Clüver's definition of ekphrasis as "the [verbalization] of a real or fictitious text composed in a non-verbal sign system" will suffice (35-36). Through the third-person narrator and Jeremy, Taylor alludes repeatedly to paintings—including real ones that hang in Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum, fictional ones by fictional artists, and an ostensibly fictional portrait by a living artist—which permits him to reflect on how the visual

arts function socio-ecologically and also to interrogate how "place becomes place by acquiring real or imagined borders" in both a local and a global sense (McKay 18).

Insofar as ekphrasis temporally expands visual images beyond the spatial restrictions imposed by canvas and frame, it foregrounds the uncertainty of individual interpretations by articulating a speaker's (and/or an author's) relation to the image being viewed. Following from James Heffernan's argument that "the persistence of storytelling in ekphrastic literature shows at the very least that ekphrasis cannot be simply equated with spatialization" ("Ekphrasis" 302), I argue that Taylor employs ekphrasis to position the uncertainty and partial knowing of interpretation as a way to understand shifting notions of place. Paintings and place come together in *Stanley Park* to form complex questions about acts of reading and ideas of place. By alluding to both real and imagined artists and their works—Dutch masters, American postmodernists, Vancouver college students—Taylor raises questions about how we construct place by moving in the interstices between "real [and] imagined borders." The references to paintings become narrative coordinates, enabling Jeremy to contextualize his culinary education in France as he returns to Vancouver to open his own restaurant, and inviting readers to appreciate the interconnections between art, food, and place. As Jeremy juxtaposes his obsession with local food with his global experiences, slippages between local and global, between knowing and not-knowing, inform the desire to know as precisely as possible where home is.

Centred as it is on a young restaurateur attempting to succeed in the competitive business world, the novel is in part about the financial difficulties of remaining local in a post-national world dominated by global market forces.[3] Art historian and cultural theorist John Berger acknowledges a similar market-driven shift in art critics' responses to visual representations of nature: "Prior to the recent [circa late 1960s] interest in ecology, nature was not thought of as the object of the activities of capitalism; rather it was thought of as the arena in which capitalism and social life and each individual life had its being. Aspects of nature were objects of scientific study, but nature-as-a-whole defied possession" (105). While the particulars of Berger's comments are debatable—he does not clarify by whom nature was not thought of in capitalistic terms; nor does he consider the nineteenth-century creation of national parks[4]—"nature-as-a-whole" connects to a capitalistic sense of *global* economy. The whole of nature now, the globe, has been commodified, the aestheticization of nature nudging nature-as-neutral-space into the

economic realm. Berger's comments, appearing as they do in his landmark guide to reading visual art, *Ways of Seeing*, are compelling for the way they illuminate Taylor's ekphrastic narrative: epistemological uncertainty takes place in the interstices between painting and ekphrasis, between metropolitan nostalgia for a primitivist past ("the soil under one's feet") and reticence in the face of expanding urbanization (e.g., the homeless community in Taylor's *Stanley Park*). Complexity, represented by Taylor's ekphrastic focus on partial knowing, offers more interesting narrative possibilities than the simple fact of knowing in *Stanley Park*.

Novel Ekphrasis

Readers first encounter art in *Stanley Park* when Jeremy, having purchased the least expensive ticket home from Dijon, France, has a 24-hour stopover in Amsterdam. Seeking sanctuary from what he imagines to be "macroscale motion sickness that came from moving between St. Seine l'Abbaye and Amsterdam," Jeremy hides in the Rijksmuseum and keeps returning to "three paintings that combine . . . into a single lasting image of his entire experience in Europe" (44). Considering that his experience includes training at a culinary institute and an internship in Burgundy, two of the three paintings seem obvious points of interest: Joachim Beuckelaer's *Well-Stocked Kitchen* (fig. 1) and Jan Asselijn's *The Threatened Swan* (fig. 2). Carel Fabritius' *The Beheading of John the Baptist* (fig. 3), does not immediately reveal its relevance to the development of the narrative or of Jeremy's character. In this stunning and controversial painting,[5] Jeremy admires, primarily,

> Fabritius' depiction of Salome, a frivolous aristocrat, which brought to mind the Audi or the Saab or the Benz that might as well have been waiting for her out front of the prison. But the image lingered as he moved on; Salome the patron had so airily inspected the proffered head as it dripped in front of her, held high in the hand of the workmanlike executioner, whose face reflected technical satisfaction in a distasteful assignment. (44)

The "proffered head" seems not to be held all that high in the executioner's hand, nor is there evidence that Salome has inspected it, "airily" or otherwise. So why *this* reading of the painting? What of Jeremy's interpretation can readers take to be a hint, a foreshadowing of things to come? The associative interpolation of European sports cars into the story of the beheading looks back to the customers who would frequent "the Relais St. Seine l'Abbaye in Burgundy, where he worked for a year after graduating from the institute," the "German and Swiss families [who] would park their Saabs and

Figure 1. Beuckelaer: *Well-Stocked Kitchen.* Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Figure 2. Asselijn: *The Threatened Swan.* Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

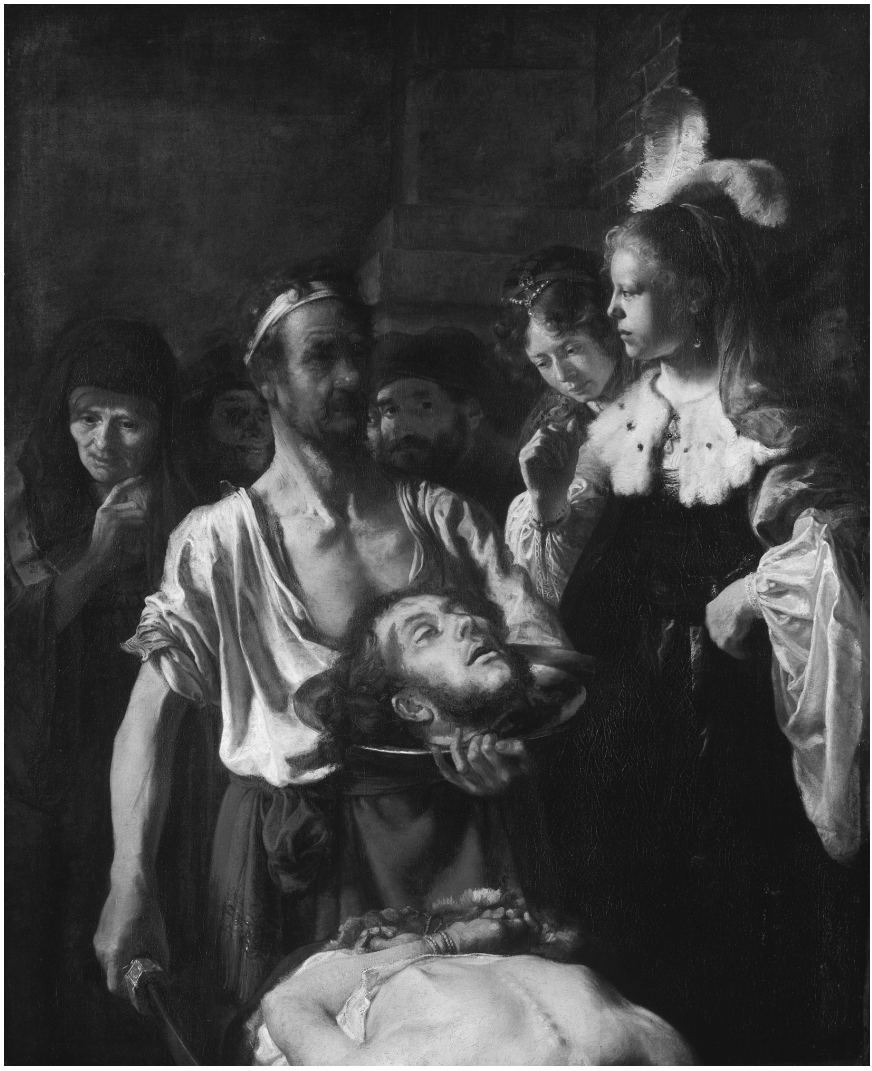

Figure 3. Fabritius: *The Beheading of John the Baptist.* Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Audis and Benzes" outside while they partook of food at the roadside restaurant. Jeremy's anachronistic reading also looks ahead to the role that Dante Beale, head of Inferno International Coffee, plays in Jeremy's rise and fall as a restaurateur: Dante effectively becomes Jeremy's patron. But it is wise, I think, to consider all three paintings in conjunction, as one image, since they function collectively to influence Jeremy.

The second painting at the Rijksmuseum that gives Jeremy pause is, fittingly, Joachim Beuckelaer's *Well-Stocked Kitchen*:

> It made him smile. A meta-image of thankfulness and plenty. Christ sat with Martha and Mary, surrounded by skewered game birds, Dutch hares, ducks, finches, pheasants, partridges, roosters, sandpipers, zucchini, cauliflower, tomatoes, grapes, artichokes, plums, cucumbers, lemons, apples, squash and blackberries. Jeremy imagined working with the large clay oven in the background. (44-5)

In fact, the clay oven is less in the background than are Christ, Martha, and Mary. It is strange that this reading of the painting foregrounds the relatively distanced, albeit centred, image of Christ but fails to mention the five humans actually in the foreground. The two kitchen maids and three customers occupy the left side of the painting, balancing the litany of kitchen stock that rolls off the page as though off Jeremy's tongue. I expect the narrator to identify Jeremy with the foregrounded cooks in the image, despite the fact they are women. Instead, this identification acts perhaps as a clue to be as wary of the stock we put in Jeremy's interpretations, his readings, as we are, by the end of the novel, of the stock Jeremy puts in his own kitchen. Jeremy Papier might be as concerned about allegory and symbolism as he is about food.[6]

As a case in point, Jeremy equates Beuckelaer's Salome with the Relais' customers. This is telling in more ways than one; the eye contact between executioner and patron, although the former's eyes are mostly in shadow, is both violent and intimate.[7] Such tension is reflected in gender and sexual politics throughout (exemplified by the humiliation Jeremy's lover, former barista Benny, will undergo at the hands of Dante later in the novel[8]). Indeed, such politics influence even the most simple-looking of the three images Jeremy views in the Rijksmuseum. Despite the singular and overbearing foregrounded image in Jan Asselijn's *The Threatened Swan*, Jeremy is as selective and exclusive in his assessment of the larger-than-life swan as he is in his readings of the other paintings: "Standing like a boxer, beak set to jab, wings cocked, feathers flying. Jeremy admired the bristling stance the bird took towards the attacker, knowing that in Asselijn's day, the threat

might well have been a rookie cook like himself" (45). Jeremy's reading, despite its brevity and the relative simplicity of the Asselijn painting, is no less interpretive than his readings of the other two paintings. A reading of the large, erect swan as a phallic image, furthermore, helps explain the lasting effect Asselijn's painting has on Jeremy, whose admiration for the bird foreshadows his response to the demise of his bistro, The Monkey's Paw, and Inferno's financial takeover and construction of the trendy, market-researched ristorante Gerriamo's.[9]

During clandestine preparations for Gerriamo's opening night menu—a menu which is to represent the culmination of Jeremy's ideological treatise on the importance of local ingredients—Jeremy receives a special delivery that includes: "A dozen plump Canada geese, a dozen grey rock doves, six canvasbacks, four large rabbits, fifteen squirrels (greys, fatter and more plentiful than reds) four huge raccoons and a swan" (356). The inclusion of the swan bothers Jeremy, and he shouts at Chladek, the man who has procured the unusual assortment of foodstuffs: "I did not want swan! Why did you bring me swan?" Jeremy expresses anger, we are told, because "to Jeremy the swan was ominous" (356). Partly he does not want swan because he thinks it is not indigenous, a claim Chladek ignores—Trumpeter and Tundra swans winter along the north Pacific coast—while revealing an impressive knowledge of southwest British Columbian invasion ecology: "And the grey squirrel? These came from England in a boat." Clearly, the indigeneity of the swan is "[n]ot the point" (356),[10] but the space Asselijn's swan occupies in Jeremy's version of himself is. At a time when the clarity of Jeremy's vision seems unquestionable, protecting the swan's gendered image becomes more important than the localness of food while he prepares his culinary treatise. Instead, Jeremy's protective response to the swan and dismissal of the squirrels' non-indigeneity confuses an understanding of his overall vision. His initial project to remind people "[o]f what the soil under their feet has to offer" is more problematic than he thought (23). In other words, despite all the talk of local knowledge, Jeremy prefers a wisdom gleaned from his experiences reading foreign artworks in a foreign land to situating himself unreservedly in his home place.

Triangulating Knowledge

While in Amsterdam, Jeremy uses the past, as articulated by the three classical paintings, to help define himself in the present moment—those fleeting twenty-four hours in the Rijksmuseum—and to take his newly defined self

forward. Jeremy does what John Berger proposes could happen "[i]f the new language of images were used differently" from the way the masses, as opposed to "the cultured minority," use it—to "confer a new kind of power" through access to knowledge (32-3). Jeremy uses the images to "begin to define [his] experiences more precisely" than words are able, namely "the essential historical experience of [his] relation to the past . . . of seeking to give meaning" to his life (Berger 33). Put another way, Jeremy frames the three Dutch paintings with what Alberto Manguel identifies in *Reading Pictures* as "apprehension and circumstances," so that "they now exist in his time and share his past, present and future. They have become autobiographical" (14). Taylor's writing about the impact the paintings have on Jeremy constitutes a meta-commentary on ekphrasis itself; as Cynthia Messenger writes in her essay about P.K. Page and Elizabeth Bishop, ekphrasis represents a "particularly important strategy" for the way "it acts as an intervention—and an intercession—between [people and] place" (103). In the final hours before departing for home, Jeremy returns "again and again to these three [images]. The patron, the kitchen, the swan" and finds "himself thinking . . . of his American friend who set to war the culinary Crips and Bloods."[11] Reflecting on his return to Vancouver, Jeremy thinks his years in Burgundy "have made [him] Blood" (45), and thus "respectful of tradition, nostalgic even. Canonical, interested in the veracity of things culinary, linked to 'local' by the inheritance or adoption of a culture" (32). From the time he determines he is Blood to opening night at Gerriamo's, Jeremy maintains his connection to the past as it is mediated through the three images; in the process, he enacts art historian Keith Moxey's claim that "the past . . . offers the present an opportunity to articulate, by means of narrative, its potential for the ethical and political dilemmas we currently confront" (60). Jeremy's penchant for local ingredients reinforces the Blood ideology he develops while in Europe. However, just as his response to Chladek's swan suggests, Jeremy's version of local knowledge—his version of place—is mediated by a knowledge made up of various cultural ideologies: French cuisine, Dutch painting, Western dualism. Once he returns to North America and puts his entrepreneurial skills to the test, these ideological implications unravel as tensions develop between his sense of self, his desire to cook local food, and the financial realities of the restaurant business.

The Monkey's Paw Bistro, for all its success as "[a] restaurant other chefs would go to," cannot succeed financially without a series of complex and barely legal strategies to keep Jeremy's metaphorical kite under control

(Taylor 51). Jeremy must elicit the help of his father's neighbour, Dante Beale, whose financial clout is such that he can easily fund The Monkey's Paw. Jeremy refuses an initial offer of partnership, asking instead for help getting a line of credit ($230 000.00) and a few credit cards. After the first few months, during which time Jeremy runs his line of credit and two of his credit cards (of which, by now, he has nine) to the limit, "[t]he Monkey's Paw kite [is] aloft and pulling hard, a ring of minimum payments chasing minimum payments" (55). The amount of money Jeremy requires to start his restaurant and keep it running acts narratively as an obvious introduction to the world of capitalism, a world to which Jeremy does not seem interested in belonging, and readers begin to understand that Jeremy's "passion for local ingredients" is perhaps "inefficient" (28). Financial success, especially as embodied by Dante, is necessarily a *global* endeavour in *Stanley Park*; the desire and ability to cross international boundaries are essential if Jeremy is to satisfy the head of Inferno International Coffee who, whether Jeremy likes it or not, has a significant stake in the restaurant, and thus in Jeremy's ideas, even prior to the official takeover.

Taylor resists what Tim Lilburn calls "[l]ate capitalism's nomadism, its own particular pursuit of homelessness, its sad, weary anarchy" (177) by pursuing the idea of the local and by challenging accepted notions of homeless people as having no agency and no culturally sanctioned relation to place. To this end, Jeremy's father (anthropologist and professor) lives among "the homeless" of Stanley Park and claims that he and his son are "working on parallel projects" (22), despite Jeremy's financial investment in the restaurant business, and his catering more to a cultured minority than to the masses. The Professor, as he has come to be called, is in Stanley Park "allowing the words of [the] wilderness to penetrate" him (23). He laments, as Lilburn does, the way that "[e]verything drifts toward money's unintended telos of placelessness," and concerns himself with the question, "how can we be where we are?" (Lilburn 177). The Professor claims that all people have "an innate polarity, a tendency to either root or move," and he makes the self-proclaimed trite observation "that in the West we are uprooting ourselves. We know the culprits: information flow, economic globalization" (Taylor 230). Neither Tim Lilburn nor the Professor, Timothy Taylor nor Jeremy, pretend that answers to these questions and problems are easily obtained, if they are attainable at all. While Lilburn and the Professor quite literally immerse themselves—the former in a root cellar dug "into the south face of a low hill" in Saskatchewan's Moosewood Sandhills (180), and the latter in

the dark recesses of Stanley Park—in an attempt to make an argument against the forces of globalization, Jeremy inhabits a middle ground. Influenced by the way his mother seemed to "put down roots [that] did not take" before she eventually "fell into a place of no places" (230-31),[12] Jeremy tries to define place with real and imagined borders, and the difficulties he faces throughout the novel are consequences of this attempt.

Despite being warned, albeit cryptically, by his godson, Trout, that "[y]ou have to move one way or the other. . . . Right or left. You can't just stand there" (161), Jeremy confesses something to his best friend, Olli (father of Trout and husband of Margaret, Jeremy's ex-girlfriend). Regarding Dante's pending investment to save his restaurant, Jeremy admits that he is "on the fence, truthfully" (166). Conscious of his ideologically ambiguous position, Jeremy remains "triangulated[, f]ixed . . . like a crapaudine on the skewer of his own culinary training" by the three images he sees in the Rijksmuseum (45). He reiterates during a dinner conversation with Trout's parents that he is "a bit nostalgic about roots," that The Monkey's Paw is "all about reminding people what it was like to be rooted in one place" (165). Olli, by this point, wants "to tell his friend to just cook and be quiet. That must be the beauty of cooking," he thinks, "There [isn't] much ideology behind it" (165-6). Ideology, it turns out, has a lot to do with it, and Jeremy finds himself having to heed Trout's advice eventually. By the end, though, Jeremy's choice "to move one way or the other" is a choice that enables a continuing sense of in-betweenness.

Local Ingredients, Local Art

The degree to which Jeremy wants to succeed with his first restaurant, The Monkey's Paw, reflects the degree to which he imports ingredients; he considers his menu to be "[l]ocal but not dogmatic. It [is not] a question of being opposed to imported ingredients, but of preference, of allegiance, of knowing what goodness [comes] from the earth around you" (51). Jeremy's bioregional vision stems from a notion of allegiance he learns in France and Amsterdam. Wandering around the Rijksmuseum and reflecting on his experiences in Europe—both as a student of his craft and as a maturing individual—Jeremy develops an appreciation for the "true source of the region" (45) whether that region is Burgundy or Cascadia.[13] His preference for local ingredients, furthermore, is reflected in his preference for local art.

Although the visual trio in the Rijksmuseum significantly influences Jeremy, he makes no effort to import these images (or to reproduce them)

for display in The Monkey's Paw. Instead, he maintains the understanding of local he develops while triangulating his position in the midst of the classical paintings, and, despite the "[t]ables and chairs from Ikea" (52), which can be explained away by thriftiness, he decorates the bistro with local artefacts.[14] Rather than use the work of such iconic west-coast artists as Emily Carr, Toni Onley, Jack Shadbolt, or Jin-Me Yoon, Taylor opts for a different approach when writing Vancouver scenes. The art work in the Monkey's Paw is "haphazard, the product of piece-by-piece collection at local art-college auctions: etchings, woodcuts, off-kilter portrait photography and a large neo-classical still life with a menacing quality Jeremy couldn't identify" (52). The first fictionalized artist appears during the description of The Monkey's Paw's interior, introducing Taylor's narrative transition to what John Hollander calls "notional ekphrasis," the poetic representation of imaginary works of art (209). Jules Capelli, Jeremy's culinary partner—"Of course, Jules didn't pay the bills" (53)—contributes "three metal sculptures by a fictional student artist named Fenton Sooner, who had gone on to enter high-profile collections" (52). Jeremy names the trio Heckle, Jeckle, and Hide, a combination of the popular cartoon magpies and Robert Louis Stevenson's famous novella; he considers the metal crows together to be "an image of perseverance" and "an emblem of gawky tenacity," much like crows in the wild, whether rural or urban, in spite of the sculptures' obvious lack of biological fidelity (52). The sculptures, more so than the paintings, represent perseverance not just in the sense that Fenton Sooner "stuck with it" and succeeded, but in the way they embody a presence that two-dimensional images arguably do not. Like the plastic "bags full of other bags" that heap upon and hang from shopping carts in Stanley Park, the Sooner sculptures hold "emblematic power" by suggesting, especially in light of their unceremonious removal from Jeremy's kitchen after the Monkey's Paw fails, "the resilience of things discarded" (Taylor 5). These sculptures, however, do not elicit as much attention in the novel as still life paintings.

To include not only a large "neo-classical still life"—a glance back to the classical *Well-Stocked Kitchen*—but one "with a menacing quality Jeremy [cannot] identify," is to introduce the ambiguity of interpretation. Why does Jeremy hang such a painting in his first restaurant? Despite his inability to identify more precisely the quality of the still life he and Jules hang in The Monkey's Paw, he does identify it as *menacing*, a quality that, because Jeremy does not describe the painting in any greater detail, is all readers can take from the text. That is, readers are not able to view this particular image in

the same way they can view, with a little effort, Fabritius', Beuckelaer's, and Asselijn's images and, consequently, cannot bring their own powers of observation and interpretation into play. Conversely, when Gerriamo's is decorated, readers are invited to consider, along with Jeremy, the pieces waiting to be displayed.

"Everybody loves Art Day," exclaims Dante upon entering his new restaurant and seeing Jeremy seated in the middle of the room (310). Unlike the artworks adorning the walls of The Monkey's Paw, Jeremy plays no role in deciding what adorns the walls of Gerriamo's; the paintings are already "[s]paced evenly around the room" when Jeremy arrives, "waiting to be hung, face to the wall" (310). The group effort evident on Art Day enables Taylor to examine and offer interpretations of each painting as he does with the images in the Rijksmuseum. Inside Gerriamo's are "twelve [paintings] in total, all still lifes but one, which [is] a grainy portrait of a naked skinhead" (311). The twelve gold-framed paintings are by four different artists and not, significantly, a triangular three. Significant also is the real/fictional and local/non-local mix of artists. As the only real artist included in Gerriamo's Art Day, Attila Richard Lukacs is the fourth artist in a novel so interested in binaries and multiples of three. As such, the Lukacs work represents a hinge between the three real paintings in the Rijksmuseum and the three fictional pieces in Gerriamo's.

Convinced Inferno International Coffee is local because he and his partners "thought it up [in Vancouver]" (269), Dante begins a conversation about the artistic choices for Gerriamo's:

> "Four local artists," Dante said. "Are we not loyal?"
> "Well … ," Benny said. "Bishop and Nygoyen are actually from Seattle. Kreschkov is Toronto."
> "Attila Richard Lukacs is Vancouver, sort of," Jeremy said, motioning to the skinhead. (311)

The confusion is typical of Dante's desire to commodify the local, a desire that compels his interest in Jeremy's ideas in the first place. But the confusion also suggests that local is difficult to determine, even for Jeremy, who claims that "Lukacs is Vancouver, sort of," the modifier emphasizing the tenuousness of the claim. As the only real artist among this group, Lukacs can more easily be researched in the world outside the text. Born in Calgary, Lukacs painted in Vancouver as a young adult and lived in Berlin for ten years (from 1986 to 1996) before moving to New York (Goodman 66); his localness is allowed, *sort of*, despite his itinerant ways, perhaps in much the

same way Jeremy develops his interest in the local while traveling in Europe. If readers take Benny's word—and why not believe a fictional character's knowledge about fictional artists?—the other "local artists" are not very local either.[15] Taylor's decision to include these fictional artists, however, and the notional ekphrasis that follows serve to redefine the borders place acquires, as Don McKay has it in "Otherwise than Place," in becoming place.

Unlike the "neo-classical still life with a menacing quality Jeremy couldn't identify," the fictional Kreschkov's paintings, "beautiful and menacing," are carefully observed:

> The food she depicted was raised on a shining black background, suspended at the top of a void. Much of it was also clearly rotting. The cheese had turned. The shank of meat revealed maggots. The fruit was bruised. But each silky patch of mould, each broken pit, each rejected mouthful was rendered in achingly precise strokes. (311)

Where the clean, robust images in Beuckelaer's kitchen signify Jeremy's unfettered, newly acquired optimism and confidence as a classically trained chef, the food depicted in these images signifies Jeremy's shift in perception—though not necessarily in ideology—and the realization that his dream of communicating the splendour of what British Columbia's local soil and sea have to offer cannot be fulfilled as he once envisioned. The depiction of spoiled food in the paintings simultaneously marks the rottenness of globally capitalistic enterprise but also of aestheticized rot as marketable commodity.

Nygoyen's images are different from Kreschkov's in that the former "at least paint[s] healthy fruit and plump vines" (311). The ordinariness of the subject matter, however, is offset by the "arbitrarily segmented" overall image, "multiple panels that assemble . . . to make the whole. One work consist[s] of four square canvases arranged in a row. Another involve[s] four canvases arranged in a larger square" (311-2). Each panel can represent segments of Jeremy's life to this point: clearly defined moments—in Dijon, Burgundy, Amsterdam, The Monkey's Paw—that have been arranged arbitrarily into an order beyond his control. Like Nygoyen's assembled wholes, though, the puzzle of Jeremy's life leaves gaps and fissures.

The third fictional artist's work is neither segmented nor spoiled. Bishop,[16] readers are told, makes "no attempt to conceal a debt to the Dutch Masters," such as Fabritius, Beuckelaer, and Asselijn (312). Similar to the familiarity of Nygoyen's subject, Bishop's

> arrangements[, too,] were familiar: fruit, vegetables, meat and cheese on tables,

> slaughtered game birds on chopping blocks, even the conical twist of newsprint, out of which spilled a bit of salt and pepper. Still, they all seemed intentionally wrong somehow. The light glanced into the frame from no definite source, throwing shadow in unexpected ways. Perspective was skewed, enlarging a dill pickle until it rivalled a watermelon on the other side of the table. (312)

Bishop's skewed perspective indeed reveals a debt to a Dutch Master, namely Beuckelaer; in *Well-Stocked Kitchen*, Beuckelaer privileges a secular perspective over the more conventional religious one his mentor, Pieter Aertsen, typically emphasized. Jeremy's earlier focus on the deemphasized Christ in Beuckelaer's painting, though, can be seen as a warning to readers that they should not trust the protagonist. Jeremy's interpretations of the work of these three artists point toward an understanding he comes to shortly after Art Day. He realizes "that there [are] different paths into the same wood. Different views of the same familiar story," like a room full of "maps providing their various views of what [can] be known of the world around them" (335). After this realization, Jeremy begins planning the opening-night menu for Gerriamo's. On the wall between the doors to his kitchen is "a grainy portrait of a naked skinhead," hanging there "like a warning" (311). But the shaven-headed image signifies Dante's characteristics more than Jeremy's.

The portrait by Lukacs stands out amongst this group of paintings for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the actual existence of the artist. The portrait is apparently "vintage Lukacs, and [one] either [does] or [does] not like phallic National Socialist imagery" (312). While I am not certain whether the portrait—described with not nearly the detail as the others—actually exists or not, it is not difficult to discover what "vintage Lukacs" looks like. Lukacs "gained notoriety early on in his career for his erotically uncompromising portrayal of rough boys," and "it is hard to tell whether his bare-chested young men constitute a political statement or an extended meditation on skinhead allure" (Goodman 66). In *Stanley Park*, the presence of a skinhead portrait by Lukacs in Gerriamo's constitutes a political statement; the evocation of National Socialist position by the sheer force of Lukacs' image invites readers to consider the complex relation between this image and Dante Beale, Jeremy's capitalistic antagonist.

Place Cubed

Dante's desire to place the Lukacs portrait "at the very back, between the kitchen doors,"—"Perfect," he says after Jeremy suggests that "[p]eople will think it's the chef. . . . Like a warning" (311)—reinforces many suggestions

throughout the novel that Dante represents a right-wing, global capitalism (311). During a conversation with Jeremy in which readers witness the first hints of the animosity between Dante and Jules, Dante asks Jeremy if he "suppose[s] she's a dyke. . . . Dykes are difficult. It's always politics with dykes" (66). If Taylor resists painting a simple portrait of global capitalism as evil outright, he paints Dante's version of globalism as a difficult version to support because Dante's language indicates prejudices and aligns them with prejudices typically associated with a conservative right-wing ideology. During a conversation, Dante tells Jeremy he "was thinking of ordering tofu" at a well-known Chicago steak house but was told "they don't like faggots in the Windy City" (186); he goes on to describe Irish beer as "a couple of Mick lagers," and he refers to the French chefs Jeremy studied with as "the frogs in the white hats" (188). This aspect of Dante's character is revealed only when he knows that he will take over Jeremy's restaurant, suggesting a juxtaposition of aestheticized local food and neo-capitalist fears and desires that are also reflected in the cost of the Lukacs' painting: "Twenty-five thou" (311). Dante's uni-directional, narrow worldview does not overwhelm the narrative,[17] nor does the novel endorse National Socialist ideologies and behaviours. The artworks themselves offer alternative ways of seeing, whereas Dante's neo-capitalism allows space for only one story. By contrast, the multiplicity of paintings in the novel, and Taylor's narrativized ekphrasis, nicely parallels the need for more than one point of reference when negotiating geographic location.

If Dante's obsessive post-nationalism can be seen as an *acceptance* of other cultures, it can also, and perhaps more likely, be seen to enact a xenophobic desire to consume his fear of other cultures by consuming marketable vestiges of the cultures themselves. He devours foreign cultural commodities and is, for example, "Tai Chi-ed into lean perfection" (98). Most distressingly, especially from Jeremy's perspective, Dante's culinary preferences tend toward an ironic blend of inclusive fusion and bland placelessness, "[w]here the duck is twice-cooked New England mallard served in a restaurant in Moscow, and the salmon is Chilean-farmed Atlantic planked on Lebanese cedar in a restaurant south of Cork City" (270). For Jeremy, such fusion dishes are the epitome of Crip cuisine and thus are more likely to displace the person eating them in Vancouver than would, say, lamb raised on Saltspring Island or sockeye salmon caught in the Strait of Georgia and purchased on the wharf at Steveston. For all that Jeremy identifies with Blood cooking, though, his connection to the local remains problematic. In addition to

continually locating himself in relation to the three paintings in the Rijksmuseum, Jeremy maintains a strong connection to his Sabatier chef's knife, a gift from his father.[18]

So important is the knife to Jeremy that, after having lost it during a drunken trek through Stanley Park, Jeremy goes to "a high-end knife shop in the basement of the Hotel Vancouver" to have it appraised in hopes of finding another one of similar quality.[19] Sigmund Bloom, the shop's proprietor, tells Jeremy a story about L'Enfer, the "unusual factory . . . in the Thiers region of France" where his knife was made: "Rumour had it that the owners of the factory collaborated with the Nazis during the Second World War. Bayonets, you understand. Their output was duly shunned afterwards, leaving a warehouse of unsold items to be discovered in later years" (130). Jeremy's knife connects him simultaneously to his father and to Dante through a familial bond and a historical bond, respectively. The history of his Sabatier further complicates Jeremy's relation to place as he attempts to answer the question, how can we be where we are? The knife's role in Jeremy's attempt to answer the question is made clearer during a scene in which Jeremy, in search of his missing blade, confronts Siwash, one of the Professor's homeless subjects who attempts to answer the question by *knowing* precisely where he is at all times with the aid of a global positioning system (GPS). Inside his bunker are "dozens of maps taped up, overlapping" and offering various projections (332). In attempting to know where he is at all times, Siwash comes to realize the limitations of two-dimensional representations of the earth, "that too much map is *problematic*" (333). Jeremy realizes that Siwash spends his days recording the number of people moving through his place—marked definitively on the GPS: N 49.18.32, W 123.09.18—in order to remind himself that he is "not in motion" (335). Knowing place remains a question of recognizing the ever-shifting boundaries that define place and the limitations of the tools we have to do so.

It is during his intense encounter with Siwash that Jeremy realizes that "different paths [lead] into the same wood," that there are "[d]ifferent views of the same familiar story" (335). These realizations enable Jeremy to question all that has come before, to rethink the coordinates of his life thus far, and to determine his position indefinitely. If place acquires real or imagined borders in becoming place, then no real limits to place exist. My attention to the role of paintings in understanding place in *Stanley Park*—like Jeremy's attention to the three Dutch paintings—represents a coordination of real and imagined borders, an appeal to place-making that positions me, and

potentially other readers, in relation to Taylor's novel and the various paths it offers into—and out from—itself.

Siwash's maps provide "various views of what [can] be known of the world" (335) and likely inform Jeremy's final attempt at the restaurant business with the Food Caboose. The location of the Food Caboose "at the dead southern edge of Chinatown" reveals at the same time as it conceals Jeremy's comfort in an area of Vancouver that has "stopped being part of any neighbourhood at all. . . . A place stranded between other places" (418-19). He returns to an in-between place, a place of infinite possibilities, after having struggled to occupy a place he thought could be definite. Not surprisingly, the choice of artworks in the Food Caboose reflects a narrative preference for recognizing different paths into the same wood. Heckle, Jeckle, and Hide are back along with "half a dozen garage-sale Braque prints" (420). The inclusion of Georges Braque, co-founder of the Cubist movement, reinforces a preference for multiple viewpoints, even if—and in part because—Braque happens to have been born in Argenteuil-sur-Seine, a mere 300 kilometres northwest of St. Seine l'Abbaye, where Jeremy apprenticed in the *relais*. Still, by choosing a painter who helped revolutionize the way we visually perceive the world, Taylor shifts the narrative away from coordination to an abstract rendering of place. Like the difference between the Professor's interest in "how people move across" the earth's surface and "become stationary" and Jeremy's ex-girlfriend, Margaret's seismological interest in "how the surface beneath [people's] feet might choose to move first" (150), the novel counters Jeremy's ekphrastic attempts to locate himself with a Cubist recognition of infinite movement, albeit movement within a static place, the "ramshackle, barn-red" Food Caboose (418).

In addition to symbolizing the edge of Jeremy's culinary and personal changes, the Food Caboose functions on the periphery of the restaurant business proper. As the proprietor of a modern-day speakeasy, Jeremy ends the novel participating in a "punk economy" that is simultaneously at odds with the pop-art décor and thrifty Ikea cutlery he fills the Food Caboose with, and in keeping with Jeremy's shifting coordinates of self (421). Taylor's ekphrasis, far from prescribing criteria by which to define Jeremy as a character, provides strategies for negotiating Jeremy's developing, at times contradictory relations to other characters, to political ideologies, and to a sense of place. To locate himself in any definite way, Jeremy knows, is to fix himself "like a crapaudine" (45) on a skewer from which he is not likely to escape without being burned.

NOTES

I would like to thank Maia Joseph, Eva-Marie Kröller, Maryann Martin, and Bill New for their insights and helpful comments on various drafts. This paper is for Maryann. Images used with the permission of Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

1 Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Malden: Blackwell, 2005) 73; Alberto Manguel, *Reading Pictures: A History of Love and Hate* (Toronto: Knopf, 2000) 12.

2 For detailed accounts of etymological and theoretical histories of *ekphrasis*, see James A.W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993), and Tamar Yacobi, "Pictorial Models and Narrative Ekphrasis," *Poetics Today* 16 (1995): 599-649.

3 Taylor plays with this tension in complex ways by referencing various political ideologies throughout the novel. An exploration of the dynamics between each of these ideologies—e.g., National Socialism/Nazism, capitalism, socialism—would make a fine essay in itself. Unfortunately, such an argument lies beyond the scope of the present paper.

4 In "Ecological Integrity and National Narrative: Cleaning up Canada's National Parks," Catriona Sandilands links political and environmental concerns in the history of Canada's National Parks system, beginning with Banff (formerly Rocky Mountain Park), created in 1885. She argues that "national park spaces are only partly organized by their insertion into national—or state—discourses. It is equally important to understand that the demarcation of a park-space also represents a particular insertion of a landscape into relations of international capital" (139). While generally Sandilands' argument informs a reading of Jeremy's and Dante's contradictory notions of place, it can also be applied to a reading of Stanley Park proper. Though not a national park, Stanley Park, too, has been constructed for the "tourist-gaze" "as a unique and consumable 'locality'" (Sandilands 139).

5 Although it is currently attributed to Fabritius at the Rijksmuseum, Christopher Brown includes a discussion of the debate surrounding the artist's identity in his book *Carel Fabritius* (1981) under "Rejected Attributions."

6 This marginalization of the women from the painting in Taylor's ekphrasis might also provide reasons for Jeremy's interest in Fabritius's painting, for the relatively minor role women characters have in the novel, and for the complex, often under-valued roles they play in Jeremy's life.

7 This is the only eye contact depicted in the painting save for that between the bearded man behind the executioner's left shoulder and the viewer.

8 Dante humiliates Benny, whom he hires to work at Gerriamo's, by submitting her to an impromptu fashion show to highlight the new front-staff uniform, "a grey flannel suit, with many small buttons running up to a closed collar, and narrow-legged pants with large cuffs" (310). In a not-so-subtle retelling of the Nazi's desire for a pure Aryan nation, Dante asks Jeremy to "imagine a set of perfect clones. . . . A dozen perfect meat puppets" (313-4). This is another aspect of the novel that falls beyond the scope of the present essay. A number of references are made to Dante being evil and devilish—his nominal connection to Dante Alighieri, his ownership of Inferno International Coffee, and, later in the novel, the revelation that Sabatier knives were made in a factory called L'Enfer, the owners of which allegedly collaborated with the Nazis during World War II. Despite the abundance of evidence, however, I prefer to think of Dante in more complicated terms, as suggested in this exchange between Jeremy and his ever-so-wise godson Trout while standing before an image of the Inferno Coffee logo. When Trout asks what it is, Jeremy suggests "The

Devil." The child shakes his head at the suggestion: "'Nahh,' he [says]. 'Too obvious'" (262).

9 This is by no means the only reading of Asselijn's swan. Though the bird is rigidly set to defend itself, its neck is the only part that might reasonably be considered a phallus, and not a particularly straight one at that. The swan also resembles an arabesque.

10 Actually, neither the (European) rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) nor the rock doves (*Columba livia*) are indigenous to British Columbia, either.

11 An allusion to well-known Los Angeles street gangs, in Jeremy's food world Crip and Blood symbolize innovative, post-national and traditional, nostalgic culinary ideologies, respectively. "Crip cooks [are] critical" while Blood cooks exhibit interests "in the veracity of things culinary"; moreover, "[v]egetarianism [is] an option for Crips but not for Bloods" (32). This binary functions as many others in the novel (e.g., local/global, good/evil, socialist/capitalist), namely to emphasize movement between seemingly static ideas.

12 The novel opens with Jeremy and the Professor meeting on a bench on the edge of Stanley Park, "between two cherry trees" where a family portrait had been taken years earlier. The bench is near Lost Lagoon, "an in-between place" (3).

13 Cascadia is an alternative name for what is commonly called the Pacific Northwest. According to Eileen Quigley, Cascadia, a watershed (or bioregion) that includes parts of Alaska, British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and California, "eschews national and state boundaries but respects that natural and socio-cultural history that have united the region for centuries" (3).

14 I emphasize local in this case while acknowledging that neither Taylor nor I include First Nations artefacts or visual art in the present discussion. The closest we get to a First Nations character/perspective is the man, aptly called Siwash, who lives in an old pillbox by Siwash Rock, off the shore of Stanley Park; despite the nominal connection to the Native story about Siwash Rock, however, we are told that Siwash "had arrived . . . like so many others had arrived" at Stanley Park and "[c]rawled from the wreckage of an imperfect landscape onto these perfect shores" (24).

15 Bishop and Nygoyen can be considered local if one uses bioregional, as opposed to political, boundaries to define local; Kreschkov can be considered local if one thinks nationally rather than municipally or regionally.

16 Taylor is here likely paying homage to the upscale Vancouver restaurant, Bishop's (2183 West 4th Avenue).

17 The Professor offers the novel's first assessment of Dante's character: "Dante is a price. Dante is a sale. Dante abhors anything that is not a commodity" (30).

18 Sabatier knives are distinguished from other knives by their triangular blade.

19 Jeremy ends up replacing his Sabatier with what Taylor presents as its opposite, a $3200.00 Fugami: "A nine-inch chef's knife. Absolutely black from the point to the butt of the handle. It seemed to absorb the light" and would "not need sharpening until sometime early in the fourth millennium" (132).

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Moira MacDougall

Rejection

Rejection is an envelope, slim as a four line e-mail
that folds you in two, tighter than Uttanasana.
You pull your frontal lobes to your knees and breathe
as the tip of his tongue seals your edges. *Place me*
on the pyre, let me unfold.

Vincent Charles Lambert

Alfred Garneau paysagiste

Si la poésie québécoise était un musée et que nous puissions nous promener d'une salle à l'autre suivant l'ordre consacré, en commençant par les œuvres plus anciennes de François-Xavier Garneau ou Octave Crémazie, les quelques poèmes retenus d'Alfred Garneau nous laisseraient une impression semblable à celle que décrit Tzvetan Todorov au début de son essai sur la peinture hollandaise du XVII^e^ siècle : « soudain, à la place des grands tableaux représentant des personnages historiques, mythologiques ou religieux, apparaissent des images de mères épouillant un enfant, de tailleurs penchés sur leur ouvrage, de jeunes filles lisant des lettres ou jouant du clavecin » (9). Soudain, à la place des grands poèmes narratifs consacrés à des personnages historiques ou aux immensités du territoire canadien, nous pourrions lire un poème sur une forêt, un cimetière, un clair de lune, ou encore sur le lac Nominingue—« où règne un grand silence » (Garneau : 23)—ou sur la rivière Rideau, à Ottawa, où Garneau a habité presque toute sa vie.

Mais les poèmes d'Alfred Garneau, à la différence des peintures hollandaises, ne suffiraient pas en nombre à remplir toute une salle. Ils se trouveraient mêlés à d'autres poèmes de leur temps, de telle sorte que nous serions tentés de leur conférer un vague statut d'exception, à supposer qu'on les remarque. À côté d'une épître soulignant l'anniversaire de la bataille de la Monongahéla ou d'une chanson à la gloire des exilés des Rébellions, se trouveraient d'autres poèmes dont les thèmes nous sembleraient proches des préoccupations plus « privées », dirait-on, d'Alfred Garneau. Ceux de Nérée Beauchemin par exemple, ceux du Louis Fréchette de *Mes loisirs* ou de *Première neige*, ou ceux, encore, de Pamphile LeMay, l'auteur des *Gouttelettes*,

où l'on peut lire des poèmes intitulés « Le lac Beauport », « Le ruisseau », « Paysage », si semblables en effet par leurs titres aux poèmes de Garneau, mais, bien souvent, par leurs titres seuls—si bien que celui qui passerait trop vite, impatient peut-être de lire Alain Grandbois ou Saint-Denys Garneau dans la salle d'à-côté, risquerait de ne voir dans les poèmes de Garneau qu'un autre répertoire de lieux communs du nationalisme de l'époque, selon lequel la nation canadienne-française était porteuse d'une vocation providentielle en terre d'Amérique : glorification des ancêtres et de la vie traditionnelle, nostalgie d'une France pré-révolutionnaire, dévotion aux valeurs catholiques, chant d'une nature vierge, rustique, indomptable, à l'image du peuple canadien-français. Certes, il n'y a pas eu dans la seconde moitié du XIX^e^ siècle que des poèmes à vocation strictement édifiante, dont la seule tâche était d'exalter ces quelques traits considérés comme le propre de l'identité nationale; mais le poids, l'exigence de la nationalité, infléchissait toutes les voix, qu'elles le veuillent ou non, y compris celle de Garneau.[1]

La grande poésie, comme les « grands tableaux » dont parle Todorov, devait être en mesure de remplir cette exigence, ou du moins de l'exprimer, de s'en faire l'interprète. Rien n'est plus simple à repérer dans la poésie de ce temps que cette volonté de prêter voix à la consolidation de l'identité nationale, autant chez un poète comme William Chapman, l'un des chantres les plus fervents de la nature canadienne, que dans certains poèmes qui pourraient nous sembler proches, par leur réserve et leur modération, des poèmes de Garneau. Prenons pour exemple cet extrait d'un sonnet de Pamphile LeMay :

> Entendez-vous gémir les bois? Dans ces vallons
> Qui nous offraient, hier, leurs calmes promenades,
> Les coups de hache, drus comme des canonnades,
> Renversent bien des nids avec les arbres longs.
>
> Mais dans les défrichés où tombe la lumière,
> L'été fera mûrir, autour d'une chaumière,
> Le blé de la famille et le foin du troupeau. (122)

Vers accomplis, pourrait-on dire, dont la qualité première est de proposer en peu de mots une représentation pleine, et donc réconfortante, de l'espace à habiter. Lumière d'en haut, défrichés, mûrissement, blé, troupeau, non pas maison mais « chaumière » : lieu sûr que cette image faite pour illustrer, donner à croire. Avec un peu d'imagination on y verrait presque une île, un repaire, où s'exaucerait enfin le vœu d'une naissance, l'avènement d'une paix, d'un certain ordre sur le monde : « L'âme de la forêt fait place à l'âme humaine » (122), dit le vers suivant dans le poème. Comme si l'aménagement

d'un tel espace ne pouvait que répondre à une nécessité plus vaste et déjà formulée, déjà inscrite dans les bois. Et ce peut être justement la tâche ou la vocation de ce poème que de fournir un modèle d'accomplissement à cet impératif, dont Réjean Beaudoin a bien saisi l'enjeu : « reconquérir le sol de l'antique patrie, mais le faire d'un geste neuf, d'une âme généreuse » (143).

De son côté, dans un sonnet lui aussi, Alfred Garneau observe une scène semblable, un homme cultivant la terre. On retrouve le même apaisement, la même lumière que dans le poème de LeMay :

> Pâle, elle cria : « Jean! » du seuil de la chaumière.
> Lui chantait dans les ors lourds des épis penchants.
> Midi de son haleine assoupissait les champs;
> Un nuage, au lointain, montait dans la lumière,—(29)

mais l'homme n'entend pas la femme qui l'appelle. On ne saura donc jamais ce qu'elle voulait lui dire; la scène reste ouverte, sans conclusion, sans réponse. La suite du poème nous apprend cependant que ce nuage lointain est « un nuage trouble » qui annonce la tempête :

> Et le vent se déchaîne en fureur, et la grêle
> Fouette et vanne les blés autour de l'homme frêle
> Tombé sur ses genoux. (30)

Cette strophe, la dernière, contredit sans l'énoncer la formule de LeMay : ici, au contraire, la nature prend l'homme, « l'âme humaine fait place à l'âme de la nature ». On pense à certaine scène de la *Scouine* d'Albert Laberge, où semble rompu, comme ici, une sorte de pacte avec la nature. Mais contrairement au roman de Laberge, le poème de Garneau ne s'inscrit d'aucune façon en rupture avec une thèse quelconque, du terroir ou d'ailleurs. À la limite on pourrait croire que Garneau fait du vieil homme tombé contre la terre une sorte de martyr national, à l'image de Jóson par exemple, le fils emporté par la rivière, dans cette scène éloquente de *Menaud maître-draveur*. De ces suppositions, rien n'est exclu. Et c'est peut-être ainsi que Garneau se distingue de LeMay : son poème ne commande aucune interprétation préconçue, aucune adhésion de la part du lecteur. Cela même si la scène est inscrite, dès la première strophe, au registre des lieux les plus convenus du terroir.

Et la poésie de Garneau a bien d'autres lieux, qui pourront nous sembler quelque peu rétrécis face aux immensités chères à la poésie héroïco-patriotique d'un Fréchette ou d'un Chapman, je pense à cette phrase, « La maison touche au bois » (120), ou ailleurs, à cette « forte berge, au large flanc de glaise » (117), à ces « confins d'un hameau tranquille du bas Maine » (133) : tous ont ce point en commun de désigner les environs, les alentours; non

pas ce décor sans vie des poèmes de Beauchemin, plutôt un lieu qui accueille, pour la modeler, la scène qui l'occupe, toujours en mouvement, ouvert, lui-même soumis aux variations de la lumière et du vent, aux précipitations, aux odeurs. Et quelqu'un est là, qui regarde, entend, respire, sans qui le poème n'aurait pas lieu, et qui pourtant n'est jamais là totalement, souvent laissé à l'arrière-scène, mesurant les distances. « L'impression globale, écrit Todorov à propos des peintures hollandaises, est que le 'réalisme' l'emporte sur l'allégorie, et que la manière de peindre, qui est une glorification de la présence, s'accorde bien avec le sens global, un acquiescement à la vie terrestre, au monde existant » (93).

Dans l'un de ses premiers poèmes, « À mes amis », qu'il publie en 1864 (il a vingt-huit ans) dans le *Foyer canadien*, Alfred Garneau répond en quelque sorte aux demandes de ses proches, qui lui réclamaient des vers : « chante pour nous » (4), tels sont précisément les mots de la requête.

Or le poème qui vient en retour, le plus long de l'œuvre et qu'on pourrait décrire comme un art poétique, fait plutôt le récit d'une sorte d'inaptitude au chant :

> Ah! chanter, chanter… Dieu que n'ai-je
> L'ivresse du cygne un moment;
> Il chante, et tout son corps de neige
> Résonne sur l'eau doucement. (4)

Et c'est ainsi que l'œuvre commence, par ce constat qui semble mettre fin à toute volonté d'écrire. Car écrire, être poète, quand on a Lamartine et Hugo sur sa table de chevet, c'est chanter, prêter voix. Sur l'instrument, le chant a le privilège de l'origine : il fait entendre une intériorité présumée, qu'il a pour tâche de rendre au dehors. Car chanter, pour l'âme romantique, c'est se répandre dans l'air, prendre part aux lieux qui l'entourent, être dans le secret des choses. On pourra comparer au poème de Garneau un passage du *Cours familier de littérature* de Lamartine : « Cette explosion de son âme ignorante et simple donna à sa voix, ordinairement faible et douce, un volume de son et une énergie de vibration qui faisaient frémir les feuilles des arbres comme un souffle de tempête. » Un chant premier, donc, involontaire et grandiose, qui se propage dans l'espace et l'anime « comme un souffle ».

Comme chez Lamartine, on retrouve dans le poème de Garneau la mise en scène d'un chant à l'état naissant, au moment où la voix commence à se faire entendre. Rappelons sur ce point les vers de Hugo que Garneau place

en exergue à son poème : « Sans éveiller d'écho sonore / J'ai haussé ma voix faible encore » (3). Car c'est peut-être ainsi que « À mes amis » aurait dû débuter, par ce haussement timide et imprévu de la voix, par son élévation progressive hors du silence qui aurait trouvé son aboutissement dans le chant, et dont l'écriture aurait accompagné l'ascension. Mais Garneau prend, à défaut de chanter, le chant pour objet, le chant qui aurait pu être et qui ne viendra pas : « je voudrais élever la voix »,

> Elle flotterait sur la plaine
> Et les ondes et les coteaux,
> Mêlée à la nocturne haleine
> Des feuilles vertes et des eaux.
>
> Et votre groupe errant dans l'ombre
> Dirait : « Avançons, avançons
> Sans bruit sous le bocage sombre.
> Ah ! quelle âme exhale ces sons! » (6)

On reconnaît donc, mais au conditionnel, dans l'ordre du désir et de l'empêchement, le « souffle » de Lamartine. L'extrait du poème de Garneau est éloquent quant aux ambitions que recouvre un tel attrait pour le chant : chanter, prendre voix, permet d'aller à la rencontre des lieux, peut-être même d'y participer, et aussi, comme l'indique la seconde strophe, de servir de guide, d'interprète, à ceux qui écoutent dans l'ombre, les silencieux. Le chant seul est en mesure de faire voir « la plaine / Et les ondes et les coteaux » à ceux qui suivent en chemin.

Ces ambitions dissimulent, mais irréalisée, une foi certaine en ce pouvoir civilisateur de la parole dont parle Paul Bénichou dans *Le temps des prophètes*. Je me reporterai toutefois aux propos de deux lecteurs attentifs de la poésie canadienne de ce temps, dont les critiques pourront éclairer l'enjeu plus directement politique d'une telle parole.

Dans un texte daté de 1866, Hector Fabre en appelle à la reconnaissance par l'écrivain canadien de ce qui compose la singularité de son environnement : « Le rôle et l'avenir de nos littératures, c'est de fixer et de rendre ce que nous avons de particulier, ce qui nous distingue à la fois de la race dont nous sortons et de celle au milieu de laquelle nous vivons » (90). Et cette identification du particulier ne peut se faire autrement que par le chant, c'est là, selon Fabre, un remède à l'absence d'un véritable « sentiment de la nature » dans la littérature canadienne :

> Notre grande et belle nature, dans sa variété infinie d'aspects, est bien faite aussi pour tenter les brillantes imaginations. C'est pourtant le sentiment de la nature

qui manque le plus à nos écrivains. Il y a dans *Charles Guérin* quelques larges descriptions, mais la passion qui s'attache au moindre coin de verdure, où la sent-on ? Nos hivers attendent encore leur barde. Chantons nos campagnes, nos grands bois, nos chaînes de montagnes. (90)

De son côté, dans un article peu connu, « Le fleuve chanté », qu'il publie en 1884 dans les *Nouvelles soirées canadiennes*, Arthur Buies formule un constat qu'on peut rapprocher de celui de Fabre : « Le Saint-Laurent ne se prête pas à la poésie, à moins que ce ne soit celle de Milton, de Dante ou de Victor Hugo » (481). Il s'explique ainsi : « Cette grande nature a des rudesses d'ébauche, des hardiesses et des échevellements qui ne vont pas aux vers de l'élégie, à ces vers qui soupirent aux bords des lacs » (481). Il y aurait donc trop de grandeur, trop de sublime dans ce fleuve pour que la poésie (à tout le moins celle de ses contemporains) soit en mesure de le considérer pour ce qu'il est, d'en offrir une juste figuration. Cette nature serait, en elle-même, de par une qualité de démesure qui lui serait propre, irreprésentable. Elle résisterait à l'écriture qui voudrait la saisir autrement que « dans l'envergure de ses formes gigantesques » : ce fleuve, pour être saisi, regardé dans son ensemble, doit par conséquent être chanté, écrit Buies. Comme si le chant seul était en mesure de dire la nature canadienne « dans sa variété infinie d'aspects », dans ce qu'elle a « de particulier », pour reprendre les mots de Fabre.

Mon but n'est pas de faire de Garneau une victime de son temps, mais au contraire de montrer que cette faveur absolue accordée au chant était généralisée. « Des chants! des chants! des chants encor! » (213), écrit Garneau lui-même dans un poème-hommage à Louis Fréchette. Il faut chanter haut et fort, réclament de leur côté Fabre et Buies, cependant que le poète semble plus enclin aux « vers de l'élégie ». Il n'a aucun « sentiment de la nature » puisque la nature canadienne est « grande et belle », et qu'il ne paraît guère en mesure de la voir comme telle, de s'élever jusqu'à elle. Eux réclament un barde, un sauveur d'espace, quand le poète ne peut que chanter faux. On pourra lire un poème de William Chapman en exemple, portant justement sur le fleuve Saint-Laurent :

Salut, ô fier géant, ô fleuve romantique,
Qui, courant t'abîmer au sein de l'Atlantique,
Reflète dans tes eaux le ciel du Canada,
Le ciel de mon pays enivré d'espérance,
Et qu'aux noms tout-puissants du Christ et de la France,
L'immortel Cartier aborda! (31)

On est ici très loin de l'élégie, comme si Chapman voulait plutôt répondre au défi lancé par Fabre et Buies. On trouve mille exemples de ce genre de

tableau dans la poésie de l'époque, où l'on voit que la grandeur du fleuve Saint-Laurent se résume en fait à l'image qu'il renvoie d'un pays, le Canada, et d'une histoire, celle de la France. Comme Chapman, la majorité des poètes contemporains de Garneau ne peuvent souvent faire autrement, face à l'espace, que rappeler que cet espace est bien canadien, qu'il est en quelque sorte l'image la plus juste de la nationalité, soit, comme ici, de façon explicite, en invoquant directement certains noms, certaines figures nationales, soit, comme chez Buies, en insistant sur l'austérité de l'environnement, sur son âpreté, sa sauvagerie, son immensité, son âge immémorial, son orgueil, traits qui constituent selon plusieurs, de l'abbé Casgrain à Lionel Groulx, le propre de la « race » canadienne-française. « Et le Fleuve, le vieux fleuve, le fleuve immense », écrit encore Nérée Beauchemin en 1917, « Reflétant les espoirs des races obstinées » (46).

La qualité première de ce fleuve résiderait donc dans son reflet, dans sa capacité de renvoyer l'image qu'on lui présente. Il se voit manifestement chargé (et cela d'emblée, à première vue, comme si cela faisait partie de lui depuis toujours) d'un caractère national, et c'est ce caractère, plus que l'apparence réelle, bien en vue du fleuve, qui semble justifier qu'on le chante.

Qu'en est-il de Garneau maintenant? Notons qu'il identifie, dans « À mes amis », le poète à l'hirondelle. Il formule cependant cette interrogation : « Et l'on aime à la regarder, / Lui demande-t-on de chanter? » (13). Garneau ne fait en passant que soulever la question, pourtant le reproche est là, dirait-on, comme s'il voulait répondre au « chante pour nous » lancé par ses proches. Les derniers mots du poème—« Mais hélas, je n'ai pas la voix » (13)—peuvent aussi être interprétés comme une réponse négative à la requête initiale, laquelle excède, comme on l'a vu, le simple cercle d'amis et nous renvoie à un impératif plus large, qui procède de la nécessité pour une nation de glorifier son environnement, entendu que la gloire de celui-ci repose essentiellement sur un ensemble de traits associés en propre à l'identité nationale.

Le poème de Garneau est peut-être bien, tout compte fait, l'annonce d'une renonciation, ou plutôt d'une mi-renonciation : Garneau renonce d'emblée au chant, mais par défaut en quelque sorte, sans pourtant s'en détourner ni en méconnaître la valeur. Mais alors se produit pour l'écriture, au moment de reconnaître son inaptitude, une sorte de renversement de perspective. Garneau n'a d'autre choix que de formuler, précisément, un art poétique, c'est-à-dire de se situer du côté du discours, de la réflexion sur les rapports de la poésie et du monde plutôt que de chercher à compenser cette insuffisance pour le chant par le chant lui-même. Garneau admet ainsi

un éloignement, une distance qui ne saura s'éliminer par la suite, et qui deviendra plutôt l'objet même du poème. On verra plus loin que ce renoncement initial au chant aboutit, dans les poèmes de maturité, à l'adoption décisive d'une écriture de disponibilité et d'écoute. Il écrira d'ailleurs :

> Écoute. Afin que toute chose
> Pour l'homme ait du charme ici bas (63)

On peut supposer que le titre de l'ensemble « À Wright's Grove. Sur les bords de la rivière Rideau » fut choisi par Alfred Garneau lui-même, pour désigner une suite de poèmes écrits en juin 1898 lors de son passage à l'ancienne propriété de Thomas Grove au bord de la rivière Rideau : « La rivière », « La maison », « Clair de lune », « Le bois » et « Le mort », ce dernier faisant état de l'impression ressentie par Garneau, alors qu'il « foule d'un pied las l'herbe dans la prairie » (122), d'être déjà passé par « ces clos », de s'être arrêté devant « ce toit » où, ce soir-là, un vieillard est mort qu'il avait rencontré auparavant—« c'était l'autre semaine », écrit-il. Voici donc ce qui se passe « Sur les bords de la rivière Rideau », semble dire Garneau, voici la rivière, la maison, le bois derrière, la plaine : la seule énumération des titres laisse entendre que son projet est de revenir sur certains événements qui ont en commun d'être survenus dans un même endroit, à quelques jours d'intervalle, et d'offrir une lecture des lieux qui s'élaborerait par tableaux, voire peut-être de reconstituer un environnement.

On trouve dans « Clair de lune » une sorte de contrepoids à l'attrait généralisé pour le chant que j'ai examiné auparavant :

> Une barquette hier, par la lune argentée,
> Promena dans la nuit une plainte chantée.
> Une plainte d'amour, je suppose. La voix
> Fraîche et jeune agitait l'écho sourd dans le bois.
> Ô ce soupir humain qui volait à la grève!
> Ô nef fuyant en un paysage de rêve! (119)

Celui qui prend voix dans ce petit poème le fait pour lui seul, moins pour incarner le martyr ou le sauveur d'une communauté que pour se mettre à l'écoute d'une autre voix que la sienne. Cette voix ne s'adresse pas à lui, mais s'élève, détachée d'un échange secret qui ne le concerne guère, appartenant plutôt à l'air de la grève, aux branches, à l'écoulement de la rivière, et bientôt cet « écho sourd » suffit à rendre vie aux environs. Et soudain la « barquette » (comme ancrée au bord du visible, appelée à paraître mais s'y refusant toujours) est un navire qui s'avance dans le rêve : la scène bascule dans

l'onirisme. Le chant contribue à faire de la grève et du bois un « paysage de rêve », soumettant l'espace à un ordre qui lui est étranger, avec lequel il se trouve bientôt confondu.

Voici donc une scène qui aurait peut-être pu convenir à l'art poétique du premier Garneau, à la différence près que les rôles sont inversés : le poète, ici, est à l'écoute. Car en fait il n'aurait pas dû être là, et c'est par accident que le chant lui parvient. On sent bien son point de vue, qui est aussi, par ailleurs, un point d'invisibilité, dont l'attention est dirigée vers un endroit inaccessible au regard : « Une plainte d'amour, je suppose ». Il faudrait s'interroger longuement sur ces derniers mots, car l'expression renvoie d'abord au fait que le poète est, en quelque sorte, détrôné du monde, laissé à l'écart de l'événement qui le travaille—comme, dans « À mes amis », ce « groupe errant dans l'ombre » qui s'efforçait de suivre le chant dans son élévation. Et aussi, soulignons-le, ce « je suppose » implique nécessairement une obscurité : le poète entend venir ce qui n'est pas encore sous ses yeux et ne peut, par conséquent, s'en tenir au visible. L'invisibilité déclenche alors le rêve, j'allais dire la vision : c'est, du fait d'entendre et de ne rien voir encore, l'espace entier qui devient méconnaissable et perméable. Jusqu'à laisser place à une irréalité qui est à la fois le prolongement et la négation de la situation initiale. On assiste en effet, dans les derniers vers de « Clair de lune », à la transformation d'une simple « barquette » en une « nef fuyant dans un paysage de rêve » : le contraire d'une atténuation, donc, une expansion, rendue possible non par l'ambition d'édifier une réalité supérieure mais par une sorte de compensation de l'imaginaire qui n'aurait sans doute jamais eu lieu si la barque, autrement dit la source du chant, « l'oiseau de la source cachée » (38), écrit-il ailleurs, eut été visible.

Non seulement dans les poèmes qu'il situe à Wright's Grove, mais partout ailleurs, Garneau demeure captivé par une sorte d'amplitude que prend parfois l'espace, au sens où celui-ci se voit doté d'une épaisseur soudaine et presque inapparente qui se rend sensible au-dessus des eaux, dans les feuillages, comme une atmosphère dont s'imprègne le paysage et qui lui donne contenance : « Ah! l'air de deuil que tout respire! » (71), écrit-il dans « Octobre ». Même dans un poème plus ancien comme « Bluette, allons sur l'onde », publié en 1867 dans *Le Foyer canadien*, Garneau se montre déjà préoccupé par cette « harmonie étrange » qu'un chant parvient à transmettre aux éléments. La scène rappelle inévitablement « Clair de lune », mais d'un autre angle, pourrait-on dire. Assis à son tour dans une barque, Garneau écoute une femme chanter à ses côtés :

En tournant la liquide allée
Tu chantais : soudain, les échos
Partirent comme une volée
D'oiseaux chantants le long des eaux.

C'était une harmonie étrange,
Un lent et beau murmure clair;
Je te dis : « N'es-tu pas un ange
Menant quelque grand chœur dans l'air? » (84)

Comment expliquer cette fascination pour l'air qu'on rencontre d'un bout à l'autre de cette œuvre? Garneau est bien un poète aérien au sens où l'entend Bachelard dans *L'air et les songes*, un être pour qui « tout s'assemble, tout s'enrichit en montant », alors que « pour un *terrestre* tout se disperse et se perd en quittant la terre » (62). Cela se vérifie dans un passage étonnant du poème « Fleurette sauvage » où Garneau, alors qu'il marche une fois encore dans les bois, croit « voir un peu / De ciel, ardemment bleu, / Émietté parmi l'herbe » (135). Comme si le ciel, en touchant terre, avait volé en éclats, s'était dispersé. L'air est au contraire le lieu d'un « grand chœur » qui dispense une harmonie dans l'espace, mais une harmonie dont la qualité première est son étrangeté : l'association des deux termes paraît contradictoire, et pourtant il faut comprendre que cette « harmonie étrange », ou cette « étrange harmonie » comme il l'écrivait déjà dans « À mes amis », est telle, avant tout, du simple fait d'être là, dans l'espace, par une sorte d'invraisemblance que résume assez bien l'emploi—très rare chez Garneau—des mots « ange », « chœur », pour décrire son effet sur les environs. Une harmonie qui demeure étrangère à l'espace, improbable donc, mais dont l'espace profite malgré lui, et qui paraît rendre l'espace plus sensible à celui qui s'y trouve. Le terme « air » est employé au moment où la composition des lieux se montre plus clairement ou plus intensément à l'esprit, comme à Percé par exemple : « Ô beau rocher! tes blanches lignes / Courent dans l'air » (142), ou devant le vol d'un oiseau : « On le voit à l'instant […] S'élancer en chantant dans les vagues de l'air » (43), ou encore à Vaudreuil : « L'air était vif d'abeilles » (134), ou ailleurs : « L'air se remplit d'oiseaux » (171). Et c'est aussi, on le voit bien, pour signaler la présence très palpable dans l'espace ou, comme il le dit lui-même, « dans l'air », d'une même étrangeté, comme si ce rocher, ces oiseaux, ces abeilles, par leur mouvement, occupaient soudainement la totalité du paysage, imposant à l'esprit l'impression d'un certain débordement. Dans ces rares occasions l'environnement paraît, à la fois, ouvert, perméable, et plein, requis par une réalité qui exige une attention si vive et instantanée de la part du poète qu'elle semble défier toute évocation.

Les premières années du siècle sont parsemées de poèmes intitulés « croquis », « tableautin », « esquisse », autant chez un poète sensible aux réalités urbaines comme Alphonse Beauregard que chez un écrivain plus attaché au terroir comme Damase Potvin, et cette tendance trouve ses premières manifestations dans les *Premières poésies* d'Eudore Évanturel en 1878. Pour l'une des rares fois de son histoire la littérature canadienne est alors contemporaine de ce qui a lieu, au même moment, en Autriche, en France ou en Allemagne, chez Hofmannsthal, Rilke ou Proust par exemple : « C'est le poète qui désormais regarde du côté de la peinture » (83), écrit Jacques Le Rider. On peut lire un exemple parmi d'autres de cette fascination du littéraire pour le pictural à la toute fin d'un journal de voyage de Henri d'Arles, vers 1913 :

> J'ai quitté la ville de bonne heure avec mon ami l'artiste F. Nous nous sommes dirigés vers ces paysages de beauté et de grâce disséminés sur les flancs du mont *Un* … Et nous voici installés sur les bords d'un petit étang. Lui prend ses pinceaux, tandis que je crayonne ces quelques notes. (332)

Voilà une scène qui n'est pas sans rappeler le poème « Premières pages de la vie », l'un des premiers que Garneau publie, dès 1857, écrit en souvenir de ses promenades estivales (en barque encore une fois) avec son ami Eugène Taché :

> Entre chaque refrain, c'était de longs propos
> Sur les verts alentours et la grotte aux échos,
> Et sur le couchant d'or qui dans l'eau se reflète,
> Car nous étions déjà, toi peintre, moi poète … (47)

Une équivalence de moyens d'expression est ici posée, entre l'écrit et le peint, entre les mots et les couleurs, qui s'appuie sur la perception de certains éléments naturels alors associés en propre à la peinture de paysage, comme si ce genre de préoccupation était jusque-là réservé au peintre et que l'écrivain commençait de s'en réclamer. « Si d'un Watteau j'avais et les couleurs et l'art! » (107), écrit Garneau dans un poème intitulé « Tableautin ». Il va même jusqu'à placer, en exergue à « La jeune baigneuse », la formule consacrée *Ut pictura poesis*, qu'on traduit le plus souvent ainsi : « la poésie est comme la peinture ».

Mais le poème qui offre l'exemple le plus évident d'un traitement pictural de l'espace est ce sonnet, possiblement écrit en août 1897, lors du premier séjour de Garneau au bord du « Grand lac Nominingue, province de Québec » :

> C'est, en forêt, un lac où règne un grand silence.
> Vingt monts aux noirs sommets soutiennent son bassin;
> Une île çà et là—tel un pâle dessin—
> S'estompe à peine, au ras du flot qui se balance.

Des grèves sans roseaux; au loin l'admirable anse
Où s'éveille le jour comme sur un beau sein;
Puis des bois s'accrochant aux rochers, sombre essaim;
Puis d'autres en haut, droits comme des fûts de lance.

Il n'est que ce tableau. Mais quelquefois, pourtant,
Ces bords, partout muets, s'animent un instant :
Un cerf paraît, qui nage en renversant sa tête.

Il brame avec douceur dans les clartés du soir.
On dirait un tremblant cantique de la bête.
Aux êtres sans raison Dieu se laisse-t-il voir? (23)

Ce qui rend ce poème si proche d'un tableau est bien ce privilège accordé à la description des lieux : d'abord un lac, ensuite, autour, des montagnes, des grèves et des bois, quelques îles au loin, et nul besoin pour Garneau de parfaire la scène d'une morale toute faite, pour lui donner profondeur. Au contraire, c'est à une question que le lecteur est soumis, une question qui ouvre le poème à une dimension éthique qui sourd de la contemplation même du paysage, qui vient, pour ainsi dire, *après* le paysage, à partir de la description qui en est faite plutôt que comme une énigme initiale à laquelle il serait chargé de répondre : cette question, contrairement aux préceptes moraux qui terminent les poèmes de *Patrie intime* de Nérée Beauchemin, garde le paysage ouvert, inconnu, sans réponse justement. L'impression nous est donnée par ailleurs que ce paysage bien visible est perçu, d'emblée, comme un tableau, « tel un pâle dessin », écrit-il, avec son immobilité, son « grand silence », comme si le caractère pictural des lieux avait pris le pas sur l'espace « réel » et l'avait figé pour l'éternité, hors de toute intervention extérieure et de toute variation possible. Il n'en est rien, pourtant, et c'est d'ailleurs ce qui vient nuancer l'équivalence posée au préalable entre le poème et le tableau, ce « quelquefois, pourtant » qui survient à mi-chemin du poème et sur lequel je voudrais m'attarder un peu.

Ce qui s'impose peut-être en dernier lieu à la lecture des poèmes de Garneau est bien ce mouvement soudain, concentré, dans une étendue jusque-là tenue pour immobile : « Un cerf paraît, qui nage en renversant sa tête », vers qui a pour effet, dirait-on, d'incliner l'image précédemment décrite. Ce mouvement imprévu et localisé semble donner toute sa tangibilité au reste du tableau. L'effet qui en résulte est que l'événement est raconté à mesure qu'il survient, dans une sorte de simultanéité qui abolit la préséance de l'écriture sur le monde. C'est l'art, plutôt, qui répond de l'événement : le poème ne paraît venir qu'après coup. La scène est toujours là, déjà, quand le poète arrive pour la voir, avec sa part d'aléatoire et d'inattendu, dans une extériorité qui n'est

peut-être en fait que l'impression que tout cela qui s'étend devant soi, montagnes, lac, grèves, possède une vie propre, et qu'à tout moment risquent de surgir de nulle part un oiseau, une bourrasque, pour le confirmer.

La poésie arrive, pour Garneau, au moment où l'être est disponible à ce qui l'entoure. Mais nul effort ne paraît nécessaire à l'avènement d'une telle rencontre. Cela survient par accident, au détour d'un chemin, devant la plaine, souvent au bord de l'eau ou en forêt, rarement en ville, on le remarquera, pour cette raison peut-être que les lieux privilégiés par Garneau sont lieux d'attente et de surgissement : tout bruit en campagne fait événement, tout mouvement se répercute dans l'esprit. L'attention n'est requise que par endroits, mais directement, sans rémission, comme le suggère ce passage des « Premières pages de la vie » :

> Mais bientôt un vent frais, un frelon bourdonnant,
> Une feuille entraînée au tournant d'une source,
> Soufflait sur notre ardeur, suspendait notre course; (45)

ou la dernière strophe du premier « Croquis » :

> Soudain, glissant vers moi sur son aile inquiète
> À travers les rameaux, doux et penchant sa tête,
> Un rossignol vint boire au flot harmonieux. (36)

« Mais quelquefois », « Mais bientôt », « Soudain », sont les marques les plus évidentes d'un facteur d'imprévu auquel Garneau attache un sens qui n'est peut-être pas aussi étranger qu'on pourrait le croire à son penchant pour la peinture, au sens où celui-ci manifeste une certaine ambition d'objectivité, ou à tout le moins l'intention de tenir à distance une portion d'espace pour en apprécier plus justement les nuances. Ce serait, curieusement, au moment où ces « bords, partout muets, s'animent un instant », où le silence des lieux est soudain brisé par le « tremblant cantique de la bête », que le poème accomplirait avec le plus d'acuité son tableau.

C'est à ces occasions, en effet, que l'espace révèle une dimension d'inconnu qui est le signe le plus probant d'une distance, d'un vide entre le poète et son environnement. Et c'est dans cet écart qu'un paysage naît à la conscience. C'est cette distance qui en est le creuset, où le familier devient méconnaissable et demande une objectivation des lieux. N'est présent, réel, que ce qui passe : on expliquerait par cette formule l'attachement de Garneau pour ces manifestations inattendues qui viennent souvent clore ses tableaux. Rares sont les descriptions qui laissent l'espace à son immobilité. Tout fuit, tout est momentané chez Garneau : « Allons, avant que l'ombre emplisse / Le lac,

tout rougissant encor » (82). Et plus loin : « Jouissons de l'heure : elle fuit » (83). Le mot est dit, l'heure : Albert Lozeau fondera, quelques années plus tard, toute sa poétique sur le passage du temps et les variations paysagères qui s'ensuivent, avec un souci étonnant pour cette fameuse unité temporelle dont Garneau, dès 1867, dans un poème comme « Bluette, allons sur l'onde », avait déjà saisi l'importance :

> Voici l'heure où sur toute chose,—
> Onde, herbe pâle ou rameau noir,—
> La lumière tombe plus rose
> De l'urne vermeille du soir. (81)

Cette strophe est la première du poème : il s'agirait donc, dans la mesure du possible, de suspendre le temps à ce moment de la journée pour en apprécier l'effet. C'est ce moment, le crépuscule, alors que l'influence de la lumière sur les éléments est la plus intense, que recouvre le plus souvent le mot « heure », comme c'est également le cas dans un passage très éloquent d'une chronique de Michelle Le Normand, « Les quais », écrite à Sorel en 1917 : « Rien de tout cela n'est splendide, rien n'est grand, rien n'est magnifique, rien n'est riche ; tout est vieux comme le sable, on dirait ; et pourtant, à l'heure du crépuscule, à cette heure dispensatrice d'illusions tout cela vous touche ; tout cela vous donne envie d'être peintre » (Lambert : 29). On ne saurait trouver meilleur exemple pour résumer les relations du pictural à l'éphémère, au fugace : à cette heure précise, ce qui est vieux et sans attrait pour l'œil apparaît pour quelques minutes sous un jour nouveau que le peintre seul serait en mesure de saisir à temps, en ce que le peint, au contraire de l'écrit, ne suppose aucun développement dans la durée, aucun ralentissement imposé par la lecture.

Si Garneau s'attache, en peintre, à la description des lieux, ces lieux ne sont guère figés dans le temps mais soumis à son influence : ils donnent immanquablement l'impression d'être « de courte durée », ouverts à l'intrusion imprévue d'un animal ou d'une simple feuille dans le cadre du tableau comme à la progression des ombres ou aux variations de la lumière. Comme l'écrit Albert Lozeau à la parution des *Poésies* : « Garneau sait observer et rendre ce qu'il voit. Ce n'est pas un peintre sur toile, qui affectionne les grands sujets exigeant beaucoup d'air et de ciel, et qui empâte lourdement. Il saisit les nuances, ce qui est d'un artiste, et donne l'illusion du mouvement » (172).

L'impression m'est donnée que les propos d'Arthur Buies sur la propension à l'élégie des poètes de son temps (ce qu'il appelle des « vers qui soupirent au bord des lacs » et dont les lamentations n'auraient

aucune chance de traiter avec justesse de la nature canadienne, infinie, grandiose, faite comme nulle autre, en somme, pour le chant) se trouvent en quelque sorte récusés par la simple lecture des poèmes de Garneau, devant lesquels un tel jugement, s'il n'est pas sans pressentir un malaise réel, semble méconnaître les moyens d'arriver à cet acte de reconnaissance qu'il réclame de l'écrivain canadien à l'égard de son environnement.

Garneau délaisse la fonction de chantre qu'on assignait d'ordinaire au poète canadien pour adopter, mais toujours en écriture, par un renversement étrange qui se produit dans les limites du poème, le point de vue de l'observateur. La reconnaissance dont parle Buies, et qui ne peut selon lui avoir lieu autrement que par le chant, surviendrait au contraire au moment où le poème se défait de toute ambition édifiante pour s'atteler à une tâche qui s'impose à lui par accident, celle de mieux entendre, de mieux voir : le travail de Garneau a consisté, si l'on peut dire, à rendre la vue au poème.

Quelques années plus tard, sa nièce, Marie-Louise Marmette, formulera une interrogation qui me semble révélatrice du travail d'objectivation que sous-tend l'assimilation du poème au tableau : « Le mot? où trouver dans ce chaos de sensations le geste du verbe qui fera surgir la vision, les contours, les images, la peinture, la description de tout ce que l'on voit, de tout ce qu'on entend, de jamais vu, de jamais évoqué? » (Lambert : 124). Voir, peindre, décrire adéquatement, voilà qui revient à une seule et même activité, quasi utopique et j'allais dire, dans les circonstances, polémique, de mise à distance du réel. Or cette nécessité de voir avec plus d'acuité et de détachement ne peut s'imposer qu'à partir du moment où l'espace, en lui-même, de par une qualité de profondeur et d'imprévu qui lui est propre, se met à solliciter le poète depuis une aire qui lui fait défaut. L'environnement semble vidé, soudainement, d'un ancien code, ne supportant plus les visions grandiloquentes qu'il avait pour effet de faire miroiter. Et c'est pourquoi on semble assister dans les poèmes de Garneau à ce que j'appellerais, faute de mieux, une sorte de rétrécissement du monde : le poète n'a plus guère devant lui cet espace commun et préconçu dont il ne pouvait que faire valoir la grandeur, mais un paysage parmi d'autres, à la fois délimité par le regard de celui qui s'y trouve, individualisé donc, et étranger, traversé par des forces sur lesquelles le poète a peu de prise.

Nous pourrions dire que c'est sur ce paradoxe d'une proximité avec l'environnement le plus immédiat et, simultanément, d'une étrangeté qui semble toujours persister malgré tout, que semble fondée, chez Garneau, la figuration du paysage. Peut-on établir un lien entre ce rétrécissement des lieux et,

en contrepartie, l'exaltation des grands espaces dans la poésie épique d'un Louis Fréchette ou d'un William Chapman? Autrement dit, serait-il possible que ce rétrécissement, qui semble accompagner de près l'avènement d'une sensibilité au paysage au Canada français, survienne au moment où l'exaltation territoriale (ou ce qui motive une telle exaltation) n'est plus possible en poésie?

Il suffit de lire d'un bout à l'autre la poésie des années 1860 à 1930 pour constater, dans une écriture tentée, avec force chez Garneau ou Lozeau, par la description de la nature, l'absence de toute description panoramique, de tout point de vue qui serait susceptible de donner une vision globale des lieux et permettre, comme chez Chateaubriand, une appréhension plus large, typiquement romantique, du sublime. Des panoramas, Julien Gracq écrit :

> une des singularités de la figure de Moïse, dans la Bible, est que le don de clairvoyance semble lié chez lui chaque fois, et comme indissolublement, à l'embrassement par le regard de quelque vaste panorama révélateur. (88)

On en trouve quelques rares, des panoramas, souvent maladroits et fort peu décrits d'ailleurs, chez des poètes plus enclins au chant ou à l'évocation nostalgique d'un passé glorieux, comme Chapman ou Charles Gill. Mon impression est que, à commencer par Garneau et Lozeau, certains poètes canadiens-français font montre de rapports (soit de terreur, de fascination, de joie...) à l'environnement qui n'excluent aucunement une certaine perception du sublime, mais que cette appréhension se fait immanquablement dans un cadre restreint, dans un lieu ne permettant pas cet embrassement global et cette clairvoyance dont parle Gracq. D'une part, donc, le poète refuse, ou s'avoue inapte à adopter cette posture de chantre que lui assigne la critique de son temps—jusqu'à Marcel Dugas : « Qu'il se dresse sur les Laurentides cet Homère attendu de tous ! Nous le voulons » (103)—et d'autre part il parvient, lorsqu'il renonce à toute ambition patriotique et qu'il se concentre sur son environnement le plus rapproché, à établir un contact plus intime (et non moins problématique) avec la nature.

Dans une étude sur *Angéline de Montbrun* intitulée « La maison dans le désert », Pierre Nepveu aborde notamment la question du deuil des grands espaces, en comparant l'œuvre de Laure Conan à *La Légende d'un peuple* de Louis Fréchette. Il arrive à la conclusion suivante :

> De Fréchette au Lionel Groulx des dernières années, celui de *Notre grande aventure* qui paraîtra en 1958, à la veille de la Révolution tranquille, cette américanité hégémonique et sublime trahira dans le discours québécois un deuil qui ne veut pas dire son nom. Deuil d'un espace perdu par fatalité historique, mais deuil plus

> grave encore, affectant la subjectivité elle-même, son rapport à l'altérité, à un vide qui la décentre et qui donne au monde un nouveau visage. (88)

Remarquons d'abord que Nepveu semble juger suspecte toute vision sublime de l'Amérique, une vision qu'il associe directement à la poésie patriotique, dans la mesure où elle dissimule l'expérience d'une perte ou d'une absence qui devrait, comme dans *Angéline de Montbrun*, être prise en charge, abordée de front par l'écriture. Il suffit en effet de lire Fréchette ou William Chapman pour constater la justesse de cette impression de lecture : un deuil est à l'œuvre, qui ne veut pas être dit, dans cette exaltation territoriale, qui charge la poésie d'une fonction qu'on pourrait dire compensatoire. Une autre poésie fait, selon Nepveu, une expérience du deuil que Lévinas associe à la « sainteté » : « qui n'est peut-être possible que dans un monde désacralisé, où le sujet assume sa séparation d'avec le monde, où il refuse la magie et la turbulence dionysiaque » (88). Une poésie, celle de l'américanité sublime, chercherait donc, inconsciemment pourrait-on dire, à compenser cette séparation du poète et de son environnement, tandis que l'autre l'assumerait, chercherait au contraire à l'approfondir.

Cette interprétation a, malgré sa justesse, le défaut d'occulter la possibilité même d'une expérience du sublime en dehors de l'exaltation patriotique du territoire, dont l'aspiration au sublime est conçue elle-même, et condamnée pour cette raison, comme une manière de nier l'altérité du monde visible pour s'en remettre à une réalité préconçue, idéale. Notre impression est plutôt qu'une expérience du sublime (ou qu'un rapport intime, magique, avec la nature) est constamment à l'œuvre, selon différentes modalités, dans la poésie de l'époque, et en particulier chez les poètes intimistes, peu tentés par le patriotisme. Garneau est l'un des premiers exemples de cette expérience.

Il faut comprendre que cette étrangeté des lieux les plus familiers n'est pas nécessairement vécue négativement, qu'elle n'interdit aucunement une certaine appréhension du sublime. Elle en est peut-être, au fond, la condition propre. Rappelons sur ce point l'une des définitions proposées par Emmanuel Kant dans la *Critique de la faculté de juger* :

> La nature est donc sublime dans ceux de ses phénomènes dont l'intuition implique l'idée de son infinité. Ce qui ne peut se produire que si l'effort extrême que fait notre imagination pour évaluer la grandeur d'un objet se révèle lui-même insuffisant. (195)

L'avènement d'une conscience de l'espace en tant que paysage, à partir de 1860, coïnciderait avec une expérience du sublime dans la mesure où elle est le fruit d'une étrangeté venue s'immiscer entre l'être et son environnement,

comme entre l'être et lui-même. Les premiers paysages font leur apparition dans la poésie québécoise au moment où l'espace cesse d'être conçu comme le support idéologique d'un récit d'émancipation nationale et devient un espace d'altérité où le sujet est confronté aux limites de sa propre subjectivité.

Cette « séparation d'avec le monde » dont parle Nepveu ne signifierait donc pas absolument que le monde soit « désacralisé » ou livré au néant. En fait, cette séparation est peut-être nécessaire à l'expérience d'une autre forme de sacralisation, c'est-à-dire à la reconnaissance, au sein du paysage, de signes qui laissent présager une dimension sous-entendue, qui constitue précisément « l'Autre » du paysage et fait apparaître son étrangeté. C'est pourquoi les lieux d'Alfred Garneau sont aussi chargés de mystère. Comme l'écrit Gilles Marcotte : « Tous les paysages, dans cette poésie, échappent aussitôt à la densité du réel, ils s'embuent d'une lumière qui les rend comme immatériels » (88).

Cette poésie serait donc l'hôte d'un mouvement en deux temps (qui surviennent, bien sûr, simultanément) : d'une part, la nature subit ce qu'Alain Roger, dans son *Court traité du paysage*, appelle une « laïcisation » (66) du territoire, c'est-à-dire l'abolition d'un ensemble de signes religieux, héroïques, qui donnaient l'illusion d'un espace habitable, conforme à la destinée collective ; d'autre part, elle est le lieu d'une autre forme de sacralisation, éprouvée par une poésie plus à l'écoute de la destinée quotidienne, empirique, de l'individu. Cette sacralisation seconde en quelque sorte, se manifeste par l'apparition d'autres signes, renvoyant le poète non pas à une histoire toute faite à laquelle serait subordonné l'environnement, mais, au contraire, à un mystère muet et agissant, qu'il pressent à même les lieux et les objets les plus familiers, pouvant le soumettre à une forme de « terreur sacrée » comme à un sentiment de participation cosmique avec la nature, ou encore, ce dont témoigne la poésie de Garneau, l'amener à adopter une attitude plus contemplative, comme s'il considérait le monde en présence de ce mystère.

NOTE

1 Il faudrait nuancer : on trouve également chez ces poètes certains poèmes qui sont, comme ceux de Garneau, tout à fait dénués de patriotisme et qui font montre d'un lyrisme plus personnel, soumis à un questionnement qui ne touche en rien à la destinée collective. Mentionnons en exemple, de Louis Fréchette, « Un soir au bord du lac Saint-Pierre », ou encore quelques sonnets de Pamphile LeMay, notamment « À notre monde » et « À un vieil arbre ».

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Nathalie Warren

Mimosa pudica[1]

Instant propice, quand passent
Des mots à plumes, des mots oiseaux
Vers lesquels flotte un soleil migrateur

Quand dans tel battement d'aile
Dans telle fissure entre l'ellipse et l'étoc
Surviennent nos gestes à contre-jour
Nos langages pliés dès qu'effleurés

Dès que nos têtes à huis clos
Nomment ersatz un chant de mer
Et se mettent à chercher l'épave
Aux repères habitables

Ce bateau sans voile,
À la coque duquel
Les sirènes glissent
Leurs murmures délétères

Dépoétisent,
Jusqu'à l'écueil
Font l'œil avide
Le bras trop long
Indéfiniment triste
Où trébuche toute caresse

La mélancolie définitive

Avec ses kilomètres de mots marée noire
Et ses grands lys enneigés
Auxquels ne s'allie la lumière

1 Le Mimosa pudica est souvent appelé plante sensitive, parce que ses feuilles réagissent au toucher en se refermant sur elles-mêmes. <http://www2.ville.montreal.qc.ca/jardin/jeunes/courrier/mimosa.htm>

David Williams

A Force of Interruption
The Photography of History in Timothy Findley's *The Wars*

That memory is structured photographically in Timothy Findley's *The Wars* (1977) is a critical commonplace. But, despite a wealth of commentary on the novel's photographic technique, we have yet to grasp fully the interruptive force of its "photo-narration." Part of this critical neglect originates in Timothy Findley's own comments on photography as a generative force in the writing: "I began to get flashes of something, and what it was, was a sentence I put down. 'Robert Ross arrived at Boulogne and got off the ship and walked across the encampment toward the train.' Then the image continued with the number of tents; the picture—it's like a developing picture in the pan, that comes more and more into focus, and more and more into view" (Aitken 80). In another interview given to his partner William Whitehead for the Findley special issue of *Canadian Literature* in 1981, the novelist had as much to say about the visual structure of his novel as he did about its composition: "*The Wars* unfolds as a series of pictures. Pictures and interviews." Of course, he added, the problem was "to find the right pictures and find the right characters to interview" (Findley, "Alice" 15).

In the interview with Johan Aitken, Findley was to offer an extra-textual image of the novel—ignored for the most part in the criticism—that makes the literary text a virtual mutation of a visual medium. This image is all the more telling because it emplots the story as a long avenue of time down which Robert Ross comes riding on a horse past "billboards [set] on an angle on either side of this avenue. Flashing on these billboards are the selected photographs, the images that I wanted to imprint of moments from that war, moments from Robert's life, moments from history" (84). The literary text has yet to be integrated with this extra-textual image in ways that

reveal the larger significance of photography as a force of interruption, which is to say a force of mutation, in the novel.

In the photograph, as in its verbal equivalent, a new phenomenology of time begins to emerge, a phenomenology in which the cyclical experience of daily or yearly time or the linear sense of time as historical continuity, gives way to an atomized sense of time where distance, difference, death, delay, danger, and discontinuity become the rule. In a crucial way, Findley's protagonist, Robert Ross, is distanced by an archival narrator from his contemporaries, and differentiated from his own historical moment by a photographic technique that would sever all continuity between his era and ours, freeing him to come riding down the light rays, in cinematic fashion, into our age. As a book of interruptions, *The Wars* dramatizes a photographic structure of delay that will lead to a belated recognition of the image's latency, its danger, and its discontinuity. But, as a formal expression of writing with light, the novel also embodies this medium that first enabled us to "see" history. *The Wars* asks to be read, in other words, as a text about historicism, about the hidden connections between history and photography, so reminding us of why history as a modern discipline would attend the advent of photography.[1]

Camera Obscura

Treating the photographic technique of *The Wars* thematically, critics tend to obscure the philosophical implications of the medium in the novel. John Hulcoop, for example, writes in the special issue of *Canadian Literature* that "Findley's fascination with stories told in the form of pictures (as in picture-books and films) is obvious. Much of his own story-telling has been done in the medium of television, and a great part of the TV script consists quite literally of visuals" (Hulcoop 39). While Hulcoop's subtitle urges the necessity of "Paying Attention in Timothy Findley's Fictions" (22), his essay stops short of identifying photography as the silent protagonist of the novel. Conversely, Eva-Marie Kröller makes photography the antagonist of *The Wars* in an essay published in the same year, arguing that it revolved "around a series of experiences each implying a *camera obscura*" (70). She isolates a series of confining rooms (*camerae*) in the novel, all of which connote "the threatening possession of dark boxes," sharply limiting Robert's perception. Suffering from the inherent violence of "Western frames of thought" that destroy, as much as they confirm, "man's central position" (69) in the world, the protagonist is thus set at odds with this apparatus of a sovereign

Cartesian cogito that enforces its dominance over both the human and non-human world. But to claim that "Robert is a long-distance runner either evading still frames or exploding them once he is trapped in them" (71) is finally to argue that the narrator is his enemy, and to say that Robert is a victim, not the heroic destroyer, of this supposed technology of suppression.

Sensing that it "is the photographic style which accounts for much of the powerful impact of *The Wars*," Lorraine M. York (1988) focuses more properly on "Findley's growing awareness" of the "suspended quality of certain moments in our existence" that, in this novel, "accompanies an increasing value for the past and for human memory" (76, 77). Rejecting Kröller's notion of the "threatening enclosure" of the *camera obscura*, York argues that the archival narrator and soldier are both joined in a "conception of the photograph as the preserver of all that is precious and alive" (84). Much as Robert tries to save the lives of animals amidst the brutalities of war, the narrator makes a narrative "attempt to capture the essence of Robert Ross' life" (84). Were this the whole of the story—that photography, like memories preserved in narrative, are life-sustaining—the ambivalence about photography that Kröller locates in the protagonist would not be so disturbing. The novel will not allow us to forget that the photograph, in its pre-digital history, must take the form of a negative before being made into a positive print.

Evelyn Cobley does not forget the ambiguous status of photography in *The Wars*, allowing that its documents are all "mediated by a researcher-narrator who interposes himself between the reader and the already technically reproduced reality they denote. This double mediation signals an acknowledgement of fiction-making which the earlier war narratives sought to ward off through documentary guarantees" (108). In this way, Findley escapes the usual trap of combatant narratives that document the horrors of war, only to reproduce "the ideological assumptions of modernity" in its lamentable failure "to deliver the promise of universal human emancipation" (99). As Cobley sees it, "duplication" and "duplicity" are the ground of the photograph, which, in Derridean fashion, doom it to "différance" instead of "sameness." Given its status as a supplement marked by the absence of the subject, the photograph reveals why "Findley should have chosen the theme of death to illustrate this process of sense-making as a process of substitutions" (112). For "neither verbal nor visual images can recuperate what is lost; they can only interminably speak their nostalgia for the traces of the past." Oddly, Cobley ends by re-inscribing "an ethic of nostalgia for origins, an ethic of archaic and natural innocence, of a purity of presence and self-presence in

speech" (Derrida 264), thus undermining her own deconstructive project.

The first essay to remark the interruptive force of the photography in *The Wars* remains the best. Laurie Ricou's "Obscured by Violence" (1979), too rarely cited, shows how "the narrator is repeatedly and uneasily trying to establish his distance from Robert Ross" by means of narrative interruptions. "Breaks and pauses, involuntary repetition, and occasional complete stoppage of words," as he inventories the style, are "characteristic of the stammering interrupted syntax and structure of the novel" (133). Therefore, "The brevity of sections, paragraphs, and sentences catch the fragmentary, but also suggest that the narrator cuts himself off: there is so much that 'could not be told'" (135). While the narrator may rely on photographs as a major "art form of the Great War, the chief means of remembering that war, as film might be the art form of the Second World War, or videotape of the Vietnam war" (132), Ricou does not regard them as a means of detaching Robert from his own moment; rather, his story "opens stammering" (129), in much the same way that Robert does himself, when doubt "stammers in his brain" (*Wars* 6). If the narrator's story ends only if and when he accepts Ross as a mirror of himself, distance is then more of a dramatic condition in need of resolution, rather than a property of photography itself. If one were to see, rather, how the narrator's position echoes that of Robert jogging with a coyote on the prairie, where "Distance was safety. Space was asylum" (32), then the quest of the protagonist would be better aligned with the narrator's quest. In words borrowed from the narrator himself, "There was nothing to be won but distance" (25) in such a photographic technique.

A Force of Interruption

In his illuminating monograph on Walter Benjamin's "persistent recourse to the language of photography in his discussions of history" (xix), Eduardo Cadava argues that Benjamin's concept of the "thesis" is "Like the gaze of the camera that momentarily fixes history in an image. . . . A photograph in prose, the thesis names a force of arrest" (xx). Because Benjamin holds that "historical thinking involves 'not only the movements of thoughts, but their arrest as well,'" Cadava concludes that, "For Benjamin, there can be no history without the Medusa effect—without the capacity to arrest or immobilize historical movement, to isolate the details of an event from the continuum of history" (59). In his "Theses on the Concept of History," for example, "Benjamin traces the effects of what he calls 'the caesura in the movement of thought'" (xx). What Benjamin sees in the instant of a shutter-click is a

"Medusa's gaze that stalls history in the sphere of speculation. It short-circuits, and thereby suspends, the temporal continuity between a past and a present." It is, in fact, this "break from the present" that "enables the rereading and rewriting of history" (59). What Benjamin isolates in his "Theses" is "the caesura of the historical event, the separation and discontinuity from which history emerges" (xx).

This "caesura in the movement of thought" is evident in the repeated starts and stops of the opening chapters of *The Wars.* An image of a horse, a dog and a man in the "Prologue" forms a virtual snapshot of immobility before it gives way after six staccato paragraphs to motion: "They rode down the track towards the road to Magdalene Wood." But no sooner is the horse in motion than it halts, whinnies, and is answered "from inside" an abandoned railway car. Four sentences later, "Robert was riding" again, this time "behind a hundred and thirty horses with the dog trotting beside him. . . . This was when the moon rose—red" (2). Here is where the prologue breaks off and the first chapter—a single paragraph—begins: "All of this happened a long time ago" (3). Such a shift from an eyewitness to a historian is not as complete as it might seem, however, in the move from the past progressive into the past perfect tense. First-person witnesses to events remain in the narrative—if not combatants, at least some "who played a part in it." But these witnesses won't say what they have seen: "Ask what happened, they say: 'I don't know.' Mention Robert Ross—they look away. 'He's dead,' they tell you. This is not news. 'Tell me about the horses, you ask. Sometimes, they weep at this. Other times they say: 'that bastard!'" "In the end"—a brief chapter is further foreshortened—"the only facts you have are public. Out of these you make what you can" (3).

"You" make what you can out of what every historian must work with—primary sources. While "You begin at the archives with photographs" (3), only a glimpse is given of the bundles of letters Robert sent home from the Front—"All these letters neatly folded and tied" (73) after being "numbered and catalogued and memorized" (153) by his longsuffering mother. Two brief excerpts (51, 71) of this word-hoard are all that enter the record, amounting to no more than a page in a novel of 218 pages. Closing the book on an epistolary narrative that might have recounted events in the first person, Findley eschews the conventions of Great War combatant narratives. (He was born too late himself—1930—to have served in World War I, and not soon enough to have served in World War II.) From the outset, his soldier is thus distanced from us in time and narrative perspective.

A more formal "interruption" then emerges in an archival scene of looking in the next chapter. Composed as a photographic layout—"Spread over table tops, a whole age lies in fragments underneath the lamps"—a single paragraph, this tiny second chapter, manages to cram 17 sentences into 14 lines. By its end, we know that the story is going to be made out of fragments, and displayed, as it were, in an "album" of fragmented instants: "As the past moves under your fingertips, part of it crumbles. Other parts, you know you'll never find. This is what you have" (4).

From a theoretical, rather than a formal point of view, what we have is a caesura in the flow of time; the "force of arrest" in the photographic technique literally disrupts the organic continuity of older notions of temporality, whether these be governed by an idea of historical cycles—such as the Eternal Return, or the Great Year—or by a Heraclitean model of "time as a flow, or river" (Bal 7). While the photographic image is "cut from that flow, a frozen moment, or suspension" of flow (Bal 7), it marks "A return without return," an "eternal return" which "tells us that the photographed, once photographed, can never return to itself—it can only appear in its withdrawal in the form of an image or reproduction" (Cadava 42). Isolating the moment from its context, the photograph breaks the cycle, for "what is repeated is a process of becoming, a movement of differentiation and dispersion—and what is differentiated and dispersed is time itself" (31).

Conversely, since "the photographic event interrupts the present" as a continuous flow, "[i]t interrupts history and opens up another possibility of history, one that spaces time and temporalizes space. A force of arrest, the image translates an aspect of time into something like a certain *space,* and does so without stopping time, or without preventing time from being time. . . . Looking both backward and forward." Cadava continues,

> this figure marks a division within the present. Within the almost-no-time of the camera's click, we can say that something *happens.* For Benjamin, however, for something to happen does not mean that something occurs within the continuum of time, nor does it imply that something becomes present. Rather, the photographic event interrupts the present; it occurs *between* the present and itself, between the movement of time and itself. (61)

By separating the moment from itself, the photographic event actually atomizes time, making it possible to "see" time as a conglomerate of particles. The result is a phenomenology that differs from older conceptions of time as "eternal return" or as linear flow. And since the photographic event "marks a division within the present" (Cadava 61), it "names a process that, seizing

and tearing an image from its context, works to immobilize the flow of history" (xx). More precisely, "in the interruption of its movement," the photographic event "tears the image to be read from its context. This tearing or breaking force is not an accidental predicate of reading; it belongs to its very structure. Only when reading undoes the context of an image is a text developed, like a photographic negative, toward its full historical significance" (65).

The verbal snapshot of "1915" which opens that über-stylized third chapter of *The Wars* is but one example of this tearing or breaking force in the medium of photography. "The year itself," which "looks sepia and soiled," turns remote, as if "muddied like its pictures" (4). While "Part of what you see you recognize," the images of recruitment parades still bristle with interrupted motion: "Everyone is focused, now, shading their eyes against the sun. Everyone is watching with an outstretched arm—silenced at the edge of wharves and time" (5). This silence, as much as the sepia colour of the images themselves, works to distance us from a scene we contemplate, but in which we do not participate. As readers, we are now firmly detached from the objects of our gaze.

At least until "*Robert Ross comes riding straight towards the camera. . . . There is mud on his cheeks and forehead and his uniform is burning—long, bright tails of flame are streaming out behind him. He leaps through memory without a sound*" (5). This sudden eruption of italics prepares us to see this latter image as existing in another dimension—one that has already been interiorized, or moved into "memory"—if it exists at all on paper (shutter speeds in 1915 making it highly unlikely that an image of Robert's equestrian leap would come into focus anywhere but in memory or imagination). In fact, the narrator tells us, "*You lay the fiery image back in your mind and let it rest. You know it will obtrude again and again until you find its meaning—here*" (6). "Here" is most likely the page itself, if not "here" in the domain of memory. While a dynamic image arises to challenge a static photograph, the narrator prefers for now to "let it rest." Another dynamic of narrative can then emerge out of this tension between distance and proximity, between the externalized image and one that has already been interiorized.

Proximity and Distance

A dynamic "oscillation between space and time, between distance and proximity," Cadava suggests, "touches on the very nature of photographic and filmic media, whose structure consists in the simultaneous reduction and maximization of distance" (xxv). While the photograph appears "to reduce . . . the

distance between people and events, or people and places," this effect "only enables it to install a greater distance. If it brings people and events or places together at all, it is only in order to keep them apart" (xxiv). This is surely the case in *The Wars* where images of *Thomas Ross and Family* are brought together in 1915 with images of crowds on the home front. On the one hand, the family "stand beside a new Ford Truck" in a picture printed "in the *Toronto Mail and Empire*" (6) trumpeting the family's donation of an ambulance to a Field Surgery Hospital which will bear their name. If the Ross family is brought close to the public as a model of sacrifice in the cause of "King and Empire," they also remain distant, their private life veiled by several levels of absence, most notably that of Rowena, their eldest child, who "is not shown. She is never in photographs that are apt to be seen by the public." Although a "*hydrocephalic*" (7) child might "taint" the family's public image, "Robert has her picture on his bureau" (6) in a private expression of fraternal love. His preservation of his sister's portrait in the sanctum of his bedroom thus links him to the narrator, who already preserves his image in an act of interiorization.

In parallel fashion, the narrator acts in the preceding paragraph to distance Robert from a public absolutely besotted by marching troops and martial music:

> A Band is assembled on the Band Shell—red coats and white gloves. They serenade the crowd with "Soldiers of the Queen." You turn them over—wondering if they'll spill—and you read on the back in the faintest ink in a feminine hand: "*Robert.*" But where? You look again and all you see is the crowd. And the Band is still playing—quite undisturbed—and far from spilled. (6)

The narrator's act of turning a photograph over, wondering if its contents will spill, is both near to and distant from an image of toy soldiers spilled out of a box by a child ignorant of war's reality. Though in this case, it is not the soldiers, but an image of Robert himself that "tumbles" out of the frame: "Then you see him: Robert Ross. Standing on the sidelines with pocketed hands—feet apart and narrowed eyes. . . . He doubts the validity in all this martialling of men but the doubt is inarticulate" (6). By such means, Robert is both brought closer to us, but also distanced from us by his marginal position in a distant epoch. In effect, he comes to occupy a role already constructed for the reader, where he is a watcher firmly detached from the object of his gaze.

In other ways, as well, the narrator seeks to isolate Robert from his own historical moment, as if to "rescue" him from a time and place uncongenial to them both. To do so, he enlists contemporary eyewitnesses who are able

to speak for the silent images of history he finds in photographs, but who also replicate the operations of photography in tearing the image from its context. Marian Turner, for example, the war nurse who once tended to the burned body of Robert Ross in a field hospital after his desertion, recalls in words the narrator has recorded on magnetic tape, "that nowadays so many people—young people especially—might've known what he was all about" (10). Her assessment of the war is far from the common opinion of an era in which Robert Ross was court-martialed: "Looking back, I hardly believe what happened. That the people in that park are there because we all went mad" (10). At the end of the novel, Marian Turner will once again come to the aid of the narrator in his "photographic" project of tearing Robert from his immediate social context and arresting the flow of time:

> I'm a nurse. I've never offered death to anyone. I've prayed for it often enough. But I've never made the offer. But that night—surrounded by all that dark—and all those men—and the trains kept bringing us more and more and more—and the war was never, never, never going to end--that night, I thought: *I am ashamed to be alive.* I am ashamed of *life.* And I wanted to offer some way out of life—I wanted grace for Robert Ross. (215)

While the memories of a Marian Turner bring us closer to the burned soldier, they also illustrate the significance of the temporal maxim she takes from Robert: "Not yet" (215).

Further examples of this tension between proximity and distance appear in the testimony of another eyewitness who, as a twelve-year-old girl, had fallen in love with the mutinous Canadian soldier. As an elderly Lady Juliet d'Orsey now assures the narrator: "You can not know these things. You live when you live. No one else can ever live your life and no one else will ever know what you know. Then was then. Unique" (114). But the intent of her words, like Marian Turner's "nowadays"—presumably the Vietnam War era in which the novel was published—is meant to establish Robert as the "hero" (10) of the future who looks back on the era of the Great War from the distance of a later age. Both women occupy a position similar to the narrator who, speaking from this later age himself, constructs an image of a soldier whose conformity with his era is kept at a distance, but whose contemporary pacifism is portrayed in extreme close-up.

Difference

For Benjamin the logic of photographic "arrest" leads to a separation of the thing photographed from itself. In effect, there is "a withdrawal that is fundamental to the temporal structure of the photograph." Indeed, "[t]here can

be no photograph without the withdrawal of what is photographed" (Cadava 10). If what is photographed is infinitely reproducible, then what is reproduced is no longer singular; it "is itself already a reproduction—and as such, separated from itself" (xxvi). This photographic separation of the object from itself is a determining feature of the medium as well for Siegfried Kracauer, a contemporary of Benjamin whose thinking on photography had an influence on his thought. For Kracauer, "the significance of photography lies not with its ability to reproduce a given object but rather with its ability to tear it away from itself. What makes photography photography is not its capacity to present what it photographs, but its character as a force of interruption" (Cadava xxviii). What the photographic image comes to interrupt is the *being in time* of the object, its radical separation from its own future.

That this is the goal of the historical album chapter in *The Wars* emerges in a later sequence of images, from "*Meg—a Patriotic Pony*" to *"Peggy Ross with Clinton Brown from Harvard*!!! Nothing in Clinton Brown from Harvard's appearance warrants three exclamation points" (7-8). That Robert is supposed to be out of step with his own era is thus demonstrated before his enlistment, when he refuses to fight another man, "Because he *loves* me" (13), as Heather Lawson says, trying to provoke a jealous response. On what authority this scene is recounted, however, is never made clear.

Nor is it clear by what authority the literal sense of Robert's letters will be denied. The pacifist, or the type, at least, of a more doubtful, questioning warrior is not yet manifest in Robert's letter of embarkation from St. John harbour: "I've written these last few words by lantern light. Green for starboard looking towards the sea. I hope you all can read this—because I can't. So—adios! As the bandits say. Robert Ross. Your son" (51). The swagger of his concluding formula hardly fits the image of his later actions. Nor does the postscript he writes in a second letter sound like the gun-shy officer who supposedly struggles to shoot a horse with a broken leg:

> P.S. Do you think you could send the automatic soon? I want it very much. Battery Sergeant-Major says if you could get a Webley .455 Mark I they're the best there is. They're wonderful to fire and they kill at fifty yards. (71)

Irony—or a hypocritical difference between the outer and inner man—fails to explain, since the private letter inverts his tenderhearted actions in the hold of the ship. By reducing his cache of letters to two brief fragments, and by framing his literal words with verbal analogues of photographs, the narrator finally manages to tear the image of an eager enlistee away from himself. The photograph and the man are made to differ conspicuously from one

another. But only when the narrator's reading of events undoes the context of the historical image is his text capable of development, like a photographic negative, toward its "full" historical significance.

The Photography of Time

Roland Barthes—likely the most influential theorist of photography after Benjamin—writes in *Camera Lucida* (1981) that, in an age before photography, people were resistant "to believing in the past, in History, except in the form of myth." However, "The Photograph, for the first time, puts an end to this resistance; henceforth the past is as certain as the present, what we see on paper is as certain as what we touch. It is the advent of the Photograph—and not, as has been said, of the cinema—which divides the history of the world" (Barthes 88). That history and photography both had their birth in the nineteenth century is no coincidence. Benedict Anderson recalls how "the establishment of the first academic chairs in History" took place in 1810 (Berlin) and 1812 (La Sorbonne); but it was not until "the second quarter of the nineteenth century" that "History had become formally constituted as a 'discipline,' with its own elaborate array of professional journals" (194). It was also in this second quarter of the nineteenth century (1827) that Joseph Nicéphore Niepce produced the first "photograph," a blurred image that he called a "heliograph" and that required eight hours of exposure to a silver plate. After his death in 1833, his partner Louis Daguerre helped to revolutionize this cumbersome process of capturing light emanations. "Daguerre's photographs were iodized silver plates exposed in the camera obscura, which had to be turned this way and that until, in the proper light, a pale gray image could be discerned" (Benjamin, "Little" 508). For obvious reasons, "The procedure itself caused the subject to focus his life in the moment rather than hurrying on past it; during the considerable period of the exposure, the subject (as it were) grew into the picture, in the sharpest contrast with appearances in a snapshot" (514). Talbot Fox's invention of the calotype in 1841 finally reduced the twenty-minute exposure of the daguerreotype (Benjamin 528, n.1) to something like shutter speed. Thereafter, "advances in optics" made new "instruments available that wholly overcame darkness and recorded appearances as faithfully as any mirror" (517).

If photography influenced the birth of history as a discipline, it did so because it authorized a new view of time. Both Benjamin and Barthes claim that historicism was necessarily founded on this new epistemology of photography, a medium which was obviously "false on the level of perception,

[but was] true on the level of time: a temporal hallucination, so to speak, a modest, *shared* hallucination" (Barthes 115). Or, "In the wording of Siegfried Kracauer, 'historicism is concerned with the photography of time'" (Cadava xviii). In Barthes' terms, the viewer of the photograph gains a position outside of time, unlike the viewer of cinema who remains immersed in its flow. "I don't have time," Barthes complains, to think about the images in movies; "in front of the screen, I am not free to shut my eyes; otherwise, opening them again, I would not discover the same image; I am constrained to a continuous voracity; a host of other qualities, but not *pensiveness;* whence the interest, for me, of the photogram" (55). It is only the force of arrest in the photographic image, and its separation from the subject, that enables a viewer to see what is preserved in the image.

More expansively, Barthes expresses a preference for the static image on the basis of its ontology: "I decided I liked Photography *in opposition* to the Cinema, from which I nonetheless failed to separate it. This question grew insistent. I was overcome by an 'ontological' desire: I wanted to learn at all costs what Photography was 'in itself'" (3). What he discovers is that, "Like the real world, the filmic world is sustained by the presumption that, as Husserl says, 'the experience will constantly continue to flow by in the same constitutive style'; but the Photograph breaks the 'constitutive style' (this is its astonishment); it is *without future* (this is its pathos, its melancholy); in it, no protensity, whereas the cinema is protensive, hence in no way melancholic" (89-90).

If cinema speaks in the present progressive tense of images that move in our time, the photograph speaks in "the aorist," or absolute past of the arrested image, as compared to "memory whose grammatical expression would be the perfect tense" (91). Unlike the past perfect of a completed action, the aorist tense of the photograph suspends the image in a past forever closed to the future. "This brings the Photograph (certain photographs) close to the Haiku. For the notation of a haiku, too, is undevelopable: everything is given, without provoking the desire for or even the possibility of a rhetorical expansion. In both cases we might (we must) speak of an *intense immobility"* (49). This is the ultimate significance for Barthes of the aorist tense of the photograph: "By giving me the absolute past of the pose (aorist), the photograph tells me death in the future" (96).

Death

Such is the significance for Findley's narrator of his penultimate image of Robert Ross which he reports in the *Epilogue:* "Robert is seated on a keg of

water. This is at Lethbridge, in the spring of 1915" (217). In his hand Robert seems to "be holding something alive or made of glass. But the object—once you have made it out—is nothing of the sort. It is white and slightly larger than his fist. Magnification reveals it is the skull of some small beast—either a rabbit or a badger. Robert's middle index fingers are crooked through its eyes. You put this picture aside because it seems important" (218). Its importance consists in an "Alas poor Yorick" moment of recognition—a true *memento mori*—that telegraphs Robert's "brotherhood" with the animals, even anticipating his fiery death with the horses. Indeed, in this image of intense immobility, everything is already given; Robert's image is without future except for the death that awaits him. The past is thus absolute, as if the picture were incapable of further development.

Death similarly shadows Benjamin's "little history" of photography, from his commentary on the technology's early requirements to his discussion of the "loss of the aura" in the process of mechanical reproduction. Those portraits, for example, that he reproduces of the pioneering British photographer, David Octavius Hill, "were made in the Edinburgh Greyfriars cemetery" ("Little" 510), a setting that "could never have been so effective if it had not been chosen on technical grounds. The low light-sensitivity of the early plates made prolonged exposure outdoors a necessity. This in turn made it desirable to take the subject to some out-of-the-way spot where there was no obstacle to quiet concentration" (514). Even when photography moved indoors, its association with death could not be dispelled: "The peeling away of the object's shell, the destruction of the aura, is the signature of a perception whose sense for the sameness of things has grown to the point where even the singular, the unique, is divested of its uniqueness by means of its reproduction" (519). For that "strange weave of space and time" that Benjamin defined as the aura of the photographic subject, "the unique appearance or semblance of distance, no matter how close it may be" (518), was elided by its mechanical reproduction. "Seeking to eternalize its objects in the time and space of an image," Cadava enlarges on this analysis of the image's morbidity, "the photographic present returns eternally to the event of its death—a death that comes with the death of understanding. That the photograph is always touched by death means that it offers us a glimpse of a history to which we no longer belong" (Cadava xxviii).

That we no longer belong to a nineteenth-century cult of romantic heroism is writ large in words the silent icon of Robert Ross is made to speak in his formal portrait:

> Oh—I can tell you, sort of, what it might be like to die. *The Death of General Wolfe.* Someone will hold my hand and I won't suffer pain. Because I've suffered that already and survived. In paintings—and in photographs—there's never any blood. At most, the hero sighs his way to death while linen handkerchiefs are held against his wounds. His wounds are poems. *I'll faint away in glory hearing music and my name. Someone will close my eyes and I'll be wrapped around in flags while drums and trumpets-bagpipes march me home through snow. . . .* (48-9)

This risible image of the dead hero—a military volunteer who gets his "romantic" notions "from silent images"—reduces him to a ventriloquist's dummy for an imperial history whose icon is General James Wolfe. In the famous image of his death (1771) created by Benjamin West, a colonial painter from Philadelphia, the subject is composed in the visual language of a Pietà, where the dying martyr is surrounded by a dozen disciples and borne up by loving hands that need not even stanch his wounds. The promise of this image, it seems, is death without dying, another analogue of photographic immortality.

As Cadava explains, "In photographing someone, we know that the photograph will survive him—it begins, even during his life, to circulate without him, figuring and anticipating his death each time it is looked at. The photograph is a farewell. It belongs to the afterlife of the photographed" (13). Nothing more clearly demonstrates this commodification of the soldier-subject in *The Wars* than the words of his photographic afterlife:

> Afterwards, my mother will escort her friends across the rugs and parquet floors to see this photograph of me and everyone will weep and walk on tip-toe. Medals—(there are none just yet, as you can see)—will sit beside this frame in little boxes made of leather lined with satin. I will have the Military Cross. *He died fighting for King and Country*—fighting the war to end all wars.
> 5 x 9 and framed in silver.

In the starkest of terms, the photo-ventriloquist shows how the soldier's image has begun "to circulate without him, figuring and anticipating his death" from the moment it is first fixed on photographic paper. And so the logic of the larger narrative, its photographic emplotment, as it were, is that Robert will be required to step out of the picture, to shed his uniform, much as the narrator has shed Robert's "uniform" image.

Delay

The isolation of a photographic image in an instant of time, outside a network of relations that would define it otherwise, opens up an "optical unconscious" to Benjamin. As he says in his "Little History of Photography," it is

"another nature which speaks to the camera rather than to the eye: 'other' above all in the sense that a space informed by human consciousness gives way to a space informed by the unconscious." What the eye sees is of a different order of being than what the camera records; indeed, "we have no idea at all what happens during the fraction of a second when a person actually takes a step. Photography, with its devices of slow motion and enlargement, reveals the secret. It is through photography that we first discover the existence of this optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis" (Benjamin, "Little" 510). In this way, Benjamin makes photography a tool for reading history that is analogous to psychoanalysis as a tool for reading personal histories: "In linking the experience of shock to the structure of delay built into the photographic event, Benjamin evokes Freud's own discussions of the latency of experience, discussions that are themselves often organized in terms of the language of photography" (Cadava 102). For Benjamin, "It is what is not experienced in an event that paradoxically accounts for the belated and posthumous shock of historical experience" (104). For, in this "structure of delay"—a defining element of photography for Benjamin—the latency that is peculiar to individual psychic experience is also realized as being intrinsic to historical experience.

Once we see this structure of delay in the photographic technique of *The Wars,* we recognize what was always latent in the image of "*Robert Raymond Ross—Second Lieutenant, C.F.A. . . . posed in mind and body"* in full-dress uniform. As Roland Barthes remarks of this pose before a lens, "I constitute myself in the process of 'posing.' I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image" (10). Something else appears in the military pose, however, since the image is prefabricated, or socially determined, by martial expectations of heroism. And so the subject of this type of photograph is given over to a loss of self, not only in the technical process of being "objectified, 'thingified,' imaged" (Cadava 8) by an instrument of mechanical reproduction, but also in the general social process of conforming to type:

> *Dead men are serious*—that's what this photograph is striving to say. Survival is precluded. Death is romantic—got from silent images. I lived—was young—and died. But not real death, of course, because I'm standing here alive with all these lights that shine so brightly in my eyes. (48)

Robert's photographic pose not only signals his withdrawal as a soldier about to embark, or as an image withdrawing from himself, but as an image cut off from all but a photographic development.

Danger

If there is a threat of violence in the technological reproduction of the image—as Benjamin maintained in "The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), the essay in which he first described the loss of the "aura" or an art work's unique appearance in time and space (*Illuminations* 220-23)—there is also a more hopeful form of violence inherent in photography-as-history. "'To articulate the past historically,' Benjamin writes, 'does not mean to recognize it "as it really was." It means to seize a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.' History therefore begins where memory is endangered, during the flash that marks its emergence and disappearance" (Cadava 63). In distinct opposition to the German war-novelist and fascist theorist Ernst Jünger, Benjamin transforms the notion of a "'second' consciousness"—or the cold indifference to pain which is supposedly the result of a photographic subject's "ability to see oneself as an object" (Cadava 52)—into an idea of the photograph as a "blast" that "'shatters the continuum of history' and in so doing reveals the history hidden in any given work. It discloses the breaks, within history, from which history emerges" (60). The "flash" of the moment in which memory is in danger is a moment for Benjamin in which the movement of history can be arrested, in which history can be thought.

There are many such moments of danger in *The Wars* where a "flash" of memory interrupts the flow of events, making it possible for history to emerge from the break. "There is," for example, "no good picture of this except the one you can make in your mind," as the narrator notes in the first sentence of the opening chapter of Part Two. "The road is lost at either end in rain. Robert's perception of it is limited by fog and smoke" (75). The abruptness of the statement dislocates us in time and space; we only gradually come to see what Robert comes to see with horror—that he has led his men onto a crumbling dike where they barely escape drowning. But the role of the reader, like the role of the narrator in this scene, is to "make" in the *camera obscura* of the mind a picture that will interrupt the action, if not penetrate the enveloping fog. The narrator is even confident enough, in the midst of the suspended moment, to survey the topography through which Robert's supply convoy has travelled: "At the centre of the world is Ypres and all around the centre lie the flats of Flanders" (75). The "moment of danger" is now extended, but also arrested, in a series of six swift chapters, at the end of which Robert will extricate his convoy from the bottomless morass of Flemish mud.

A similar photographic technique structures the whole of Part Three, in which a crazed superior, Captain Leather, sends a mortar party under Robert's command to take a position in a deep shell crater where they nearly drown again. But they survive a chlorine gas attack because Robert recalls, in a flash of memory from his school days, how urine contains enough ammonia to neutralize chlorine gas, converting it to salt. This mental "flash" in a moment of danger becomes a formal feature of Part Three in which the action is clocked in a series of sub-headings that first interrupt events at "*4 a.m.*" as "The mines went up" and "there was a sort of glottal stop—halfway to nowhere" (121). Soon, the "glottal stop" becomes an *f*-stop of a camera "flash," as at *4.25 a.m.* (126), and then again at *5.30 a.m.* (127); *6.10 a.m.* (128); *7 a.m.* (130); *7.30 a.m.* (130); *8.15 a.m.* (131); *8.50 a.m.* (136); *9.30 a.m.* (140); *10.30 a.m.* (141); *12.15 p.m.* (141); and *1 p.m.* (141).

As Laurie Ricou said of this formal device, "the parallel between Robert Ross' stammering thought processes and the narrator's difficulty with his story makes spasmodic fear an unmistakeable aspect of the narrator's character" (134). But the technique is less personal than historiographical in its motivation; in other words, the narrator's facsimile of a photographic style is what enables him to write "history" at all. Another narrator in *The Wars* has a more personal motive, however, for stopping the action in prose snapshots—the twelve-year-old diarist Juliet d'Orsey, who feels tortured by a scene she had witnessed between her sister Barbara and Robert with whom she is helplessly in love: "I was standing on the third step from the bottom and I think I must already have come to a stop because what happened next is sort of like a photograph in my mind and I see myself in the picture. Robert Ross came out of Captain Taffler's room and the door, as it opened, gave a kind of click like a shutter of a camera" (171-72). Recording in her diary a sense of self-division, the child splits herself into an object who loves without hope and a subject who feels her own belatedness. Later, she will suffer from, but also look back on, such self-division in a scene of adult sexuality: "This was a picture that didn't make sense. Two people *hurting* one another. That's what I thought. I knew in a cool, clear way at the back of my mind that this was 'making love'—but the shape of it confused me. The shape and the violence" (178). As things stand, the child writes, "I feel a dreadful loss. I know things now I didn't want to know." What she finally sees, however, as she "looks" at herself in the picture, is the very child she has ceased to be. The "historian" finds her *self* in the "blast" of a "photograph."

A Posthumous Shock

Although film has likely done more than still-photography to produce shock in its "techniques of rapid cutting, multiple camera angles, [and] instantaneous shifts in time and place," Benjamin argues in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," "the 'snapping' of the photographer has had the greatest consequences. A touch of the finger now sufficed to fix an event for an unlimited period of time. The camera gave the moment a posthumous shock, as it were" (*Illuminations* 174-75). In Freudian terms, "[T]he danger of the event renews its demand and opens another path for itself, emerging, symptomatically, as an image of what has happened—as a return of what was to have departed—without our acquiescence or understanding" (Cadava 103).

The concluding pages of *The Wars* ask to be read in these terms. For the novel proper concludes with a photograph "of Robert and Juliet taken about a year before his death" (217). The man who risked life and honour to save a herd of horses from senseless slaughter in the Canadian Field Artillery has been condemned by a military court, his sentence commuted to convalescent treatment in Lady Juliet's home because "there was virtually no hope that he would ever walk or see or be capable of judgement again" (216). In this last photograph, "He wears a close-fitting cap rather like a toque—pulled down over his ears. He has no eyebrows—his nose is disfigured and bent and his face is a mass of scar tissue. Juliet is looking up at him—speaking—and Robert is looking directly at the camera. He is holding Juliet's hand. And he is smiling" (217). The photograph would be unremarkable were it not for the tender witness it bears to Lady Juliet's love. Latterly, it reveals how Robert has been put in the same position as Rowena when, out of love, he made himself his wheelchair-ridden sister's sole caregiver. Robert's fate, we recognize in an instant of "posthumous shock," is contained in the photograph of his sister. Here at last, we see how a "structure of delay" that informs the photograph has structured the narrative all along: Robert has always been "one" with Rowena.

In the *"Epilogue,"* another "posthumous shock" comes from one final photograph of Robert with his sister. For it speaks of the "return of the departed" (Cadava 11) whose image from before the war restores us to the beginning of the narrative. In this temporal hallucination, nothing (and everything) has happened. But it is the addition of Robert's written word to his own silent image that speaks volumes: "*Robert and Rowena with Meg:* Rowena seated astride the pony—Robert holding her in place. On the back is written: Look! You can see our breath! And you can" (218). The sight of

their breath, and Robert's confirmation of that sight, comes to "animate" (Barthes 20) us in much the same way that Marian Turner and Lady Juliet have animated Robert's memory. That is to say, it is our fate, as readers who "remember" Robert, to inspire his image with our own breath. This is the true latency of history—that it remains to be lived over again.

In what may be his boldest stroke, Findley invents an essayist, Nicholas Fagan, to explain our sense of closeness, and also of distance, from this temporal hallucination that appears in the medium of photography: "This is what he wrote: '*the spaces between the perceiver and the thing perceived can . . . be closed with a shout of recognition. One form of a shout is a shot. Nothing so completely verifies our perception of a thing as our killing of it*'" (218). One sees at last why the whole of the novel has sought to dramatize this oscillation between distance and proximity. For the narrator "verifies" his perceptions of the war, first by "killing" off an old-style warrior, and then by closing the distance with a "shout of recognition" at Robert who is made the "hero" of a new age.

In the end, one can see why those photographs Findley imagined as "flashing" on "billboards" down a long avenue of time did not move; they were irrevocably fixed in their own time. But the "hero" who comes riding down the light rays is not confined to his own historical moment: he could never be "contained entirely in a caught circle, back only in his own time" (84), not if he could be torn from his own context to ride into our future. And so the hero comes to join us in our ever-changing present even as his past is held firmly in check by images of a history that would not finally become us.

NOTE

1 In her "'Records of Simple Truth and Precision': Photography, Archives, and the Illusion of Control," *Archivaria* 50 (Fall 2000), Joan M. Schwartz argues similarly that "the defining moments in both the history of modern archives and the history of photography can be traced to the same two-year period in France, 1839-41," because "the nineteenth-century epistemological assumptions upon which both archival practices and photographic practices rested" (3, 5) were identical.

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Brian Henderson

Coda of Sighs
(after Anne Carson)

You forgot
the sighs of the ghosts of the
wind being
felt up by pines
of silk slipping from skin, of
air over owl's wing,

of the very last
out breath
taking you
beyond the pleasure of the dereliction
at the heart of that moment

of the letter
sliding
out of its envelope
unread

There is a moment
before the sigh
where it is everywhere
collecting itself
that the sigh says goodbye to
and scatters,
the sigh
that is the soul, shimmering
on its edge
with sharpness

Deena Rymhs

David Collier's *Surviving Saskatoon* and New Comics

Since the 1992 publication of Art Spiegelman's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Maus*, a two-volume graphic narrative that explores the author's inheritance as the son of Holocaust survivors, comic books have attracted renewed attention. Recent film versions of *V for Vendetta*, *Ghost World*, *Road to Perdition*, *American Splendor*, and *Sin City* reflect a growing interest in alternative comics. Distinct from the superhero tradition that has dominated the comic book industry, alternative comics originated in the 1960s and 70s as a primarily underground form. This new strain of independent, creator-owned art saw "an unprecedented sense of intimacy" in the authors' approach to their subject matter, an intimacy that "rival[led] the scandalous disclosures of confessional poetry but shot through with fantasy, burlesque, and self-satire" (Hatfield 7). The personal tenor of these comics would coalesce into "New Comics," the next wave of comic art that followed in the 1980s and 90s. Inheriting the cross-genre tendencies of the underground comics before them, New Comics have persisted in pushing the relatively open boundaries of the form, branching into autobiography, biography, political documentary, reportage, and historiography. Like their predecessors, this body of literature exhibits a strong interest in marginal identities and the social values that engender difference.

One of Canada's most noted comic-book artists, David Collier has written several book-length graphic narratives since Robert Crumb first published Collier's comic strip in 1986. His work has also appeared in such mainstream venues as the *National Post* and *The Globe and Mail*. Blending life writing with social commentary, Collier's comics are interested in the dominant values that define particular settings and in individuals who do not fit the social

norms of their environments. Many of his graphic narratives combine autobiography and biography. *Portraits of Life*, for instance, resurrects marginally important figures of the past such as Ethel Catherwood, an Olympic high-jumper in the 1920s who fell out of the public eye; Humphry Osmond, a psychiatrist who coined the term "psychedelic" while working in a psychiatric hospital in Weyburn, Saskatchewan, and who gave Aldous Huxley his first experience with mescaline; and Grey Owl, an English gentleman who, posing as an indigenous conservationist, became one of the most well-known hoaxes of the twentieth-century. His characters tend to be curious public figures. In the process of tracing their lives, Collier often reflects on his own past experiences alongside those of his protagonists.

Collier's *Surviving Saskatoon* is a comic book retelling of the David Milgaard story. Convicted in 1969 for the murder of Gail Miller, Milgaard was Canada's longest-serving prisoner before his exoneration in 1997 (Collier n. pag.). *Surviving Saskatoon* returns to the 1969 murder while musing on Saskatchewan's social tenor at the time of Milgaard's conviction. Milgaard is an outsider who defies the normative values of his conservative prairie setting, and his difference, Collier emphasizes, makes Milgaard vulnerable to suspicion. Alongside his reconstruction of Milgaard's story are Collier's autobiographical reflections on his time in Saskatoon. A lone wanderer in this peculiar cultural landscape, Collier examines Saskatchewan's construction of the outsider, making a political argument about the perceptions and prejudices that wrongly imprisoned Milgaard. Collier explores his experiences in Saskatoon in a way that parallels Milgaard's treatment as an outsider. New Comics' interest in alterity and in the dissolution of the heroic ideal emerges in *Surviving Saskatoon*'s focus on the outsider—a position occupied by Milgaard, Collier, and later, Saskatchewan itself, as a stagnant political entity struggling with out-migration, economic depression, and an identity still dependent on its settler past.

The Praxis of New Comics Literature

While traditionally denied critical attention, comic art is undergoing considerable reappraisal as a literary form. The introduction of the term "graphic novel" into literary parlance (although its popularity is recent, the term was first coined in 1978 by Will Eisner) signals an increasing recognition of comic art as a sub-category of literature. Yet many creators and long-time critics of comic books look askance at the term graphic novel. Charles Hatfield argues that "graphic novel" is a misnomer, an "all-purpose tag" for a

vague new material object (5). Not all such comic volumes follow a novel's typical progression in their length or structure; instead, they are often assemblages of sketches first published in serial form. That comic works are non-fictional would also preclude their classification as novels. Hatfield points out the curious irony that the term graphic novel legitimates a once lowbrow form: "[T]he novel—once a disreputable, bastard thing, radical in its formal instability—is here being invoked as the very byword of literary merit and respectability" (5-6). As Pierre Bourdieu has argued in his discussions of material culture, artistic taxonomies are related more to the tastes of social classes than to inherent values of the art object.

With their reputation as a mass-produced, lowbrow medium, comics have traditionally been looked upon as cheaply-produced throwaways (Sabin 8). The packaging of *Surviving Saskatoon* evokes this conception of the pulp comic book: produced with low-quality materials, the thin, "handmade" booklet costs $4.50. According to Roger Sabin such low-cost packaging explains "why comics have been relegated by the hip art world to the status of 'found objects' and 'trash icons'" (3). He further observes how these perceptions have come to affect the status of the comic book author, remarking that "comic creators have never been represented as 'artists,' and have historically been left open to exploitation: not uncommonly, they remain anonymous while the characters they have created go on to become household names (everybody knows who Superman is, but how many people can name its [sic] creators?)" (3). Given its history, the comic book might be an apposite genre for exploring alterity: seen even by its creators as "an abject art form with its own worldview" (Worden 898), this medium maintains a self-consciousness about its identity as an outsider to conventional art.

While hierarchies of high/low art have affected the reception of comic books, one also needs to distinguish among the various types of comic art within a robust, vast industry. Hatfield points out the curious identity of alternative comics in relation to their surrounding company:

> Because alternative comics de-emphasize heroic fantasy (the market's bedrock genre), they are unfortunately marginalized even within the marginalized field of comic book fandom. By that field's peculiar standards, their core readership is considered highly specialized. The position of alternative comics is therefore fragile—though they continue to serve mainstream comics practically, as a seedbed for new talent, and rhetorically, even ideologically, as an abiding and convenient Other. (30-31)

Alternative comics are uniquely positioned: while they are a subset of a specialized branch of literature, the space between them and the spate of

superhero comics with which they share the medium is not collapsible. In the contexts of the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights movement, Gay Liberation, and more recently, the War on Iraq, alternative comic artists used their medium to engage social issues. Wimmens comix, which appeared in the 1970s, not only challenged social constructions of gender, but provided a feminist response to the male-centred fandom and formula of comic books. Alternative comics have long served as a vehicle of political protest. New Comics continue in this tradition by broaching political issues or challenging the structures that produce social inequities. Collier, like many of his contemporaries—Scotland's Eddie Campbell and Lower East Side New York's Ben Katchor, for instance—locates his work in working-class environments, following the social realism of Cleveland's Harvey Pekar in the 1970s. In sharp contrast to their more mainstream counterparts, New Comics are interested in the beautiful losers, those whom the industrial world has shortchanged and whose realities erode faith in a superhero. One may make the case, as Matthew Wolf-Meyer does, that the superhero comics differ in ideological content by traditionally upholding capitalist values. Wolf-Meyer looks at superhero comic books with an eye to "the sorts of narratives that they disallow" (502). Despite a pantheon of American superheroes who attempt to tackle such social problems as crime and poverty, these comics typically depict a utopia "attempted and failed" and ultimately "retain the status quo while appeasing the proposed conservative ideology of [their] readers" (511).[1] Wolf-Meyer points out, for instance, that the "Justice League [the team of superhero figures that includes Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman] has never acted against the United States government in its forty year history" (502).[2] The different ideological stance of New Comics, by contrast, calls into question hegemonic values, prompting readers to re-examine their real worlds and those relegated to their margins.

Framing Milgaard

While Collier takes the well-known story of Milgaard's wrongful imprisonment as the apparent focus of this graphic narrative, he offers a different telling than one might expect. Interspersed with Collier's social commentary about Prairie culture and its othering of those who do not conform to its ideas of normative society is Collier's personal account of small-town Saskatchewan life, a life that is "still tough . . . if you're outta the mainstream" (Collier n. pag.). Often self-revealing, Collier's musings on his experiences in this setting form the antithesis of a heroic narrative. Shortly following

his first arrival in Saskatchewan in 1984 after quitting animation school, Collier depicts himself frequenting unemployment centres. Jobless, he returns to Ontario with his last bit of money. His next attempt at living in Saskatoon occurs six years later after quitting the army. Living parsimoniously, he makes money selling "landscape drawings" or, more precisely, sketches of oil wells to a national newspaper. His is the story of the down-on-his-luck artist struggling to live meaningfully in a contradictory and inhospitable environment.

Collier's narration flits back and forth between two storylines: "Saskatchewan '69," which tells the story of Milgaard's wrongful imprisonment, and "Milgaard and Me," which recreates Collier's time in this setting more than 20 years later. These two narrative layers are mapped spatially onto the text with the left page developing Milgaard's story and the right page, Collier's. This design invites the reader to contemplate the meaning at the seam of both narratives. The "biocularity" that Marianne Hirsch observes of comics' verbal-visual planes of meaning is taken one step further by Collier, who has us read back and forth between two protagonists. Milgaard and Collier—the two "protagonists" of this text, the two Davids—are figures whose lives are more pathetic than heroic. Collier depicts his struggle eking out a living in Saskatoon after quitting animation school and leaving the army. Milgaard, too, is an unlikely hero. The chain of events that follows his wrongful imprisonment—attempted escape, a police-inflicted gun-wound, depression—is not the material of the typical comic book. Writing against the grain of the superhero tradition, Collier draws attention to social injustices in the real, not just fictional, world and ultimately calls into question his reader's values.

"Saskatchewan '69"

"It's hard to believe now but at one time hippies were out of the ordinary, shocking even," Collier opens this graphic narrative, "and when true evil appeared as it inevitably does, they were the first to be blamed in Saskatchewan '69" (Collier n. pag.). With these framing remarks, Collier sets up his context—the Prairies in the late-1960s, where the hippies are a marginalized subculture. In the foreground of the first panel appears a young, longhaired David Milgaard (fig. 1). Behind Milgaard are a strip mall and passing motorists looking back at him with sneers on their faces. Collier asks: "Is it the space that breeds taciturn-type people? Maybe it's just too cold to roll down the window, but whatever the reason, in Saskatchewan

Figure 1

assholes don't yell from cars: but if they did: 'Get a haircut you freak!'" (n. pag.). Deferring to the well-worn idea of the land determining the character of its inhabitants and to the stereotype of Prairie people as laconic, these comments mark an unexpected shift of focus from Milgaard's story of wrongful imprisonment to Saskatchewan's social character. Collier continues: "Saskatchewan remains pretty progressive politically—the first socialist government in North America was elected here in 1944 and the first Medicare system on the continent was in place less than twenty years later, but on a personal level it's a conservative place" (n. pag.). The accompanying image depicts a typical Saskatchewan family seated in their living room—a painting of a moose commanding the background—with their unwelcoming faces turned toward the reader (fig. 2). Here, Collier places the reader in the position of the outsider, an unwitting intruder peering at the unwelcoming glances of the family members. An observer of Canadian social landscapes and the cultures that form within them, Collier assumes within this graphic narrative a

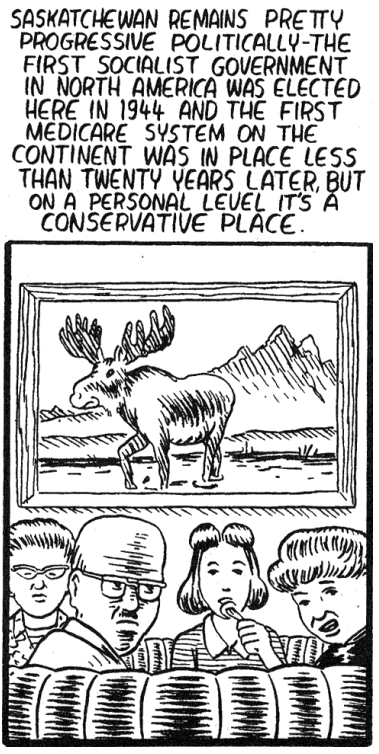

Figure 2

stance characteristic of his other works. His interest in *Surviving Saskatoon* is in Saskatchewan's social conservatism and its treatment of the outsider.

While the two protagonists' experiences are to be read as interconnected, the split narrative makes for a disjointed and even confusing reading experience. The comic book opens by introducing Milgaard in his small-town Prairie setting, alluding to the scapegoating that will produce his later conviction. The following page depicts an unidentified man stopped by two Mounties on a deserted street for jaywalking (fig. 3). It is not until a few pages into the book that the reader learns that this second figure is Collier's avatar. The shift from the first narrative to the second is at first disorienting; one reads the second page thinking it to be a continuation of Milgaard's story from the page preceding it. Collier refrains from providing cues sufficient to signal the shift in narratives. One might link the confusion produced by the shift in narratives to the fragmentation peculiar to the form itself. The explicit challenge posed to the reader at the start of *Surviving Saskatoon* may be a commentary on the comic book genre—on the reader's wresting of coherence from an inherently fragmented form. Hatfield explains: "The fractured surface of the comics page, with its patchwork of different images, shapes, and symbols, presents the reader with a surfeit of interpretive options, creating an experience that is always decentered, unstable, and unfixable" (xiii-xiv). The comic book reader is called to interpolate the space between panels, to endow each sequence, Scott McCloud argues, "with a single overriding identity [that forces] the viewer to consider them as a whole" (73). The space between the panels, called the gutter, continually demands of the reader this subtle, almost imperceptible, interpolation. "Here in the limbo of the gutter," McCloud describes the reading experience at the basis of comics, "human imagination takes two separate images and

Figure 3

Figure 4

transforms them into a single idea" (66). In joggling the reader in such a way, then, Collier perhaps consciously calls attention to the unique operation of the comic-book genre and the different way of reading it demands.

Collier's face is turned away from the reader in all of the panels on the second page: their ambiguity invites the reader to assume that the figure is Milgaard (fig. 4). The initial conflation teased out by this design is, I think, not accidental: Collier is interested in developing the continuities between Milgaard and himself. Paradoxically, Milgaard is an "everyman" whose ill fate and misperception by a general public who doubted his innocence for over 20 years are treated as the outcome of social prejudice. While Milgaard's wrongful imprisonment is an extreme, exceptional instance of the law's mishandling of authority, the point to be drawn from his story, perhaps, is that if a naïve sixteen-year-old can become so demonized, then others might easily be similarly constructed. The two RCMP officers who bully Collier for jaywalking and ask, "Are you FROM Saskatoon?" show the continued operation of insider and outsider roles. Moreover, this interaction suggests how easy it is to end up on the other side of the law. The reader becomes witness to the antagonism generated by ideas of inclusiveness.

Throughout the rest of the graphic narrative, Collier flits back and forth between the two storylines, setting up his autobiographical account as a counterpoint to Milgaard's story. The one narrative informs and deepens the other. Collier's eye is turned to the prosaic details that texture these two lives. He casts himself as a wanderer who occupies the margins of Saskatchewan society. Following his initial encounter with the Mounties, he continues to perceive his difference from others. The two plots parallel each other at a few points. Not long after Milgaard and his friends—before setting off on a joyride to Saskatoon—have their car battery stolen, Collier's car battery is stolen. Indignant, Collier enumerates other ways that this province has wronged him, recalling how his first girlfriend was lured away by someone from Saskatchewan. This affront deepened years later when the same happened with his first wife. His mother's savings, he also recalls, were fraudulently stolen by a man from Saskatchewan. These personal losses suggest —albeit somewhat playfully—how Collier has also been victim to the same place as Milgaard.

The parallels between Collier's autobiographical account and Milgaard's story are the result of careful management of the space and page, as well as an intricately woven narrative. Other subtle connections emerge. In the courtroom following his guilty verdict, Milgaard as he is escorted away to

prison asks his mother, "[W]ill you bring me some comic books?" The era in which Milgaard's story takes place—the late 1960s and the peak of the hippie movement—was also a crucial period for alternative comic artists, some of whom would later inspire Collier. Such artists as Robert Crumb—whom Collier names as an influence—emerged at the end of the 1960s underground era and carried over in the 1970s and 80s punk movement with transitional publications like Spiegelman's *Raw* magazine. These earlier artists, Bob Callahan points out, experienced an artistic renaissance in the company of younger punk artists. Collier was part of the punk scene when he began as a comic artist. Though obviously characterized by different sensibilities, the hippie and punk movements shared a decidedly anti-corporate attitude. Sabin points out that while the later New Comic artists "were not part of the 'grand political project' like the hippies before them . . . they were commonly counter-cultural within the context of the 1980s and 90s" (178). The cultural and historical setting of this work creates a metanarrative that speaks to the development of the comic genre itself. Collier and Milgaard belong to cultural movements that were both pivotal to the development of alternative comic books. The countercultural stance of both movements is perhaps a further convergence of the two protagonists.

Milgaard, however, is hardly a serious political radical at the time he is convicted of the murder. He is a kid out on a joyride, "just farting around" (Collier n. pag.) the evening he ends up in Saskatoon. In the interim before he learns he is suspected of the crime, he finds a job selling magazine subscriptions in British Columbia, his innocent, youthful appearance noted as an asset for the position. When he sees himself on a wanted poster, Milgaard eagerly turns himself in to the police station to clear up the perceived error. Additional details question Milgaard's identity as the murderer. Rehearsing the skeleton of facts and reconstructing the crime scene visually as well as textually (fig. 5, 6 and 7), the narrative here makes a foray into the detective novel and true-crimes writing. The killer was right-handed, while Milgaard was left-handed. The distance that Milgaard was supposed to have travelled to the murder scene was too great to have been covered in the calculated time span. As Collier rehearses the possible sequence of events that would have made Milgaard the murderer, travelling to the crime scene from the point where Milgaard and his friends got stuck in their car, he asks incredulously, "Didn't anyone at that trial try covering this distance?" (n. pag.)

Not only did the plausibility of Milgaard's identity as the murderer appear to go unquestioned, but so did the trail of sexual assaults that led to the

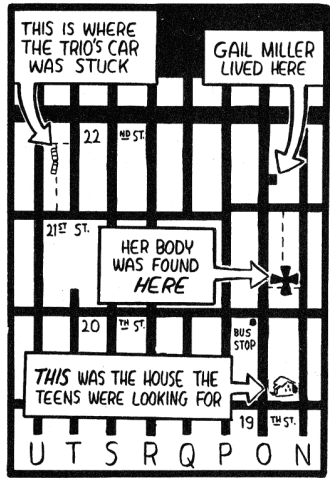

Figure 5

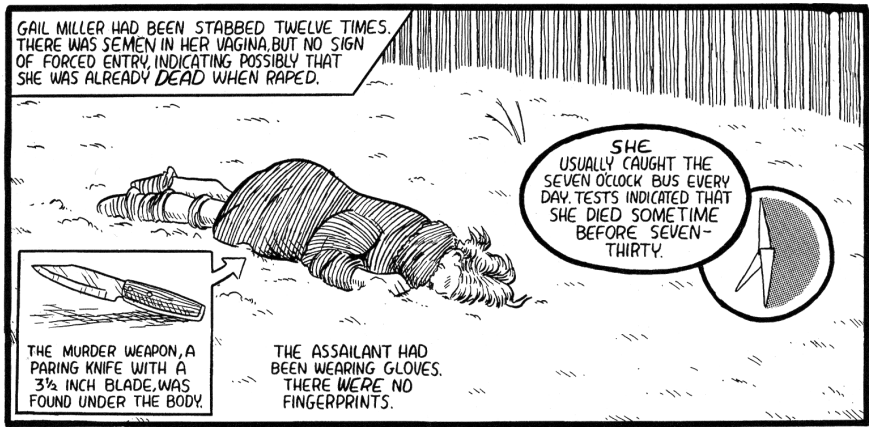

Figure 6

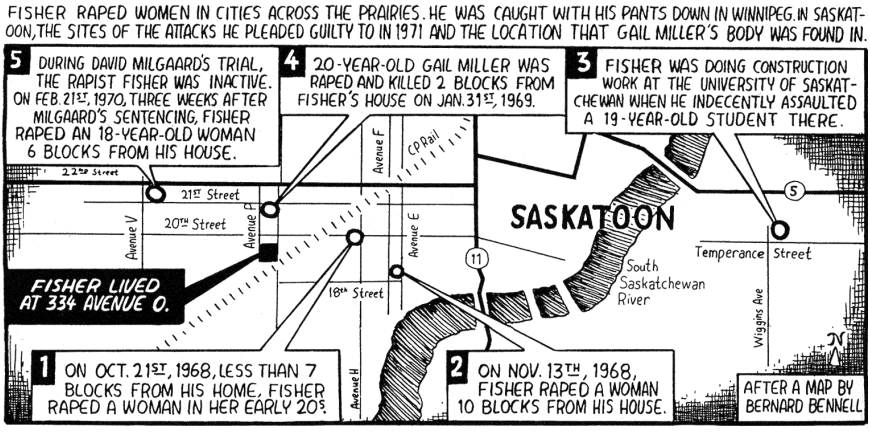

Figure 7

house of Larry Fisher. The actual murderer, Larry Fisher, is the antitype of Milgaard, "a clean cut, polite, hard-working construction worker with a wife and daughter, the type of man the police—if not the majority of people in the province—could relate to" (Collier n. pag.). Fisher is part of the normative culture, an accepted member of the larger community who are confounded when they discover his cold-blooded impulses. "I grew up next door to Larry Fisher in North Battleford!" a barber tells his client. "He always had girlfriends or he was married. I don't know why he had to do that to all those women" (Collier n. pag.). Underneath the surface appearance of domestic normalcy, Fisher is a vicious serial rapist and murderer.

As Collier wanders through Saskatchewan, he notices Free David Milgaard stickers around the city landscape. Saskatchewan emerges as a culture of contradictions. The most obvious contradiction is the province's socially conservative nature, a conservatism incongruent with its political progressiveness—its identity as the "first socialist government in North America" and the birthplace of Medicare. The city appears to be indifferent to injustice, evidenced by Collier's Saskatoon friends Irene and Warren, who are intractably convinced of Milgaard's guilt despite evidence to the contrary. Further contradictions emerge in Collier's experiences. Although he is intimidated by the RCMP for jaywalking, all the cars in traffic stop for Collier the moment he approaches a curb (fig. 8). "This is a car town," he remarks. "Whenever I walk I feel I'm being looked upon with a mixture of pity and amusement" (n. pag.).

Figure 8

Collier is sensitive to people on the outside throughout this graphic narrative, reflecting on the relocated Aboriginal urban population of Saskatoon streaming in from reserves, and depicting an encounter with a neighbourhood woman named Anna coming back from the food bank improperly clothed for the prairie winter. Collier witnesses the dissolution of a socialist vision. With no rent control, residents are squeezed out of their apartments. The once egalitarian impression Collier had of the city, where the "rich and poor lived side by side," now seems only to underline and deepen such disparities. "Right next door to poverty-stricken ol' me," Collier remarks as he strolls through his neighbourhood, "lives a reasonably well-off judge!" (fig. 9). Milgaard, it is also implied, was a victim of such economic inequities. His lawyer's competence is called into question when Collier's understatement describes him as "the best counsel legal aid would buy" (n. pag.).

Figure 9

The legal system receives the greater part of Collier's scrutiny in this graphic narrative. Coerced witness testimony produced Milgaard's arrest and conviction. When later evidence emerged indicating that Milgaard might not have been the murderer, the legal establishment colluded to protect itself. Fisher's wife came forward to the police in 1980 stating that she suspected her husband of Gail Miller's murder. Despite substantial evidence pointing to Fisher, David Milgaard remained in jail. For Milgaard, life within the prison was filled with similar injustices. Maintaining his innocence, he was seen as refusing rehabilitation and subjected to punitive measures within the prison. An institutional transfer relocated Milgaard from

the prairie to Dorchester Penitentiary in New Brunswick. Placed in a new context where no one knew him, Milgaard was made to endure, as a convicted sexual offender, the intimidation of other inmates. Hopeless, Milgaard escaped from prison, but upon his discovery by police, sustained a permanent gunshot injury even though he had surrendered unarmed (fig. 10). Eventually medicated for depression, Milgaard continued to spiral downward until DNA testing cleared him of his charges almost 30 years after his conviction (fig. 11).

Figure 10

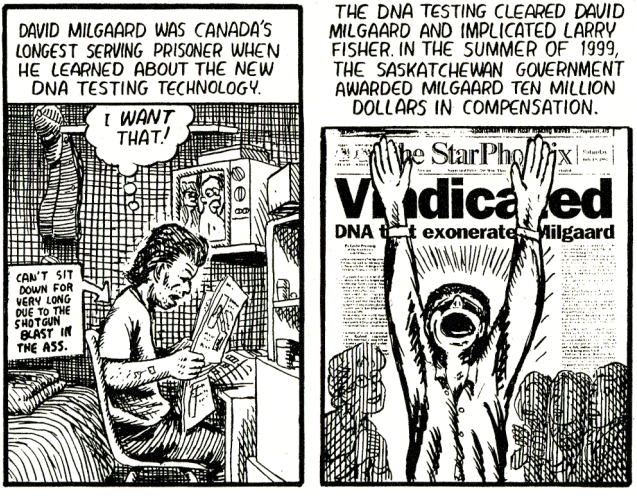

Figure 11

Characterized at first as an inhospitable, even adversarial place working against the text's two protagonists, Saskatchewan emerges at the end of this graphic narrative as a pathetic figure. With the rupture of the socialist dream, Saskatoon sees an increase in poverty and class-related crime. Littering a residential street are signs petitioning against child prostitution. Observing this city at this historical juncture, Collier remarks: "I predict that some unique culture is gonna get in the 21st century here—in the meantime, though, this community has some serious problems to work out" (n. pag.). Drugs, prostitution, and vagrancy define the social reality of Saskatchewan in the late-twentieth-century (fig. 12).

Figure 12

Saskatchewan as Collier finds it is a worn and weary place awaiting renewal. "When I first registered my car in Saskatchewan, I checked the box marked 'settler's effects,' which made it sound as though we got here by covered wagon," he remarks with amusement (n. pag.). The antiquated terminology reflects a community still living in its past. Interestingly, a similar conception appears in the Tragically Hip's reflection on the Milgaard story, "Wheat Kings," a song that opens with an image of stillness where "All you hear are the rusty breezes." The public's response to Milgaard at the discovery of his innocence is summarized in the cautionary statement, "you can't be fond of living in the past," but the song describes a dream of being locked up in a "dead and stark" museum "where the walls are lined all yellow gray and sinister / Hung with pictures of our parents' prime ministers." Despite

a desire to forget the more blighted parts of its history, the province is still living in the past.

Saskatchewan, at the time Collier observes it, is a dying place, with the "highest rate of out-migration in the country" (n. pag.). Collier asks what will become of this marginal political entity, a place on the periphery of the nation's awareness. Alison Calder and Robert Wardhaugh respond to this apparent figuring of the Prairies in the national imagination:

> It has been possible to believe that the Canadian prairies have ended, or at least that time has ceased to pass here, judging by representations of the prairies in much literature and popular culture, and that we are permanently frozen in a rural, agricultural scene alternately coloured by the grainy, sepia tones of the Dirty Thirties or by the romanticized, golden glow of a nostalgic small-town sunset. (4)

Representations of the Prairie in literature and popular culture have deferred to the same static conception, a "vision of prairie history that is at once frozen at a particular moment . . . and is also over" (Calder and Wardhaugh 7). Countering this perception, Calder and Wardhaugh ask how "writers, creative and scholarly, [are] representing the prairie, and what . . . these representations mean" (4). Collier, as an outsider to and observer of this setting, enters into dialogue with existing conceptions. While he does not disturb these stereotypes, he extends his reflection to the treatment of the "other" in this particular social and political context. His interest goes beyond the idea of geography as determining the character of a people; instead, he ponders how communities are drawn in this place and the role that exclusivity, fear, and provincialism play. Challenging social conservatism, Collier involves his reader in a larger criticism of the criminal-justice system, a system that few interrogate. As an indication of the public's antipathy toward prisoners and its trust in the justice system, Stephen Harper's 2006 election platform pledged to get tougher on crime, promising minimum and mandatory prison sentences for certain offences and proposing to end the release of prisoners after they have served two-thirds of their sentences. Milgaard exists outside the fictional world. Collier ultimately exposes the cruel face of social conservatism—a culture of insularity and fear that resonates in our current historical moment.

In his telling of Milgaard's story—an event that has become part of a national consciousness—Collier writes an altogether different work than one might expect. Exploring his time in Saskatoon alongside that of his protagonist, Collier arranges these two registers so that they interact and inform

each other continually. The autobiographical register of this work points to the contributions graphic narratives are making to life writing. These innovations prompt the necessary recognition that graphic narratives are more than just gaining acceptance with the literary establishment, but are vitally transforming how we think of literary forms. Hillary Chute and Marianne DeKoven point out that this new genre is "absorbing and redirecting the ideological, formal, and creative energies of contemporary fiction" (768). Pushing our understanding of the process of representation, comic literature prompts us to perform different readings, to train different interpretive senses. In Charles Hatfield's description, this body of literature invites a "new formalism" (x), one which prompts consideration of the semiotics of the page, the conjunction of image and text, and the reader's process of interpolation between panels. Critical conversations concerning graphic narratives have become less about arguing their value and place among other literary forms and more about how, in an era in which we are flooded with image and digital media, we might begin to read differently. Comic art offers a burgeoning literature whose different approaches to representation can offer important reconsiderations not only of history and marginal figures from the past, but of the process of interpretation itself.

NOTES

1 A case in point is Marvel Comics' *What If?* series, in which each issue examines an alternate possibility to that depicted in any of Marvel's other comics. Inevitably, the alternate version ends in disaster, commonly with the death of the hero. This common pattern clearly presents the point that things are meant to be as they are, and that the alternative is likely to be unpleasant.

2 While alternative comics are often seen as sharply breaking from their superhero counterparts, the history of superhero comics is more complex than this polarity might suggest. Many superheroes are outcasts. Spiderman is a vigilante constantly pursued by the police and blamed for the crimes of his foes, while struggling to eke out an existence as a freelance newspaper photographer. The X-Men, a super-powered group of mutants, are consistently viewed by the American government with suspicion. Superman, Bradford Wright points out, emerged in the Depression as a "champion of the oppressed" (10). Wright goes on to argue, however, that many superhero comics became less questioning of the federal government after the New Deal. During World War II, comic books often demonized America's enemies. Increasingly deployed in service of government politics, superhero comic book narratives became less sensitive to social-cultural problems and,

instead, became outlets for racial anxieties (Wright 37). A number of comic books from the 1940s onward, Hillary Chute summarizes, began "mirror[ing] some of the worst, least redeemable qualities in American culture" ("Decoding" 1019).

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Hendrik Slegtenhorst

Gondolier

The idyl breaks as Venetian glass under the heavy rain,
The idolatry of the ideal broken like the intestines of a night
White with wakening, slivered by indigestible shards
Transparent to the hands laved with the inundations
Of the rising lagoon. Saintly marks identify the oarsman,
His aging gondola on the barcarolle of the canal
Between the aquamarine ululations of the mouths
Of the Po and Piave thirsting for the industry of the depths.
And in this twilight of temperament become brittle
With brine borne in the blood, and veiled by eyelids
Made thin with subcutaneous sight, he studies no more
The broken ornament, takes the tide that takes the tithe
Of time, and looks at the city that sinks away as it ever
Becomes more beautiful with the life it cannot keep.

Jesse Patrick Ferguson

Chainsaw

I.

Soldiers ranked: a sanguinary cohesion.
Each pike-man pulled and pushed,
itching to make sawdust of whatever,
at least the flesh
beneath the woodsman's leather chaps.

II.

During aneurysm, your brain
a chainsaw *sans* chain.

Its teeth slowed then stump-stalled,
bumpered, embedded in the breadth
of a 200-year-old oak.
Carbide steel nubbed
against the adamantine gnarl of knot.

The kickback of all 72 tongue studs
locked in the intractable darkness
of a ¼ inch incision
where blood and oil look the same.

Aggression, clipped.

III.

Generating gyroscopic angst,
fuming burnt oil blue clouds,
this 20-pound wasp buzzing
the too-small Mason jar of your skull,
de-stingered.

Without guide-bar logic
inflaming the meninges,
converting its last gasp of oxygen
to metal clatter and carbon monoxide.

Double Vision Reading

Caroline Andrew, Monica Gattinger, M. Sharon Jeannotte, and Will Straw, eds.
Accounting for Culture: Thinking Through Cultural Citizenship. U of Ottawa P $35.00

Chelva Kanaganayakam, ed.
Moveable Margins: The Shifting Spaces of Canadian Literature. TSAR $24.95

Reviewed by Sophie McCall

Two recent collections of essays on Canadian culture and literature seem symptomatic of an increasing incompatibility in critical approaches between the social sciences and the humanities despite an ostensible shift in the academy toward interdisciplinarity. Reading these two texts in tandem is likely to cause a bad case of double vision—a time-honoured, eminently Canadian affliction. But if these texts demonstrate incommensurability in discipline, methodology, and function, they also explore some common ground. Both are trying to formulate a coherent, if flexible, picture of cultural continuity and change in Canada in an era of accelerated migration, commodified cultural exchange, and the erosion of nationally-based cultural policies. Both call for a re-examination of the role culture plays in citizenship and ask what "Canada" signifies as a container for an ever-increasing cultural, linguistic, sexual, and religious plurality.

Many of the contributors to *Accounting for Culture* express an urgent need to reinvigorate the function of Canadian cultural policy and to link it to a participatory notion of cultural citizenship. John A. Foote's statement of intent is widely applicable: "We are looking for a conceptual approach that helps us move away from the marginalization of culture or cultural policy towards a greater recognition of its fundamental role in encouraging active cultural and civic participation and in bridging inter-cultural differences." Almost all the writers insist that vague evocations of cultural complexity (ubiquitous in Canadian literary studies) cannot rectify the marginalization of culture in governmental policy and public debate. Statistics, graphs, and colour-coded pies, based on economic arguments, remain the most effective tools in eliciting government support. Thus, some of the contributors define culture using conventional taxonomies that risk reifying culture as a knowable set of characteristics (Stanley, Foote, Pacquet). Colin Mercer offers a more nuanced approach. Although "we need more numbers, more facts, more indicators, more benchmarks in both quantitative and qualitative terms," he urges critics to ask not what culture *is* but rather "how it connects and relates to how we go about our lives."

Kanaganayakam's collection, as the title suggests, shows a greater degree of comfort with "moveable" and "shifting" notions of culture. Indeed, the contributors to this volume seem sceptical of attempts to define culture; rather, as Kanaganayakam points out, each essay is imbued "with a deep awareness of the fluidity of margins."

The strength of the collection is the extraordinary range of Canadian writing that "refuses stable location" by authors "whose origins lie outside Canada." This is Canadian writing that is constantly "moving away and gesturing towards origins." Cynthia Sugars' powerful essay explores the haunting obsession with origins in Canadian settler literary discourses that attempt to manufacture an "ab-originality that is not aboriginal." There is a certain disdain for positivistic, government-focused notions of culture, and a faith in literature to escape rigid approaches to cultural difference. In Donna Bennett's words, "literature provides us with narratives created outside the boundaries of bureaucracy in order to articulate complexity and raise exceptions." This insight seems apt in light of the potentially reductive imperative to count and itemize cultural difference in Andrew *et al*. However, the notion of literature occupying a privileged space outside bureaucracy is also symptomatic of the disciplinary norms in Canadian literary studies whereby critics opportunistically tune out the material constraints within which Canadian culture is produced, packaged, and sold today.

The problem of nation, in this era of globalization and increasingly complex patterns of migration, remains ever-present in both texts. Just as the apparent turn to interdisciplinarity simultaneously has justified a retrenchment of academic specialization, globalization ironically has reified national borders. For Diana Brydon and Jessica Schagerl, globalization has not resulted in "nation-states hav[ing] lost their power to control global flows." George Elliott Clarke insists on the need to teach minority literatures as a way to create alternative national narratives, and Daniel Heath Justice makes an impassioned call for indigenous sovereignty in both literary studies and in Canadian political life. Kanaganayakam's response to the persistence of the nation in these discussions is that Canadian literature "is haunted by the idea of a nation. The presence of the nation . . . is both problematic and paradoxical." His essay on Canadian writers whose work is not set in Canada (for example, Mistry, Vassanji, Ondaatje) offers a compelling illustration of precisely this paradox. In Andrew *et al.*, the paradoxical need for, and inadequacy of, a nationally based cultural policy are explored in some detail. Even as the export of Canadian culture is increasing at an unprecedented rate, Canadian cultural policy remains mired in the outdated assumption that Canada has (or should have) a singular national culture. Because of the inadequacy of this model, the legitimacy of cultural policy itself is in question—at this moment when, the contributors suggest, Canadians most need it.

One way to reinvent Canadian cultural policy is to reveal its potential links to a participatory conception of cultural citizenship. As Greg Baeker and others argue, cultural policy, fractured at the national level, must now operate on three equally fractured and increasingly diverse levels: civil society, the nation-state, and the global environment. The turn to cultural citizenship is necessary because "traditional public interest arguments for cultural policy, rooted in notions of a homogenous nation state . . . are undermined in an era marked by the transnational movement of people, capital, images, etc." Statistically speaking, according to Allan Gregg, the erosion of cultural policy in Canada has coincided with dwindling numbers of voters. He asks: "Could the decline in faith in our political process and the lack of support for culture be related? Can culture be used to rekindle faith in politics?" Gregg's homogenized notions of culture, politics, and citizenship can be corrected by reading Kanaganayakam's collection, particularly Brydon and Schagerl's careful attention to "how recent and how fragile citizenship" is; and how "it has always been sexualized and racialized."

Despite their respective focus on the "fracturing" of Canadian cultural policy and the "fluidity of margins" in Canadian literature, the contributors to both volumes simultaneously express a yearning for a larger, more cohesive narrative of Canada. For Andrew *et al*., Canada needs to re-envision the role of national cultural policy. Kanaganayakam begins his introduction by resurrecting the spectres of Atwood and Frye, as if these figures could offer us, in the chaos of current multiplicities, a common starting point of discussion. These are just a few of the critical ruptures that necessitate double vision when reading commentary on shifting Canadian cultural landscapes.

Des idées en réseaux : catholicisme, nationalisme et socialisme, d'un pays à l'autre

Stéphanie Angers et Gérard Fabre
Échanges intellectuels entre la France et le Québec (1930-2000). Les Presses de l'Université Laval 30,00 $

Compte rendu par Michel Lacroix

Comment les idées, les livres, circulent-ils d'une culture à l'autre? Cette question, longtemps abordée dans une perspective abstraite ou dans la logique unilatérale et réductrice de l'influence, se trouve désormais reprise sur de nouveaux frais. Avec le renouveau de l'histoire intellectuelle, la multiplication des recherches sur la sociabilité et les études de transfert culturel, les analyses tiennent dorénavant compte du poids des institutions, du rôle des médiateurs et de l'importance des processus de diffusion et de sélection. Un objet d'étude, tout particulièrement, s'est trouvé mis en valeur suite à ces transformations : la revue.

Dans leur étude, Stéphanie Angers et Gérard Fabre s'attaquent à pas moins de cinq d'entre elles, afin de voir comment, sur plus de soixante ans, elles ont canalisé les échanges entre la France et le Québec. Ce faisant, ils apportent une contribution notable à l'histoire intellectuelle québécoise. On avait souvent, par le passé, affirmé l'importance d'*Esprit* pour les animateurs de *La Relève* et de *Cité libre*, deux des plus importantes revues des décennies précédant la Révolution tranquille; toutefois, jamais on n'avait tenté, comme le font Angers et Fabre, de documenter avec précision la nature des liens entre ces revues et leur consoeur française. Moins encore avait-on pensé à inclure *Parti Pris* et *Possibles* dans le champ d'interrogation. Ceci permet une étude diachronique qui suit la courbe des évolutions propres à chaque revue, tient compte du renouvellement des équipes et des discours, et permet d'observer comment se redéploient les réseaux intellectuels selon les contextes. Le bilan dressé dans l'ouvrage montre ainsi comment une même revue (*Esprit*) a pu servir de source pour légitimer un catholicisme critique à l'endroit des méfaits du capitalisme et du nationalisme (*La Relève* et *Cité libre*), voire introduire un catholicisme de gauche défendu par des laïcs (*Cité libre*), puis pencher plutôt du côté des réseaux souverainistes, et entamer un dialogue avec d'autres réseaux, sur la base d'une commune adhésion à la décolonisation (*Parti Pris*) ou à l'idéal de l'autogestion (*Possibles*). Toutefois, comme le soulignent les auteurs, divers malentendus, à partir des années soixante, brouillent les liens entre *Esprit* et les revues québécoises et entraînent un éloignement progressif, après une phase d'étroite relation.

Une des forces de cette étude tient à ce qu'elle explore véritablement l'interaction entre les pôles français et québécois, suivant entre autres les mutations du discours sur le Québec développé dans *Esprit*. Bien loin de ramener les échanges à une relation à sens unique, où toutes les idées exprimées dans les revues québécoises viendraient directement de France, ils lancent plutôt, à l'aide

de métaphores géographiques révélatrices, l'hypothèse de « confluence » ou de « diffluence », c'est-à-dire de rencontre entre des courants d'idées convergents ou de séparation en plusieurs branches. En ceci, ils se distinguent fortement, par exemple, de l'approche adoptée par Catherine Pomeyrols, laquelle dans *Les intellectuels québécois, formation et engagements, 1919-1939*, tendait à réduire à une pure et simple importation intellectuelle la relation entre les milieux nationalistes français et québécois. Parallèlement, Angers et Fabre distinguent les diverses phases des relations avec *Esprit* en fonction du type de réseau mobilisé. Au réseau critique, sans enracinement direct dans l'univers politique, qui caractérise *La Relève* et les débuts de *Cité libre*, succède le modèle du réseau partisan, directement lié à un mouvement politique (*Cité libre* des années soixante et *Parti Pris*), puis celui du réseau professionnel, dominé par les experts (*Possibles* est ainsi défini par un ancrage dans le milieu universitaire). Leur ouvrage possède par conséquent une double portée, historique et méthodologique.

Une attention remarquable est apportée, du début à la fin, à la trajectoire et aux idées des différents animateurs des revues étudiées, ce qui rend justice à la pluralité de points de vue et à la diversité des rôles au sein des revues. On découvre ainsi par qui passent les contacts avec *Esprit*, quelles polarités cristallisent les positions dans les réseaux, mais surtout, on voit s'incarner les débats, parfois grâce à des documents d'archives. Le moment de rupture entre *Esprit* et *Cité libre*, entre autres, est révélateur de la dimension personnelle, voire affective, des relations intellectuelles. D'importants compléments biographiques, en annexe, ajoutent d'ailleurs à cet intérêt.

Ici et là, on pourra soulever des interrogations quant à l'interprétation des réseaux ou du contexte historique, juger par exemple que le réseau de *Cité libre* a été dès le départ hanté par l'engagement partisan ou estimer que les liens d'*Esprit* avec Brault, Marcotte, et Miron ne s'inscrivent pas tant dans le cadre de *Parti pris* que dans celui des éditions de l'Hexagone. De même, une relecture, à la lumière des liens entre *Esprit* et *Cité libre*, des thèses de J.-P. Warren et E.-M. Meunier sur les origines catholiques de la Révolution tranquille, aurait été fort intéressante. Toutefois, ce sont là critiques de détail, qui ne remettent pas en question la qualité de la démarche intellectuelle et le grand intérêt de cet ouvrage.

Trials and Tribulations

Yves Beauchemin; Wayne Grady, trans. *Charles the Bold: The Dog Years.* Douglas Gibson $34.99

Antonine Maillet; Wayne Grady, trans. *On the Eighth Day.* Goose Lane Editions $19.99

Reviewed by Gordon Bölling

Charles the Bold: The Dog Years is the first in a series of four novels that chronicle the life of Charles Thibodeau, a youngster from Montreal's notorious east end. In this first volume, Yves Beauchemin takes us from Charles' premature birth in October 1966 to his first term in secondary school. In the first pages the reader realizes that Charles is a special child and that his life is going to be far from ordinary. Although he is "born with a natural gift for happiness," Charles' childhood is overshadowed by tragic events. His mother never fully recovers from the birth of his younger sister Madeleine, and both sister and mother die before Charles reaches the age of four. Left with his alcoholic father, Charles suffers from the domestic violence Wilfrid Thibodeau repeatedly inflicts upon him. One night the carpenter even attempts to murder his son, who then seeks refuge with the Fafard family.

This may sound like a particularly bleak and depressing plotline, but Beauchemin, like Mark Twain in *Adventures of Huckleberry*

Finn, successfully counterbalances the more sobering sections of his story with a beautifully rendered account of a childhood in 1970s Montreal. Charles makes friends easily and on his way to adolescence he encounters a truly Dickensian cast of characters. Minor figures range from Mademoiselle Laramée, Charles' first teacher, to the notary Parfait Michaud and his eccentric wife, and from the hardware-store owner Fernand Fafard to the shady businessman Gino Guilbault. However, not all of these figures convince the reader. Some, like the pederast Monsieur Saint-Amour, are not as fully drawn as might have been wished for and therefore lack the depth of a memorable and truly original character.

From the beginning, Beauchemin intertwines Charles' life story with the larger history of Quebec. *Charles the Bold* contains a great number of references to the province's past and thereby anchors the fictional narrative in a specific place at a specific time. For example, in the week before the protagonist's birth, Montreal sees the opening of its new subway system, and in November 1976 Charles and his foster parents witness the formation of a new provincial government under the leadership of René Lévesque and the Parti Québécois. Nevertheless, the novel's focus is squarely on the trials and tribulations of Charles' childhood, which Beauchemin decides to narrate in a more or less chronological fashion. This traditional approach also comes to the fore in a few rather didactic sequences as well as in the novel's closed ending, which sees Charles reflecting upon his past life. *Charles the Bold* is certainly a book worth reading. Whether Beauchemin's novel will stand the comparison with such classics as W.O. Mitchell's *Who Has Seen the Wind*, as claimed on the book's cover, remains to be seen.

Non-fiction writer Wayne Grady is the translator of both Beauchemin's *Charles le téméraire: Un temps de chien* and Antonine Maillet's *Le huitième jour*, originally published in 1986. For his translation of *On the Eighth Day*, Grady was awarded a Governor General's Award in 1989. Maillet's novel is a celebration of the powers of storytelling and of the transformative qualities of art. Told in the irreverent and humorous tone that has become a hallmark of Maillet's fiction, *On the Eighth Day* sketches a world that "is much richer, much vaster, and much more complex than anyone has yet imagined." At the centre of this picaresque novel are the adventures and travels of two unlikely heroes. Big-as-a-Fist (also known as Tom Thumb or Thumbkin), a dwarf shaped out of leftover bread dough, and his twin brother John-Bear (also known as John-the-Strong or Strong-as-a-Dozen), a giant carved from an oak tree, set out to "search the four corners of the world for the route to their destiny."

On their hazardous journey, the twins are soon joined by two equally fantastic characters. The first is the aptly named Sir René Renaissance (also known as Figure-Head), a sixteenth-century French sailor who had been trapped under ice for centuries only to be brought back to life under John-Bear's warm breath, and the second is Extra-Day (also known as Born-Out-of-Time), the baby of the giantess Gargamelle. Guided by their curiosity, a thirst for life and an insatiable imagination, the four travellers visit such outlandish places as the country of Topsy-Turvydom and the Tintamarre Marshes, and encounter such bizarre creatures as a five-legged calf, a witch, a fairy, the fox Renard, and a carrier pigeon named Marco Polo. In addition, Death (also known as *Dulle Griet* or the Grim Reaper) makes several appearances but is outwitted by the novel's heroes time and again.

In *On the Eighth Day*, Maillet adapts motifs, themes, and stock characters from a number of sources. Thus she is indebted to the classical fairy tale, to adventure stories,

to legends as well as to the genre of the fable. However, it is the Book of Genesis that serves the Acadian writer as her point of departure. Unsatisfied with God's creation of an orderly world out of original chaos, the narrator of the novel's frame tale, a thinly disguised Antonine Maillet, takes upon herself the task of continuing God's work: "This Creation of yours is too small, I'd say to him, or so I told myself; too short, too thin, too—unfinished. . . . He could have asked the world's dreamers to dream; asked the inventors to invent something; or asked me to add to his seven days an eighth day." Maillet's script of the story of creation urges readers to leave the known world behind and enter "the day when everything is dared and anything is possible. Ask me for the moon, the stars, and all the planets." *On the Eighth Day* is an astonishing tribute to the power of imagination.

Keep Moving

Peter Behrens
The Law of Dreams. Anansi $32.95

Reviewed by Russell Morton Brown

Peter Behrens' powerful first novel has been a long time coming. His previous book, the short story collection *Night Driving*, was published in 1987, with some of its stories written a decade before that. If Behrens has needed some 30 years to prepare himself for *The Law of Dreams*, the wait has been worthwhile.

Night Driving showed its author learning from a variety of sources: its first story sounds like the masculinist writing of early Richard Ford; a later one draws on the Southern Gothic as channelled by Leon Rooke; others recall the textured relationships in Mavis Gallant's writing, explore the dispirited western ethos of Guy Vanderhaeghe's early fiction, or display the complex emotional arcs that characterize the narratives of Clark Blaise (who wrote the book's back-cover blurb). Good models all, but our awareness of them shows Behrens still assimilating what he had been reading.

The Law of Dreams is quite different. It's told with a burnished and sometimes terse imagism that no longer signals its debts:

> The coal fire sizzled in the grate. Fragrance of butter, toast, blackberry jam, and tea with sugar clouded the room. . . . Shea poured the tea and Mary, in a crisp white cap and apron, handed the cups around. He had grown fond of the whores' drink of tea, its smoky flavor. They never had tasted tea on the mountain. Water or whiskey. Milk he'd tasted from Phoebe's pail, or stolen, squeezed from her father's cows in the field. Men drank porter in the beer shops on market day, after selling the pig.

This writing makes use of the "poetic" style we associate with a number of contemporary fiction writers, many of whom began as poets: Michael Ondaatje, Jane Urquhart, Anne Michaels, and Michael Redhill. As in their work, this style is sometimes at odds with the harrowing material it recounts:

> He'd been beaten, often. The open palm, the fist, the stick. Speechless violence, what men seemed to admire most of all. The humiliation almost unbearable, far worse than the pain.
>
> The next scream flickered so fast, like a startled bird, he almost believed he hadn't heard a thing.

When Behrens decided to tell this story set within the environmental disaster that disrupted nineteenth-century Ireland, he was responding to the bits of family history he had heard growing up in Montreal. His choice also speaks to our current concerns with the environment, and the close appearance of *The Law of Dreams* and American novelist Cormac McCarthy's new novel, *The Road*, is a sign of our uneasy times: in each an ecologically devastated world causes a breakdown in civilized order that sends

its starving inhabitants on perilous and uncertain journeys. But Behrens' picaresque narrative and his retelling of past events with lyric realism is quite different from McCarthy's spare fable of future journeying in a post-apocalyptic world chiefly inhabited by shadowy and monstrous humans. In contrast to the restricted canvas of *The Road*, *The Law of Dreams* is filled with vivid events and with colourful characters that bring a mixture of kindness and threats.

When Behrens' protagonist, Fergus O'Brien, is expelled from the farmlands that defined all he knew, he must go for the first time where "the world is strangers," guided only by what he calls "the law of dreams"—which is "keep moving." Driven by his sense that "your dead want an answer and all you have is memory and the road," he lives a version of the nineteenth-century Irish diaspora. He is put into and escapes a workhouse in Ireland; he allies himself with a gang of wild youths roaming the countryside; he journeys to Liverpool in England, where he lives for a time in a bawdy house; next he travels to Wales, finding there a female companion who alternately saves and betrays him. Together they undertake the difficult Atlantic crossing aboard one of the coffin ships on which so many perished. In the novel's conclusion Fergus has arrived in Montreal; there, alone once more, he realizes that further journeying lies ahead.

The accomplishment of *The Law of Dreams* is that, in all this telling, it successfully locates the reader inside the skin of its main character. This is the novel as experience, a book to be lived.

Rites of Passage

William Bell
Crabbe. Fitzhenry & Whiteside $12.95

Julie Johnston
A Very Fine Line. Tundra $24.99

Reviewed by Gisèle M. Baxter

The question of the "young adult" or adolescent novel is a problematic one. Does this material actually appeal to age peers of its characters, or to a younger audience curious about this next phase in life? The current popularity among teens of Lewis and Pullman and Rowling concerns novels that mostly deal with childhood, not adolescence (Rowling's juvenile characters seem increasingly younger than their actual ages), yet there remains a constituency for reasonably contemporary, reasonably realistic fare that takes on the angst of the teen years (hence the enduring popularity of *The Outsiders*, with its naïve but genuinely adolescent perspective).

Tolkien asserted in "On Fairy-Stories" that young readers don't necessarily like fairy tales, nor must they. The experience of adolescence takes so many different forms that the challenge of balancing appealing subject matter and relevant thematic concerns is tricky: there can be no generic "teen novel." That said, despite the current popularity of fantasy, and sexed-up teen chick lit (actually promoted in one book display as "Bridget Jones Jr."), and grimly explicit problem novels (that is, anything by Melvin Burgess), the books considered here represent common trends in adolescent fare, and while both challenge conventions, both also reflect the persistence of the boys' book/girls' book dichotomy.

William Bell's *Crabbe* was first published in 1986 and has been reissued in trade paperback format. Despite its strengths (its spare, straightforward prose and convincing narrative voice, precisely observed sense of detail, especially in the wilderness setting,

and well-paced plot), this is a familiar "angry young man" novel. The protagonist, Franklin Crabbe, throws away an apparently promising future on the eve of his exams and takes off for the wilderness; his daring is matched by his ineptitude, and he is rescued from almost certain death by a woman named Mary, young enough to stir desire yet old enough to maintain authority, who dwells capably by herself in the wilderness, on the run from her own demons yet tormented in turn by her isolation. The novel's popularity as a set text in high school is unsurprising; Crabbe's discoveries sometimes seem to set up topics for discussion: family dysfunction, formal and informal education, euthanasia. After Mary's death, Crabbe's return to the world he left is handled subtly enough: his family begins to acknowledge its dysfunction, and he begins to realize not all adults are monsters and he has much to learn before finding his path. Yet Mary's death and its melodramatic circumstances, however capably handled, cheat the novel of its chances to grapple with truly challenging issues: what if Mary had returned to the outside world with Crabbe? As it is, the implications of her mercy killing of her husband and Crabbe's attraction to her never really need to be pursued. A similar novel, Tim Wynne-Jones' superb *The Maestro*, also ends with the sort of "after school special" suggestion that all will be well with the guidance of caring adults, but its wilderness segment has the marvellous conceit of its protagonist discovering not a capable dispenser of survival lore but an eccentric genius clearly modelled on Glenn Gould. *Crabbe* lacks that sort of audacity, and yet it does question the boys' book convention of capable masculine heroism in its flawed complaining protagonist, who learns his most significant lessons from an unconventional woman.

Julie Johnston's 2006 novel *A Very Fine Line* is also set in Ontario, but if *Crabbe* echoes elements of the boys' adventure story, this novel echoes (and twists) elements of the girls' domestic tale. Set around the Second World War, the story introduces Rosalind Kemp on the cusp of puberty, her singular mother, her various sisters, and some mysterious maiden aunts who are not as practical and modern as Adele Kemp wants her children to be. Rosalind seems clairvoyant, a horrifying prospect during the traumatic physical evolution into womanhood (so traumatic she tries at one point to become a boy); I am reminded of Frankie's response to the priest in the movie *Stigmata*; told her condition is a gift from God, she asks if she can give it back. Rosalind's retrospective voice is precisely observant and witty. Indeed, Johnston's stated enthusiasm for L.M. Montgomery's *Anne* books is obvious in her vibrant sense of time and place, and the plausible eccentricity and vivacity of her characters (especially Adele Kemp, in her formidable foundation garment, grey best suit and fox fur, confronting the schoolmistress). It is also apparent in her evocation of a community of women, though at a time when harder questions about gender roles and expectations dared to be asked. The time-setting is one of the novel's strengths: despite its brevity, there is a sense of time passing that coincides with Rosalind's physical development and increasing sense of her powers, so that her options are defined dramatically through the choices and fates of her older sisters, and her encounters with the principal male characters, Corny and Adrian. Despite the melodramatic denouement of a novel that isn't really plot-driven, and an ending with more than a whiff of conventional didacticism, I never felt excluded by this book (elements recall Alice Munro's treatment of children and teens), while I did by *Crabbe*, which makes more specific assumptions about its readership. These divergent responses only further illustrate the difficulties in approaching, and the risks in defining the adolescent novel.

Feminist Theatres

Susan Bennett, ed.
Feminist Theatre and Performance. Playwrights Canada $25.00

Reviewed by Rosalind Kerr

This important volume offers a number of key critical approaches to the significant but often neglected contributions that women have made to creating feminist theatre across Canada. Bennett's insightful introduction stresses its importance as a blueprint for a much needed full-length study in its detailing of the range of feminist practices exhibited by companies, individual artists, critics, and theorists. Noting the standard lamentable relegation of feminist theatre to a short-lived period (1970s-1980s), she has chosen articles that encourage readers to consider how much has been achieved despite the ongoing systemic under-representation of female artists first documented in Rita Fraticelli's federally commissioned *Status of Women in Canadian Theatre* (1982).

The first two articles, Cindy Cowan's "Message in the Wilderness" and Kate Lushington's "Fear of Feminism" (1985), set up the difficulties feminist theatre has faced from the outset. Cowan's coverage of the complicated situations facing marginalized Maritimes women theatre artists highlights the achievements of the innovative Mulgrave Road Co-op in creating the necessary community among very diverse groups of women. Lushington raises Fraticelli's prophetic lament for the unfulfilled promise of feminism to change the face of Canadian theatre.

Jane Moss' "The Body as Spectacle: Women's Theatre in Québec" (1986) offers an important overview of the stunning reclamation of women's bodies and voices by Quebec and Franco-Ontarian female artists beginning in 1969. Patricia Badir's "Playing Solitaire: Spectatorship and Representation in Canadian Women's Monodrama" (1992) surveys key artists working in this distinctive art form beyond Quebec. A retrospective on Pol Pelletier, Louise H. Forsyth's "A Clash of Symbols: When I Put on What I Want to Put on" (1997) fleshes out the account of the revolutionary breakthrough of feminist theatre in Quebec.

The next three articles on feminist collectives—Kim Bird's "The Company of Sirens: Popular Feminist Theatre in Canada" (1989); Donna E. Smyth's "Getting the Message: The NAAGs of Halifax" (1989); Wendy Philpott's "Women's Circle, Women's Theatre" (1991)—describe vibrant alternative theatre practices dedicated to social change. Susan Bennett's "Diversity and Voice: A Celebration of Canadian Women Writing for Performance" (1996) records the companies, plays, playwrights, performance artists, and collectives that put feminist theatre on the map. Complementing Bennett's list is the impressive array of names and achievements of Black women playwrights in Djanet Sears' "Naming Names: Black Women Playwrights in Canada" (1992). Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan's "Making It Happen: A Commercial Model for Self-Production" (1995) adds the perspectives of two prominent performance artists.

The active relationship between feminist theatre scholars and individual artists is represented by Ann Wilson's "Critical Revisions: Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*" (1992) and Celeste Derksen's "A Feminist Absurd: Margaret Hollingsworth's *The House That Jack Built*" (2002).

Next, Nightwood Theatre's crucial role in promoting feminist theatre is examined in Shelley Scott's "Collective Creation and the Changing Mandate of Nightwood Theatre" (1997) and Cynthia Grant's "Still 'Activist' after All These Years? Reflections on Feminism and Activist Theatre, Then and Now" (2004). Last, Jennifer O'Connor's "Still Acting Out After 25 Years" (2004)

celebrates Nightwood's achievements but returns full circle to the still-marginalized position of women in mainstream theatre (newly documented by a report released in 2006, "Equity in Canadian Theatre: the Women's Initiative").

I hope *Feminist Theatre and Performance* will provide the critical site that Bennett describes by bringing performers, spectators, and critics together to share in the ongoing feminist theatre project set in motion 30 years ago and still committed to the pursuit of cultural change today.

By Our Lack of Ghosts

Earle Birney; Sam Solecki, ed.
One Muddy Hand. Harbour $18.95

Reviewed by Daniel Burgoyne

Find *pnomes jukollages & other stunzas* (1969) (good luck doing that) and then go dig up *David and Other Poems* (1942). Begin there. Or, I suppose, begin here with *One Muddy Hand*, Earle Birney's selected poems, edited by Sam Solecki. In this reincarnation of *Ghost in the Wheels*, Birney's 1977 self-chosen selected poems, Solecki has slightly compressed the selection and drawn from three other McClelland & Stewart collections of Birney's poetry, including *Last Makings* (1991). Birney's original preface from *Ghost* recurs here too. Beyond a handful of earlier poems well worthy of inclusion, the main addition to this selection is drawn from a series of love poems written for Wailan Low. Low, Birney's literary executor, provides the biography for the volume as well. Solecki's choice results in a sense of the later Birney's writing, and I agree with Solecki that there is a distinct style that emerges in this series, a frank intimacy, that does provide insight into Birney. And yet, I wish more attention was given to Birney's concerted experimentation with visual poetry prior to 1970; he is one of the first Canadian poets to produce and write about concrete poetry, and his work with bill bissett and bpNichol strikes me as fundamentally important. To his credit, Solecki retains a few poems like "Epidaurus" (1963), "To Swindon from London by Britrail Aloud / Bagatelle," and "Window Seat" (1969). But he removes other visual poems that Birney had included in *Ghost*.

Solecki has also included about 15 pages of Birney's prose writing, from *The Cow Jumped over the Moon* (1972) and *The Creative Writer* (1966). With their focus on "David," these will be of use to teachers, and they invite more exploration.

The collected poems of a writer like Birney are notable for how they reflect more than half a century of Canadian writing. Here are four glimpses of Canada:

> "Standing bare-assed in the arctic winds" (dressed in a Mountie uniform, pants slipped) in 1985
>
> In 1973, "Hung up on rye and nicotine," "Inside his plastic igloo now / he watches gooks and yankees bleed / in colour on the telly"
>
> Back in 1945: "Parents unmarried and living abroad"
>
> Earlier, one might say the poetic childhood chaperoned by F. R. Scott, "only / silence where the banded logs lie down / to die" in "North of Superior"

For those unfamiliar with Birney, Solecki's balance between respecting Birney's own selection of his work and somewhat extending it makes *One Muddy Hand* a useful introduction. For vintage readers, this volume is a timely reminder of Birney. It doesn't contribute much new to our sense of the poet. But it's important to see him back in print.

Correction

Our review of Norman Henderson's *Rediscovering the Prairies: Journeys by Dog, Horse, and Canoe* in Number 192, page 135 incorrectly stated that the book does not have an index. The book's index is on pages 203-214.

Metafictional Historical Novels

Gordon Bölling
History in the Making: Metafiktion im neueren anglokanadischen historischen Roman.
Universitätsverlag Winter EUR 56.00

Reviewed by Nora Tunkel

Based on a doctoral dissertation submitted at the University of Cologne in 2004, *History in the Making*—as its German subtitle indicates—examines metafiction in recent Anglophone Canadian historical fiction. Although it could have been theoretically more adventurous, the study is ambitious, the research thorough, and the attention to analytical detail impressive.

The first three chapters provide the background for the discussion of five novels published between 1980 and 2000, including Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace,* Timothy Findley's *Famous Last Words,* Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces,* Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion*, and Carol Shields' *The Stone Diaries*. Bölling's introductory chapters underline the function of Canadian historical fiction within the construction of the nation's identity, and he links the diversity of the genre to the increasing challenges of formulating that identity particularly from the late 1960s onward. An overview of existing studies of the historical genre, of metafiction, and of the relations between historical genre and metafiction follows, along with a justification for the work undertaken in this book. Of the novels discussed, *Alias Grace* receives the lion's share. Bölling links Atwood's integration of epigraphs, historical drawings, poems, and letters to a pluralistic understanding of history. He pays attention to the complex character of Grace Marks, looks at quilting as a metaphor for history and storytelling, discusses instances of intertextuality and offers a reading of *Alias Grace* as a parody of the detective novel. The analysis of *In the Skin of a Lion*, too, is wide-ranging in its attention to self-reflexive narrative modes, oral and alternative histories, intertextual and intermedial references. In his chapter on *Famous Last Words*, Bölling analyzes Hugh Selwyn Mauberley as artist and looks at Findley's oblique and often critical references to literary modernism (a topic that deserves more extensive discussion), the novel-within-the-novel and the two oppositional reader figures, Lieutenant Quinn and Captain Freyberg. The reading of *The Stone Diaries* challenges the usual interpretation of the novel as fictional autobiography, while the chapter on *Fugitive Pieces* deals with the intricate interrelationship of trauma, memory, and forgetting over several generations in writing about the Holocaust.

Without doubt, *History in the Making* is a well-researched study. Bölling's theoretical range and the extent of his documentation (including the many footnotes) demonstrate that he knows his material thoroughly but also that he is able to give clear and concise accounts of the issues at hand. Like other critics before him (Bölling cites Werner Wolf, Linda Hutcheon, Rüdiger Imhof, Hubert Zapf, Bernd Engler, Kurt Müller, Oliver Scheiding) he argues for a long tradition of metafiction before the fact, most notably in historical fiction, but one might argue that such a radical approach risks overlooking issues of literary or mimetic intent. For example, John Richardson's introduction to *Wacousta* does self-reflexively refer to the act of writing, but it is still primarily background information to assist his readership in understanding the so-called New World. The author's discussion of Linda Hutcheon's influential work is particularly good. Bölling, who rejects Hutcheon's term "historiographic metafiction" in favour of "metafictional historical novels," acknowledges her influence on Canadian literary studies during the 1980s and 1990s, but he also suggests

that her approach did not do justice to the diversity of the genre.

At this point, *History in the Making* could have taken its argument several steps further. Instead of proposing alternative readings or formulating new methods of dealing with this diversity, Bölling concludes his conceptual framework with an outline of other critics' recent work. As a result, the reader is left with intriguing but rather vague descriptions of analytical tools developed by Ansgar Nünning, Kurt Müller, and Werner Wolf. By contrast, the author's literary analyses are very fine (though at times the most fascinating details are consigned to the footnotes). In all, *History in the Making* is a highly engaging study.

Sacres de la poésie

Jacques Brault
L'artisan. Éditions du Noroît 19,95 $

Jean Chapdelaine Gagnon
Cantilène. Éditions du Noroît 17,95 $

Luc Lecompte
Dans l'ombre saccagée du désir. Éditions du Noroît 18,95 $

Compte rendu par Luc Bonenfant

Dans *La littérature en péril* (Flammarion, 2007), Tzvetan Todorov distingue l'*artisan* de l'*artiste* : alors que le second produit des objets qui « sont exclusivement destinés » à « la contemplation du beau », la beauté ne constitue pour le premier « qu'une facette d'une activité dont la finalité principale est ailleurs ». Le plus récent recueil de Jacques Brault joue de ces deux termes, transformant derechef l'artisan en véritable artiste. Depuis toujours, la poésie de Brault n'a de cesse de nous rappeler que le poète doit s'appliquer, qu'il est en quelque sorte un ouvrier au service de l'esthétique. *L'artisan* ne fait pas exception. Reprenant ici les vers de Miron, citant là Pessoa, s'inspirant ailleurs de « bois gravés de Lucie Lambert », les poèmes de *L'artisan* ne cachent pas leurs engagements fraternels à l'égard d'artistes importants. Espace de mémoire, la poésie travaille ici avec la minutie de l'orfèvre cherchant à tailler un bijou parfait. Grâce et beauté sont donc au rendez-vous, de même que ce silence si essentiel aux mots qui « ne sont plus que des bruits d'absence ». On ne se surprendra pas : Jacques Brault nous convie encore une fois à un rendez-vous où le travail artisanal du poète se trouve sacralisé par la Beauté du silence et l'aphasie du Verbe.

Todorov, pour revenir à lui, explique aussi dans son ouvrage que le mouvement (artistique) de contemplation du Beau, qui naît au XVIII^{e} siècle, visait à remplacer la contemplation (artisanale) de Dieu : « Dans l'Europe chrétienne des premiers siècles, la poésie sert principalement à la transmission et à la glorification d'une doctrine dont elle présente une variante plus accessible et plus impressionnante ». Tel semble être *Cantilène*, de Jean Chapdelaine Gagnon, qui dit tout au long sa volonté de s'approcher de Dieu plutôt que de la Beauté. Divisé en trois parties (« Cantilène », « Jour-Nuit », « Gymnopédies »), le recueil propose une traversée depuis le chant simple et vulgaire du cantilène jusque vers la sphère—culturelle et religieuse—du sublime. Après tout, la Gymnopédie était à l'origine une fête religieuse donnée en l'honneur de Léto, la mère d'Apollon, le Dieu grec du soleil et de la poésie. Ici, donc, le poème célèbre le poème, mais dans une sorte d'incantation qui relève de la prière et de l'appel à une mémoire biblique. La poésie est ainsi plus religieuse que sacrée, d'autant qu'elle semble s'adresser à un personnage particulier, Jésus : « Le mien de père t'a rejoint comme un fils / Ou un frère / De celui qui mûrit à la fourche de l'arbre / Pour que les hommes / 'Avant la lettre' Judas / Ne t'oublient pas / Malgré leur atavique dessein / De se passer de ton pain ».

Enfin, le plus récent recueil de Luc Lecompte, *Dans l'ombre saccagée du désir*,

vise l'esthétisation du blasphème alors que le lubrique y prend l'aspect d'une prière. Ces beaux poèmes en prose entrelacent les références religieuses à une esthétique où les moments d'extase pornographique permettent de refaire l'ordre du monde : « La chambre, semblable à de la pesanteur. Semblable à de bas élans qui se dressent, cherchent à monter là où il n'y a pas d'autre dieu que le sperme bref. . . . Reste le désordre des draps dont on ne sait s'il est beauté ou chaos. » L'illumination n'est plus celle de la révélation christique; elle est proprement sexuelle. Cela, la photographie liminaire nous en avait pourtant averti : la regardant rapidement, on aura cru y voir le corps décharné et brutalisé du Christ en croix, mais l'observation montre que le corps est plutôt celui de l'amant. « L'on gardera des amants cette esquisse éprise, sombre et déjà toute coagulée. / Certains parleront de scarification. D'autres de lacération. Le mot *sacrifice* sera sans doute prononcé. Pour laisser monter vers un lieu céleste la part obscure du martyre. / Ce sera terriblement esthétique, ce clair-obscur sanguin ». Or l'amant, justement, ne serait-il pas Jésus quand on sait que la relation amoureuse est, pour Lecompte, une relation sacrificielle? Nous sommes ici dans l'ordre dur et violent de la subversion la plus belle parce que la plus pure.

Bien qu'envisagé différemment, le sacre, dans ces trois recueils, constitue un *acte*—d'esthétisation chez Brault, de ritualisation chez Lecompte, de profanation chez Lecompte—qui montre en définitive que le travail artistique de la poésie est toujours aussi un travail artisanal.

Gaining Loss

Terry Carroll
Body Contact. Mercury $16.95

Margaret Macpherson
Released. Signature Editions $19.95

Reviewed by Andrea Wasylow

Sometimes you have to lose everything, everything that helps to define your life, to gain a sense of direction and dignity. Through massive and life-altering trials, Carl and Ruth, the respective lead characters of Terry Carroll's *Body Contact* and Margaret Macpherson's *Released*, arrive at unforeseen emotional enclaves, usually haphazardly. For most of their stories, these characters travel alone and lonely, but whereas Ruth emerges from brokenness to wholeness, Carl does completely the opposite. Both novels treat criminal acts; the criminals do not really come to justice, and the innocent are certainly punished. Ruth thinks, "It is the same thing I wanted, solitude, enough time to recover," and it is in searching for the good and the right that both Ruth and Carl experience gratefulness and contrition in their solitudes, one surviving and the other exposing sexual abuse. Noteworthy is the fact that both novels are refreshingly and overtly Canadian in their constructed cultures and content, with Carroll's invoking of a Québécois character and Macpherson's descriptions of Nova Scotia and Ontario. Both authors examine with care and concern how certain of us skitter to an indeterminate conclusion, and how, to use Macpherson's phrasing, any character in many ways can be "splayed like a spent star."

Terry Carroll's *Body Contact* centres on the experience of police officer Carl North, charged with the duty to protect the residents of Belleford, Ontario, and to ferret out the person who remains at large for murdering Tracy Hewitt, the cheating, gambling-addicted, and alcoholic wife of

Rick, his old hockey buddy. Carl is a capable and seasoned cop, "familiar with the fights, the suspicions, the thirst for revenge, the desire to eliminate the ex from your life." The author presents us with numerous plausible murder suspects, and with devices such as cliffhangers to end chapters, descriptions of the pitfalls of the hierarchy of the police force, the presentation of villains without conscience, and town scandals juxtaposed over equally lurid working and wealthy classes. Carroll asks his characters questions on his reader's behalf, and arrives at suspicious, suspenseful, and ambiguous answers. Presenting deliberate and heavy-handed plot twists, details, and chronologies that are the mainstays of detective fiction, Carroll somehow exposes the banality and the human nature behind salacious and controversial affairs and secrets we find hidden not so deep within sleepy Belleford. To Carl's question, "Is there no justice?" his wife Connie answers with a matter-of-fact, "Of course there is, sweets. She's just visually challenged." The characters are so idiosyncratic that although we are not endeared to them, we all know (of) them. By the end of the novel, the author reshapes Carl's freelance interest concerning the murder case into a degree of personal obsession, fitting with the contortions of the microcosms of his own marriage and his own town. But we should have known, as "trying to stifle certain people only makes them more determined."

This is a pleasurable read, as we as readers doubt and second-guess ourselves, wondering who is calling and hanging up, why the body was buried that way, and what the mysterious list of phone numbers means. We also get to think about larger questions, such as how the perverse and predatory come to have power in a respectable society, why certain types of people always seem to know everyone's secrets, and how "violence and depravity [play] out against ordinary life." Replete with intrigue to the very end, this novel makes us realize that even sure things can unravel.

In *Released*, Margaret Macpherson creates no less than an epic story about Ruth, this made especially remarkable by the fact that Ruth only comes into her twenties within the time span of the novel. While Carroll's novel is more entertaining, Macpherson's is sobering, as Ruth continually teeters between creative and destructive forces in her life. Hearkening back to the biblical namesake, Ruth is loyal, kind, and compassionate, and this may very well prove to be her undoing. A source of guilt for "Ruth the Tooth" is how she enters the world, born with teeth and causing pain to her mother during breastfeeding. Her girlhood is marked by two significant factors; numerous painful dental procedures are mitigated by her saving grace, a strong connection and friendship with Jax. When the "summer of Jax" is complete, the reader wants her to reappear perhaps as inexplicably as she disappears, and Ruth will unconsciously search for her in future years. Naïveté, guilt, and an ascetic bent draw Ruth to religious fanaticism in her adolescence, and to the centrepiece relationship of the novel, with her boyfriend Ian. He introduces Ruth to romance, poetry, alcohol, and eventually violence and a cycle of abuse: "I don't know real pain. Ian does, of course. That's what defines him. That's what draws me in." Macpherson portrays a believable regression of Ruth and Ian's relationship, a downward spiral from carefree adventures to Ruth enduring torturous acts. Especially wrenching is that through all of Ian's abuse, she is absolutely unguided, unprotected, and unadvised. She receives no protection from her parents, friends, roommates, professors, or church. What makes this particular narrative different from other tales of young girls falling for the wrong boy, only to come to misery, atonement, and healing? In a speech to Ian, Ruth's resilience stems from her ability to forgive. She is real,

honest, wrong, innocent, closed, trusting, blind, courageous, ignorant, open, young, and caring.

In all, *Released* is about searching for the sacred, whether through God, a romantic relationship, or a friendship. But while Macpherson writes of Ruth "loving the unlovable," Carroll writes about seemingly upstanding characters so vile that forgiveness may not be an option. Both *Body Contact* and *Released* are salient in that some of their characters are literally scared sick, and we know that they have reason to be, that they witness or undergo firsthand the evils that appear daily on the news, and that they are having appropriate reactions. We can step away from our own lived narratives and let our desensitization go too, even if only briefly, to take in these haunting stories.

Villégiatures

Normand Cazelais
L'haleine de la mer. XYZ 18,00 $

Sophie Frisson
Le vieux fantôme qui dansait sous la lune. XYZ 20,00 $

Compte rendu par Maryse Duggan

Tous les romans sont promesses de dépaysement, plus encore ceux qui prennent pour cadre des lieux à vocation touristique. Voici deux destinations de prédilection pour les Canadiens : les Îles de la Madeleine et le Mexique. Mais les lieux de villégiature ne figurent pas uniquement des ailleurs propices aux loisirs et à la détente, ce sont aussi des endroits de passage, de tous les passages, pour des êtres en rupture de couple, de liens familiaux, de vie.

Les Îles de la Madeleine de *L'haleine de la mer* prennent toute leur dimension touristique pour servir de décor à une histoire poignante. Celle de Marie-Luce, une des ex de Gérard, perdue de vue depuis longtemps mais qu'il reconnaît sur le traversier à destination du lieu où sa petite famille va en vacances. Marie-Luce, atteinte d'un cancer en phase terminale, se rend aux Îles pour y « vivre » sa mort imminente et choisit Gérard comme témoin objectif de sa réalité, chamboulant ainsi le bonheur tranquille qu'il connaît avec Marie, sa femme. Le sujet, cette mort annoncée, se prête bien à quelques grandes questions métaphysiques—savoir s'il est plus facile d'être athée que de croire en Dieu, par exemple, ou analyser la foi de Pascal—mais fait aussi place à des considérations plus sociales et temporelles. Par la voix de Marie, d'ailleurs, le roman devient intimiste puisque cinq chapitres sont des entrées de son journal et donnent à intervalles réguliers une perspective différente sur l'effritement d'une relation jusque-là stable. Une réflexion toute en finesse sur la fragilité de l'existence, du désir, et de l'amour.

Plus que la superfluité et le manque de crédibilité de quelques personnages secondaires dénoncés par une certaine critique (le magazine *Voir*), c'est l'amalgame de deux genres diamétralement opposés qui frappe ici : l'histoire de couples à la dérive se pose sur fond de brochure publicitaire pour touristes. Aucune information ne manque : la géographie des Îles, l'histoire des Acadiens, ce peuple « d'épreuves », victime du Grand Dérangement, la situation économique précaire de la région et sa pêche au homard périclitante, la description d'une nature intacte et d'un style de vie qui prend le contrepied des valeurs états-uniennes. Normand Cazelais vient-il de créer—sur commande de Patrimoine Canada—un nouveau genre, né du croisement du roman et du guide touristique? Toujours est-il qu'on perçoit le géographe de formation et le chroniqueur touristique de profession derrière cette entreprise somme toute innovatrice.

Un autre lieu à vocation touristique sert de cadre au *Vieux fantôme qui dansait sous la lune*, le Mexique. Point de guide

touristique ici, l'endroit non spécifié est la quintessence des stations balnéaires mexicaines. Sophie Frisson, pseudonyme de l'auteure-narratrice de ce journal intime spirituel, érudit et truculent, a décidé d'écrire le chef-d'oeuvre du siècle. Pour ce faire, cette jeune et belle étudiante en littérature, quelque peu en rupture dans son parcours « professionnel » et avec sa famille (elle veut « faire chier sa conne de mère »), s'offre des vacances en posant nue : « quand je montrais mon diplôme, on m'envoyait au diable. J'ai montré mon cul et on m'a envoyée au Mexique. » Le fantôme, c'est un centenaire squelettique dans un fauteuil roulant, en état de décrépitude avancée mais toujours vert, qui inspire répulsion et fascination. Lui-même écrivain, auteur de 333 livres, il est totalement inconnu et donc « certainement canadien », en conclut à juste titre l'écrivaine en quête d'inspiration. Au lieu d'inventer, elle va raconter les romans parfois à teneur de science-fiction, parfois exotiques, toujours rocambolesques du grand Canadien qui a publié dans le monde entier sous des pseudonymes bizarres : Platon Tremblay, Héraclès Latendresse, Aristote Sanchez, entre autres. Impossible de connaître la véritable identité de ce Mathusalem aux dimensions mythologiques qui semble être de toutes les origines ethniques et religieuses.

Incommensurable, tout en excès dans la vie comme dans la mort—sa propre mise en scène (d)étonnante—ce fantôme fait bien partie d'un projet d'écriture ingénieux. De par sa formation littéraire, seule véritable certitude dans ce journal, Sophie Frisson connaît toutes les ficelles du genre romanesque et s'amuse de toute évidence à les détourner ou à les brouiller : un personnage trop grand pour être cerné, une façon désinvolte de traiter l'impuissance d'écrire, des indices qui ne mènent nulle part (la récurrence du chiffre 3, par exemple), des références dans toutes les langues, un mélange d'érudition et de langage ordurier, tout converge pour créer un roman d'un « autre type ».

Force est de constater, à la lecture de ces deux ouvrages, que le roman reste littéralement un lieu de dépaysement, mais que le genre est en pleine mutation.

Teenage Resentments

Becky Citra
Never to be Told. Orca $8.95

Penny Chamberlain
Chasing the Moon. Sono Nis $9.95

Reviewed by Rick Gooding

The beginning of *Never to be Told* finds Asia Cumfrey living a happy and unreflecting life in the BC interior with Maddy and Ira, her aged adoptive parents. At the same time, the ghost of Miranda Williams, who has been haunting a nearby homestead for decades, discovers that Asia is beginning to sense her presence. After Ira suffers a heart attack, Asia moves to West Vancouver to live with her newly discovered maternal grandmother, Beth, and her contact with Miranda is interrupted. Part ghost story and part journey of discovery about the young mother who abandoned Asia years earlier, Becky Citra's novel for young readers skilfully and sympathetically captures the twelve-year-old heroine's attitudes while delicately conveying their limitations.

The great strength of *Never to be Told* lies in Citra's ability to present Asia's anxieties and resentments without pandering to them or caricaturing the adult characters. While some of the adults are tainted by self-interest or seem insensitive to Asia's needs, most have her best interests at heart, and Citra prevents readers from sharing more than momentarily Asia's antipathies. Perhaps more than anything, Citra's maturity as a writer emerges in Beth's tactful and patient reading of Asia's moods and her respect for the young girl's privacy and growing independence.

The story is well paced and readable. Through the accumulation of details, the two central mysteries—the disappearance of Asia's mother and the ghost's secret—build to their inevitable resolution, though the tale falls short of a satisfying dovetailing of historical and contemporary narratives—the two stories resonate with one another but remain essentially distinct. The circumstances behind the disappearance of Asia's mother are poignant, but readers may feel a twinge of disappointment when Asia fulfills the ghost's demand, only to discover that the act is completely without consequence. The style is well tailored to the ten- or eleven-year-old reader: many young readers will identify with a heroine who climbs far too high up trees, explores West Vancouver by herself, and can even drive, albeit badly and in emergencies only. The brief chapters and quickly paced plot give the narrative urgency, while the sentence construction is simple and the style direct, without any of the vocabulary building exercises that sometimes trouble historical novels. If young readers give up on the book, they will likely do so in the first dozen pages, confused by the first few shifts between the 1915 diary, the ghost's wandering memories, and Asia's perspective. After that, the narrative settles down, and the jigsaw puzzle that is Miranda Williams' story means that the novel may even sustain a second reading.

In Penny Chamberlain's Prohibition-era novel, *Chasing the Moon,* Kit (who, like Asia, is twelve) moves in with her estranged father on the Saanichton Peninsula after her mother is confined to a tuberculosis ward in Victoria. Kit soon befriends Caleb, a runaway fortune teller and water diviner, who is hiding from his abusive and alcoholic father. Kit's discovery that her father is a small-time rum-runner making nightly trips down the coast to Washington precipitates the main adventures of the novel, including a dramatic shipwreck and an unlikely friendship with the famous American rum-runner Roy Olmstead. While the book works mainly as realist historical narrative, Kit's prophetic dreams and Caleb's talents introduce occultish elements that prefigure Kit's discovery of her own modest clairvoyant skills.

Chamberlain's characters are more likely than Citra's to inhabit the world of stereotype, and *Chasing the Moon* is much less critical of its protagonist's resentments. Most notably, Kit's father's girlfriend, the transparently gold-digging flapper Vivian, speaks with cloying and transparent insincerity and divides her time between "tottering" on high heels and "sashaying" into the room. Within a paragraph of her appearance, it is almost impossible to consider Vivian independently of Kit's (and perhaps Chamberlain's) perspective, and Vivian's eventual betrayal of Kit's father is entirely predictable. Kit's well-meaning but insensitive father is similarly handled, while thuggish, "rat-faced" smugglers and Caleb's alcoholic father round out the gallery of the familiar.

Longer than Citra's novel, with more compact type and longer paragraphs and chapters, Chamberlain's book will likely appeal to slightly older readers. The world of adult sexuality is in plain view, though Kit only dimly apprehends it, and she is embarrassed by Vivian's frank talk of knickers and periods. Similarly, Kit never quite understands her muted romantic attraction to Caleb or her jealousy at Caleb's interest in Vivian. The politics and morality of the Temperance Movement are also sporadically engaged, though the novel usually stays clear of overt moral commentary. Young readers will likely find the swift and linear narrative engaging, especially the second half, in which the adventure story takes over. Less adept than *Never to be Told* at establishing a perspective that is more mature than its protagonist's, *Chasing the Moon* may in fact be more appealing to young readers. But perhaps that's not an entirely good thing.

The Enigma of Riddles

Eleanor Cook

Enigmas and Riddles in Literature. Cambridge UP $80.00

Reviewed by Thomas Wharton

"The world presents itself as a riddle," Eleanor Cook says in the preface to *Enigmas and Riddles in Literature*. "Here is what I am like," it says to us. "What am I?" One of the ways we have attempted to answer this question, Cook suggests, is by creating riddles of our own, smaller imitations of the greater enigmas of existence. The book that follows is a Frygian anatomy of the riddle, and its more enigmatic near-synonym, enigma, as rhetorical trope. But this is not simply an exercise in taxonomy—as she sets out her definitions and categories Cook ranges through literary history, from Aristotle to contemporary poetry, and along the way offers more in-depth case studies of riddle in the work of specific writers: Dante in his *Purgatorio*, Lewis Carroll in the Alice books, and Wallace Stevens in his later work. Her larger intent, beyond a detailed survey of the riddle in literature, is to re-establish the importance of rhetorical criticism, which she suggests is nothing less than the study of "how writing works."

Cook playfully sets two enigmatic creatures at the entryway to the work: the first chapter is devoted to two mythical beasts, the sphinx and the griffin or gryphon. While the sphinx may be more familiar as a riddling beast, the gryphon's hybrid form is itself a kind of enigma. Though not as implacable and dangerous as the sphinx, the griffin still stands for mystery, and often occult wisdom or seeing. Its very name once suggested enigma to writers by association with the Latin word *griphus*, for riddle. I myself made use of this enticing connection in the title of my short story collection, *The Logogryph*. So I'm happy to let Cook know that the "griffin-riddle" has not yet completely died out in the writerly imagination, as she fears.

Cook goes on to survey the history, function, and fortunes of enigma as literary (and scriptural) trope, beginning with Aristotle, highlighting Augustine's work in rhetoric, and moving on to the Renaissance and beyond. She then looks at the "shape" of enigmas and riddles by way of classifying structures such as genre, mode, scheme, and masterplot, a concept borrowed from Terence Cave's *Recognitions* (1988). The Pauline masterplot, for example, is the one most succinctly summed up in Paul's first *Epistle to the Corinthians*: "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face." In this masterplot, which has embedded itself deeply in the Western psyche, our current, limited, worldly understanding will, at the end of time, give way to revelation and the answering of all riddles. As Cook hints, traces of this end-directed Messianic thinking have persisted in such ideologies as Marxism. In our postmodern era we have seen the ascendance of another, less comforting masterplot, that of the riddle with no answer. As Cook puts it, "enigma is to deconstruction what metaphor is to so-called logocentrism."

Further explorations of the typology of enigma emerge in Cook's chapters on classifying riddles by genre and scheme. While these sections are at times rather dry going, the case studies of Dante, Carroll, and Stevens make more focused and stronger cases for the usefulness of riddling out the function of enigma in fiction and poetry. The Carroll chapter, in particular, offers a fresh key to the mysteries of the Alice books, looking at Carroll's command of tone as a product not of quasi-mystical inspiration, but of rhetorical craft. Here and in the chapter on Stevens, Cook is most convincing in demonstrating the usefulness of rhetorical study to the mystery of "how writing works."

Another rich chapter explores some of the figures that have represented enigma in

literature over the centuries, such as knots, nets, traps, labyrinths, and mazes. Cook's wide-ranging survey of writers who have made enigma part of their rhetorical or figural repertoire includes Borges, Seamus Heaney, and Carol Shields. Along the way the reader is treated to plenty of examples of riddles ancient and modern, easy and baffling. The final chapter looks at some intriguing extra-literary uses of riddles in worldwide cultural contexts. While this chapter is a bit of a grab bag, it's a fascinating one, and effectively demonstrates that the riddle, trivialized these days to the status of wordplay or juvenile joke, has had deeper significance than we usually realize, in arenas like politics, diplomacy, folk ritual, and psychoanalysis.

This book will be of interest to literary scholars and folklorists, but I found myself most engaged by it as a writer. "Rhetoric" may be a foreign term to most writers these days, but it is worth considering the long history of some of the shaping devices still employed today, often unconsciously. To what degree do unacknowledged tropes, like enigma, inform one's work? One can also dip into the book at random for literary trivia, folklore, and surprising illuminations: "Anthropologists record peoples where riddles are never asked except when there is a corpse in the village." The enigma of human nature is an endless source of material for the writerly imagination.

Back to the Future

Ramsay Cook

Watching Quebec: Selected Essays. McGill-Queen's UP $29.95

Reviewed by Norman F. Cornett

Historian Ramsay Cook introduces this anthology with a glance at his youth amid the "extremely diverse religious population" of Morden, Manitoba, whose inhabitants spoke "mostly English and Low German with a smattering of Icelandic, Polish and Czech." Though quite small, his hometown boasted "eighteen churches." Their denominational affiliations did not go unnoticed by this son of a "United Church minister," who vividly recalls the "literally dozens of reverends who collected their mail at the local post office." Nor does Cook forget the French-speaking Roman Catholics from nearby "places like Letellier and Saint Norbert, where sports were played even on Sunday after morning Mass, though never on Sunday in Protestant Morden." In fact, it included "virtually no papists." Separated by religion and language, rather than distance, Cook confesses, "the presence of Franco-Manitobans touched me infrequently."

Against this backdrop the reader grasps Cook's awareness of the importance religion can hold for a nationalist movement. His 1965 essay, "The Historian and Nationalism," fittingly presents Zionism as a nationalist template. Cook avers, "It is no accident that the first Western people with a historical consciousness is also the people whose history provides the archetype of modern nationalism: the Jewish people." In this vein, *Watching Quebec* echoes the leitmotifs of religio-nationalist discourse in French Canada prior to its Quiet Revolution of the 1960s.

In the middle of that decade Cook authored eight essays which form the core of this collection. On one hand, their contemporaneity with the unfolding transformation of French Canada makes these pieces first-hand accounts of the Quiet Revolution by an astute outside observer.

On the other hand, the nearness of these events deprives Cook of perspective so that he shortsightedly lapses into doomsaying. For example, the first chapter of *Watching Quebec*, "Canada and the French-Canadian Question," variantly dated 1964/1965, begins with this portentous declaration, "Since 1962 Canada has been passing through a period of critical national and political instability." The article continues with a

string of warnings, then ends with the ominous prospect that "the country will face a crisis unlike anything it has ever witnessed before." Such forebodings notwithstanding, Canada-Quebec relations survived the Quiet Revolution. Its historiographical representation now elicits reservations, exemplified in *Les idées mènent le Québec*, edited by Stéphane Kelly.

Cook's 1986 essay, "The Evolution of Nationalism in Quebec," references celebrated English historian Sir Lewis Namier to confirm that the "liberal-nationalist thrust" of early nineteenth-century French Canada afterwards succumbed to "conservative nationalism." In line with Namier's *1848: The Revolution of the Intellectuals*, Cook deems this outcome "foreordained." He reiterates that assessment some 20 years later when he penned the prologue to this compilation. Here Cook cites Namier's "incisive little study" to give the lie to contemporary Quebec's "liberal nationalism."

However, over the more than half-century since Namier's heyday, the methodology he employed and the inferences he drew have come under fire. For example, Conor Cruise O'Brien's 1992 biography of Edmund Burke, *The Great Melody*, repeatedly chides Namier's "reductionism" in the study of late eighteenth-century Britain, the subject on which he built his reputation. Nor does Namier's treatment of nationalism fare better. Peter Alter's 1994 monograph, *Nationalism*, takes to task the "simplistic view offered by Namier." Knowing that he published *1848* in 1946, amidst the ruins of World War II, one can understand Namier's censure of nationalism. Yet it seems incongruent with the fact that, as Abraham J. Edelheit notes in *History of Zionism*, from the end of Namier's military service during the Great War, until his death in 1960, he "devoted himself to the Zionist cause."

Despite arguments about the "morality and justice of nationalism," along with "Wilsonian ideals of national self-determination," Cook maintains that nationalism constitutes a "reactionary ideology." This train of thought has led him to assume that "internationalism belonged to the left, nationalism to the reactionary right." Yet such binary thinking sets up a false dichotomy: it fails to recognize that internationalism, as well as nationalism, occurs on both sides of the left-right divide. Thus in *Nationalism and its Futures*, Craig Calhoun remarks that current internationalism chiefly amounts to "the project of capitalism, and it flourishes in the top management of multinational corporations" whereby it "joins elites across national borders while ordinary people live in local communities."

Conversely, the leftist program of "welfare state nationalism" has catered to the average Québécois since the 1960s, as Nicola McEwen observes in *Nationalism and the State*. Cook corroborates this when he states that during the Liberal government of Quebec premier Jean Lesage, "the left . . . asserted its ascendancy within the cabinet. And it is no accident that as it . . . shifted leftward it . . . also grew more nationalist." Cook thereby contradicts his own supposition of the inextricable link between nationalism and the "reactionary right." Nor does deriding "all of the learned arguments of contemporary political philosophers" strengthen Cook's case against nationalism.

Further, Cook's postulate that nationalist movements *a priori* belong to the "reactionary right" precludes the possibility of "liberal nationalism," and ultimately negates any but extremist nationalisms. Although he acknowledges the gamut of thought among those advocating Quebec independence, Cook nonetheless surmises that "All, despite effusive democratic professions, verge on a totalitarianism enforced on them by their commitment to nationalist absolutes." Written in the mid-1960s, this allegation appears unfounded in light of subsequent political developments.

Another piece from this period, "The Meaning of Confederation," distorts French-Canadian nationalism by likening slavery in the American south to the role religion and language historically played in Quebec, so that Cook calls them "French Canada's peculiar institutions." Meanwhile, having discussed the troubled relations between French- and English-speaking Canadians, Cook's 1964 article, "The Canadian Dilemma," concludes with a parallel to the Holocaust as he cautions against seeking a "Final Solution" to this problematic relationship. Such hyperbole disserves the mutual understanding between francophone and anglophone Canadians that Cook proposes in *Watching Quebec*.

Time has not abated Cook's opposition to nationalism. In 2004, fifty years after the earliest writings in this anthology, he pronounces nationalism a "destructive ideology," and by this criterion finds both French and English Canada historically guilty of "too much, not too little, nationalism." This verdict accords with Cook's fundamental belief in the absolutist nature of nationalism. Indeed, since he considers it *ipso facto* absolutist, only the forms, never the essence of nationalism, evolve in Cook's scheme of Quebec history. Not surprisingly then, he charges Quiet Revolution nationalists with rejecting "the absolutes of the Roman Catholic faith only to accept the absolutes of a nationalist faith." This black and white portrayal contrasts vividly with the spectrum of French-Canadian nationalist thought historiographically illustrated in works such as *Les nationalismes au Québec*, edited by Michel Sarra-Bournet and Jocelyn Saint-Pierre. Colour blindness impairs Cook's vision of nationalism in *Watching Quebec*.

(Re)membering the Bentleys

Dennis Cooley
the bentleys. U of Alberta P $24.95

Reviewed by David Stouck

With his book-length poem based on Sinclair Ross' *As for Me and My House*, Dennis Cooley joins a company of writers who in a variety of ways have paid homage to the work of Sinclair Ross. Margaret Laurence was one of the first when she said that Ross' stories about the world she was born into made possible, by their example, her own writing. Robert Kroetsch, Guy Vanderhaeghe, and Ken Mitchell have made similar statements. But two writers have gone further: Lorna Crozier and Dennis Cooley have not only identified Ross as a source of inspiration for their writing, but have recast in verse his most famous novel for their own contemporary purposes.

For more than 60 years critics have been consulting the prevailing ideas of their time, everything from existential doubt and forms of psychological truth to calls for social justice, in order to construct readings of this artfully ambiguous text and its characters. Lorna Crozier's *A Saving Grace: The Collected Poems of Mrs. Bentley* (1996) presents with feminist purpose the narrator's sexual life; we are told, for example, of her lovemaking with Paul Kirby, the schoolmaster and amateur philologist who, she says, "was very good with his tongue" and "felt good inside." This account lies outside the novel, which in Crozier's poems has been turned from a story of sexual repression into one of sexual confession: a Mrs. Bentley refashioned for the 1990s. In *the bentleys* (2005), Dennis Cooley has taken Ross' modernist novel and presented a postmodern version, unmaking the story and reworking the novel's linguistic possibilities.

The pleasure of this text is certainly in its exuberant verbal energy and play. *the*

bentleys is a collage of literary parodies in a range of genres—songs, advertisements, playbills, prose poems, rhymed quatrains—and includes four pages of anagrams for a spelling bee where "live" becomes "vile," and "elation" becomes "toenail." "Language wobbles all over the place," Cooley said in an interview in *CV2*, "and part of a poet's privilege is to take advantage of that . . . and it may lead to formal departures or to syntactic surprise." There is no punctuation in *the bentleys*, and a word that closes one line often morphs into another word in the next. Equally varied is the presentation of text on the page: in different type fonts and sizes, many poems are justified on the right margin instead of the left, and the words of some poems are laid out to assume elegant shapes. (I see hats and vases, maybe a seahorse?)

But what happens to *As for Me and My House*? Cooley describes himself as "rooted in the prairies . . . strongly committed to the local and to the contemporary understanding of writing . . . so that the writing may be emotional, or it may be parodic, like language itself." Ross' Bentleys are indeed emotionally present in Cooley's text—Mrs. Bentley at the organ, Philip at his drawing board—and there is tender supplication for their plight in lines such as "in spring our thoughts like the roads / are barely passable," or, more directly echoing Ross, "all night long the terrible heat / when the winds run low at last / the silent screams we take to bed." But Cooley's bentleys are also contemporary to our time—comic, profane, physically abundant—for, as the speaker in the "afterword" says, they have "leapt into a new book / they have a new look" and "intersect / the texts they alter and migrate between." Cooley and Crozier both depend on our knowledge of Ross' novel for their poems to work, but this relation in no way diminishes their poetry; rather it gives their work cultural weight, and at the same time extends and honours *As for Me and My House*, the *Ur*-text of Canadian prairie writing.

Shell-Shocked Species

Carole David; Nora Alleyn, trans.
Unholy Stories. Guernica $15.00

Pierre L'Abbé
Kiss of the Beggar. Guernica $15.00

Hank Schachte
Killing Time. New Star $18.00

Michael Trussler
Encounters. NeWest $18.95

Reviewed by Dorothy F. Lane

In Martha Stout's psychological study, *The Myth of Sanity: Divided Consciousness and the Promise of Awareness* (2001), she posits that humans living in the contemporary world are "a thoroughly shell-shocked species . . . we have all endured experiences that we perceived as terrifying, and that utterly exhausted our tender attempts to comprehend and cope." From this experience of primary and secondary trauma, Stout declares, "moderately dissociated awareness is the *normal mental status [sic]* of all adult human beings." That notion of shell shock emerges dramatically in these four recent books by Canadian authors—including three collections of short stories and one novel. All four books reflect on the coping strategies of individuals in managing trauma. For the characters, the disturbing past often emerges through moments of connection and repetition, and through dialogue and relationships.

Hank Schachte's novel, *Killing Time*, articulates this state of trauma and dissociation powerfully. The novel is set in the space between two traumatic events that affect the memory of the main character, Richard: an automobile accident and the sexual union of Richard and his brother's partner, Cindy. In the telling of the story, however, the second event is recounted first: Richard's awakening from the amnesia he has suffered since the accident—including an inability to remember the accident, and to create any new memories—is as unsettling as the injury

itself. When Cindy realizes the transformation, she responds with tears: "Don't start remembering now." This opening is baffling for the reader, uncertain of what has just happened, its significance, and the relationships that the novel probes. The second half of the book is Richard's reconstruction of the accident and his injury, following the death of Richard's and Paul's mother, and Richard's retreat to his father's cabin on one of BC's Gulf Islands.

The novel is framed by several penetrating philosophical statements and questions: "*there is no life without time / there is no time without memory / there is no life without memory*" is the epigraph to the second section of the book. It explores the role of memory in constructing and maintaining identity, and the ambivalence in human relationships. Schachte himself states that the book "explores the idea of memory as a form of prejudice—how memory and experience influence our perceptions of the present moment and our construct of personal reality." It thus challenges the simplistic admonition to "live in the moment." As the reader realizes, Richard is literally living in the moment, and intense pain and confusion result from that dissociation. While such an examination might be exhausting and overly intellectual, this novel manages to communicate both the complexity of the ideas explored, and the tangible disturbance to Richard and his family. It is a challenging and ultimately rewarding read.

In stark language, Carole David's twelve narratives collected in *Unholy Stories*—translated from French by Nora Alleyn—explore the devastation that underlies the everyday lives of families, and repeated cycles of abuse, violence, and psychological illness. Most remarkable is David's enthralling way of telling these stories, often beginning in the mundane, and concluding in the profound and suggestive. For instance, in the opening story, "Monster," the narrator commences with a present-tense reflection on her purchase of a Valentine's Day gift at a Montreal dollar store. Through the story, and its depiction of her meal with her lover at a local restaurant, the narrator displays her own entrapment in the cynical statement with which she begins: "People are always misled by the appearance of things." Her harsh judgement of the people she encounters is turned on herself as she looks at her reflection in the French door of the restaurant: "I am the monster," she concludes. Similarly, in the story that follows, "M," the 12-year-old Nat behaves in inexplicable ways with respect to her stuffed animals, toys, pictures, and family members. The narrator tells us that "a part of her is wounded and she doesn't know it or won't recognize it." The reader is left with only the baffling actions directed at Nat's mother. It is these "invisible lesions"—again examples of "dissociated awareness"—that fascinate David, as these patterns of denial are witnessed through generations of families and relationships. The narrator of "If Only" comments that the "older my brother gets, the more he looks like my father"; the narrator of "Maiden Name" reflects on the observations of family members: "You are your mother's daughter. . . . The resemblance is striking." These stories are disturbing and mysterious, presenting a multi-faceted glimpse of ordinary life and what is hidden from the eye.

The stories of Pierre L'Abbé, collected in *Kiss of the Beggar*, develop similar themes but display more unevenness in the telling. L'Abbé, a professor of religion and ethics who has published both creative and scholarly work, is strongest when writing dialogue that discloses or develops relationships. The third-person reflections on individual characters' thoughts are less compelling. In his opening story, "The Kiss," the narrator alternates between the viewpoint of Joan and that of Robert, her husband. The focus on infidelity is swift and brutal in the initial scene of intercourse:

"When she looked down on the bed, Robert was still at it, like an animal. But it was not her underneath him. It was Annette Darby." Male and female characters are drawn in bold, sometimes almost mechanical ways in most of the stories. Most disturbing, perhaps, is "In the Time of Talking," in which the narrator recalls her grandparents' strained relationship, the traumatic experience of a therapist's professional misconduct, interwoven with the memory of an abandoned fawn and its slain mother. While the ambiguity and drama of the narrative is often riveting, it collapses at the end with the narrator gloating in revenge. The allegorical "Intellies" reads like an affected satirical exercise, creating exaggerated roles and relationships, and an explicit moral message. The final story, "Rachel and Leah," which recasts the biblical story of Jacob's marriage(s), has a similarly mechanical quality, affecting the intellect but not the empathy of the reader. L'Abbé's male figures are often cruel and narcissistic, even when—like the hapless Nick in "Rachel and Leah"—they are victimized.

Finally, Michael Trussler's *Encounters* creates discrete stories—with a variety of characters, spaces, and situations—and remarkably weaves these into a coherent collection. Trussler's ability to focus simultaneously on weighty issues of relationship and philosophy and on the minute details of material objects, living creatures, and landscapes is extraordinary. In his first story, "People Are Much More Adventurous Now," the focus shifts from the photographs—both perceptive and disturbing—designed and left in Anika's mailbox, to the interaction of friends at a dinner party in a prairie city modelled on Trussler's current hometown. His narratives move deftly from the mundane to the profound, from the ordinary to the grotesque, and from the local to the international.

Like David, Trussler probes the membrane between the surface pleasantries and the "monster" that often lurks beneath. The photographic image is beautifully evocative in encapsulating these ideas: "each one a miniature dam, each holding back its own secret past, each one holding back a lake that may well be shattered glass." Similarly, in "My Husband Once," the opening in masks, costume parties, and blindfolds becomes resonant of Stout's notion of shell shock and dissociated awareness: reflecting also a suspicion of appearances, family, and community. Like David, Trussler is fascinated by repeated patterns of behaviour, action, and reaction: the once-anorexic teenager now cares for her anorexic daughter. The microscopic focus on the caterpillar that walks circles around the rim of a bucket—like the photographs in the first story—is reminiscent of the "moral" that one should "pay attention when you stumble up against things repeating themselves." The narrator realizes at the end of the story that she has slipped "into a self that had been waiting, patiently waiting for me to find her." The external view of self as monster is reminiscent of David's story. Trussler's stories thus transport us through wide-ranging spaces and experiences, but with echoing patterns. Trussler demonstrates a keen eye for detail, and sensitivity to distinct voices in dialogue.

Martha Stout concludes her study by stating that survival alone is not the key issue for humankind: "The uniquely human question is not, 'Can we adapt to trauma and survive?' but rather, 'Can we overcome our memories of trauma, and learn truly to live?'" All four of these books, in their own distinctive ways, reflect on the experience of trauma in human life, in relationships, and in remembered joy and pain. They expose aspects of the human experience, alternating among the grotesque, the horrifying, the magnificent, and the mundane. In this way, they are all remarkable examples of the power of stories to probe the secret traumas of ordinary lives.

Drag the Lake for Voices

Anne DeGrace
Treading Water. McArthur $29.95

Birk Sproxton
Phantom Lake: North of 54. U of Alberta P $29.95

Reviewed by Jennifer Fraser

Both Anne DeGrace and Birk Sproxton recount the story of a lake transforming into a monster. The demands of civilization turn the lake of DeGrace's novel, *Treading Water*, into a liquid onslaught that swallows up a community to make way for a hydroelectric dam. The body of water that inspires Sproxton's meditation on self and land, *Phantom Lake: North of 54,* is drained to make way for a mine. The lake literally becomes a ghost. Both authors mourn the passing of their respective lakes and thus write elegiac memoirs for them.

Treading Water begins in 1904 and ends in the present. The flooding of the end is foreshadowed at the start as a woman labours to give birth to her first child: "I am drowning, and I want the sky and the air and this is enough, if this is a dream I must wake up now. Now. My skin is somebody else's and if I could I would shed it like a snake and swim away, start again." A hundred years later, the homes, the stores, the garden, the cemetery all drown and yet a rebirth occurs as the community swims into and resumes a new life in the pages of DeGrace's narrative. The baby born in 1905, as we learn in the Epilogue, is the author's grandmother: "And so," DeGrace explains, "I have returned, at low water, to walk the ghost streets of this village."

Phantom Lake also tells of a birth, but a masculine one where the parents are industry and labour. The author's father, "a foreman underground," urges him to study: "Go to school, so you don't have to work in the mines." And in the library he finds an interpretation of mining: "In Alchemy the womb is equated with a mine, the embryo being the ore and the minerals are born of the earth." Despite his schooling, Sproxton expresses throughout the love he has for the lake, the mine, and his father the miner. Thus he recalls smelter smoke, which holds for him "the fluid intimacy of a kiss," as if it had a voice and could speak "of fiery golden dragons" leaving "the full gritty taste of words in the mouth." He dreams of his father in a big baseball game as he makes an amazing catch: "on his head at a rakish angle sits his miner's helmet with its light shining."

Both DeGrace and Sproxton tell stories and record voices of people and things most often ignored or forgotten. *Treading Water* keeps one afloat long enough to hear the little community of Mennonites and First Nations people and suffragettes from Winnipeg. Characters struggle to tell their stories: for example Mr. North the shell-shocked school teacher stutters and cries and throws himself under the desk at loud sounds. Parents start a petition to get rid of him as he sinks psychologically: "It was like a voice under water. It was like drowning." In the next war, the figure who joins the community is Aliesje Beijer, a very pregnant Dutch woman who waits for several gruelling days at the train station for her new husband to collect her. She fears this young man she barely knows, the father of her child, has drowned "in this huge, wild lake, this enormous, dangerous country." Despite the cruelty of the world, the characters are survivors, heroic ancestors, in fact. The old woman Isobel, who has buried her beloved horse Ace and her even more beloved husband Jack on her property, refuses to leave when the lake rises in a storm. As trees crash past her, swept away in a landslide, she realizes: "It had not reached me or Jack or Ace or our Spanish cherry tree, and I thought, as I sat there, that it had to be sheer stubbornness on the part of those two that kept the water back."

Birk Sproxton, also sensitive to the loss

of stories, concentrates on a man whose "Native language is overwhelmed by the English he hears all around him." This man "feels himself to be submerged." Hence, in *Phantom Lake*, Sproxton employs Glenn Gould's "collage" method to produce a creative documentary, "a form that works with facts of data or 'voices' and then sets them in play with and against each other." His text is filled with facts about the land, acid rain, mining, and voices that tell of "mineral love" and "ochre visionary pictographs." This is blended in seamlessly with literary studies about a literal underground man from *The Sunless City,* a novel written about Lake Flin Flon, the lake that becomes a ghost of its former self. The hero of this narrative appeals greatly to the Northern community for he is "an inner space explorer," and Sproxton revels in the literal and figurative implications for a mining town.

BC Crime and Punishment

William Deverell
April Fool. McClelland & Stewart $10.99

Gayleen Froese
Touch. NeWest $22.95

Reviewed by Douglas Ivison

One of the exciting developments in contemporary Canadian writing has been the increasing prominence and success of Canadian genre fiction, and in particular of Canadian-specific genre fiction. In recent years, Canada has produced a number of writers working in genres such as speculative fiction and crime and mystery fiction who have achieved critical and commercial success without having to de-emphasize their Canadianness. In mystery fiction, in particular, specifically Canadian settings and experiences can be a real asset for writers, as a strong and unique sense of place is one of the key aspects that differentiates novels in this generally formulaic genre. The two otherwise quite different novels discussed in this review are both set in contemporary British Columbia, and the success of both depends heavily upon their ability to successfully evoke a sense of place.

William Deverell is a veteran and successful writer of legal mysteries. *April Fool*, his thirteenth novel (his first novel, *Needles*, was published in 1979), is a sequel of sorts to 1997's *Trial of Passion*, which was the first Canadian novel to win the Dashiell Hammett Prize for crime writing. In *April Fool*, Deverell brings back the protagonist of that earlier novel, Arthur Beauchamp, one of Vancouver's top criminal lawyers, now retired to a life as a gentleman farmer on Garibaldi Island, an idyllic community torn apart by conflict between those who would preserve the island from the outside world and those who would further develop it. Six years retired, Arthur is drawn back to the law by two quite different events. His wife is one of the leading figures agitating against the logging of a forested valley, which is to be followed by the construction of a housing development in place of the forest (in fact, she spends much of the novel living in a tree house to block the project), and Arthur reluctantly gets involved once the fight moves to the courtroom, assisted by a child star turned activist lawyer. Simultaneously, one of his former clients, Nick the Owl Faloon, a world-class jewel thief who has retired to run a lodge in a small Vancouver Island resort town, has been accused of murdering a beautiful and prominent psychologist and relationship columnist (when instead he was busy burgling the guests of his much more successful competitor). For Arthur, Nick represents the one that got away, as he was unable to prevent Nick's unjust conviction for allegedly raping a magazine writer. Again, against his best judgment, Arthur is convinced by the entreaties of a group of Nick's friends to take charge of his defence and return to the criminal courts for the first time in over half a decade.

Both situations, then, set the stage for some humorous courtroom scenes, as the novel lampoons the legal system and those who work within it.

As the above description suggests, *April Fool* does not take itself too seriously. In fact, it is often quite funny, whether in describing the courtroom antics of judges and lawyers and those who manipulate the legal system for their purposes, the idiosyncrasies of the Garibaldi Islanders, or the off-the-wall behaviour of the novel's diverse cast of secondary characters. Despite this comedic aspect, however, *April Fool* does address more serious concerns. Arthur, for example, is a once-powerful man struggling to come to grips with aging, torn between the fear of what a return to the courtroom will reveal about his diminished abilities and the nostalgic desire to recapture the thrill of the courtroom, once the source of his strength. Moreover, the novel explores the flaws in the legal system that can produce unjust results when properly manipulated, and provides a nuanced and sympathetic portrait of the very real struggle to preserve places like Garibaldi Island from unchecked exploitation and development.

Engagingly written with a vibrant narrative voice, a strong sense of place, and a sure comedic touch, *April Fool* is never less than readable. Arthur Beauchamp is a fully realized character surrounded by an entertaining, if sometimes outlandish, cast of secondary characters. Yet, the novel does not quite hold together. In many ways, the book seems like a hodgepodge: part mystery novel, part courtroom thriller and legal satire, part regional comedy. Although Deverell does manage to bring, more or less, the two main narrative strands together by the end of the novel, *April Fool* ultimately lacks a sense of unity and cohesion, as if Deverell had written two stories, neither quite developed enough to be a novel in its own right.

Although as a musician Gayleen Froese has released three albums, *Touch* is her debut novel. Largely set in Victoria, *Touch* is a supernatural mystery featuring Anna Gareau, a woman who has psychic visions about people when she touches their possessions. Travelling through Victoria on illicit business, Anna stumbles onto a series of mysterious deaths befalling the employees of a magazine. By chance, she meets Paul Echlin, a shady author interested in the deaths, who hires her to investigate them, and ends up partnering with his publicist, Colette. At first drawn to Colette because she had a vision of Colette's death, Anna eventually becomes friends with the publicist (in fact, it would not be surprising if another Anna and Colette mystery were to be published). As their investigation progresses, Anna and Colette uncover strange and sometimes unsavoury secrets about the magazine, its employees, and Colette's own boss. Their investigation eventually leads them to the goth subculture, and then an even more mysterious and threatening subculture at its margins.

Although her psychic gift is not all that interesting, and nothing particularly intriguing is done with it, Anna is an engaging character, if not fully realized. Otherwise, though, *Touch* never really comes alive. The plot drags and lacks narrative drive; the mystery is generally uninteresting and unengaging; the narrative voice is banal; the novel fails to provide much of a sense of place and atmosphere; and the descriptions of the subcultures and marginal spaces at the heart of the mystery are insufficiently detailed (this is due, in part, to the rushed resolution). Despite its reference to specific local details, *Touch* could have been set nearly anywhere in North America: we never really get a strong sense of Victoria and its inhabitants. The result is a generic mystery, one that does not have enough other compensations to make it a compelling read.

Hantises

Daniel Castillo Durante
La passion des nomades. XYZ 24,00 $

Daniel Poliquin
La kermesse. Boréal 24,95 $

Compte rendu par Kinga Zawada

Finalistes du Prix des lecteurs de Radio-Canada et du Prix Trillium, Daniel Castillo Durante et Daniel Poliquin nous offrent deux romans remarquables, unis par le thème de la hantise. *La passion des nomades* et *La kermesse* invitent les lecteurs à suivre le parcours de personnages marqués par le trépas d'un proche. Chaque récit donne à voir l'influence obsessive que le souvenir d'un défunt peut exercer sur la vie des protagonistes.

La passion des nomades s'ouvre sur l'assassinat du père. Juan Carlos Olmos, consul argentin à Montréal, est mystérieusement abattu de trois coups de feu près de son chalet dans les Laurentides. Le bouleversement éprouvé à l'annonce de cette nouvelle étonne son fils, Gabriel, puisqu'il lui avait semblé n'avoir nourri que des sentiments de haine et de rancœur envers un père qui avait abandonné son foyer et son pays. Inexplicablement tourmenté par la voix de l'absent, Gabriel décide de quitter Buenos Aires et de s'aventurer au Canada afin d'élucider les circonstances du meurtre de l'homme qu'il a méprisé toute sa vie. Rendu sur les lieux, il découvrira les mêmes villes, marchera dans les mêmes rues et s'éprendra de la même femme (Ana Stein), pour retracer, jusqu'au dernier, les pas du père.

Si l'intrigue se dessine de prime abord comme l'esquisse d'un roman policier, ce malentendu est vite dissipé. D'une part, les confessions rapportées dans le journal intime d'Ana Stein, ancienne maîtresse du consul, dévoilent un crime passionnel. D'autre part, l'enquête policière de Gabriel se transforme rapidement en quête identitaire du fils qui engage un dialogue par-delà la tombe avec la figure paternelle. Soulignons cependant que ce héros qui « a toujours la poisse » et dont la figure se compose de termes aussi charmants que « lâche », « raté », « épave » ou « couillon », pour n'en citer que quelques-uns, ne s'attire pas nécessairement l'estime des lecteurs et c'est plutôt Ana, la meurtrière, qui séduit les destinataires et gagne leur admiration. Derrière la femme impassible et glaciale du récit à la troisième personne se cache la narratrice du journal intime de l'assassin, dont les extraits permettent de découvrir un personnage féminin très fort : une amante passionnée, délaissée, délirante, capable de tuer celui qui l'a trompée (ainsi que son double).

Le style érudit de ce roman où chaque mot est soigneusement pesé empêche les lecteurs de développer un attachement affectif aux personnages, mais sollicite en revanche un profond investissement intellectuel, produit un effet de distanciation et impose un regard critique. L'intrigue de *La passion des nomades* sert de tremplin aux réflexions sur la complexité des relations père-fils, sur les variantes du schéma œdipien, sur le lien entre le crime et la passion, et surtout sur le statut de l'immigré au Québec et son regard sur le pays d'accueil.

Cette écriture riche et imagée déclenche aussi un réseau intertextuel et provoque un ralentissement de lecture permettant de savourer maintes références à la musique, à la peinture et à la littérature. Quant à la passion, elle semble teintée de rouge-sang et de noir pour les nomades. Jamais synonyme d'amour ou de bonheur, elle se conjugue avec la mélancolie et l'art de la séduction chez le consul, avec l'obsession chez Gabriel, et avec la mort chez Ana.

La kermesse, par contre, baigne dans une atmosphère de rigolade. Malgré l'atrocité des propos—guerre, pauvreté, violence, inceste, etc.—le style enjoué et l'humour débridé de Daniel Poliquin incitent le lecteur à avaler d'un coup les 336 pages de son roman picaresque. Avec une série

de personnages attachants qui butent contre les obstacles de la vie et de l'Histoire, l'auteur nous fait découvrir le quartier disparu du Flatte et fait revivre les soirées mondaines de Rideau Hall.

Le personnage principal, Lusignan,—inspiré selon l'auteur par Rodolphe Girard—nous embarque dans un récit composé de réminiscences, de correspondances, et, quand cela l'arrange, d'élucubrations : « j'ai inventé le reste du mieux que je pouvais », admet-t-il avec candeur. Élevé par une mère folle et dévote, le protagoniste quitte son village natal pour se faire expulser du Collège de Nicolet, devenir journaliste, écrivain, homme d'État et soldat. C'est en 1914, dans le régiment *Princess Pat*, qu'il fait la connaissance d'un bel officier noble, intelligent, et talentueux, Essiandre d'Argenteuil, qui lui procurera un moment d'« éblouissement » et deviendra désormais le centre de son univers. Après la mort d'Essiandre lors de la bataille de Passchendaele, Lusignan sera hanté par le souvenir de son amant d'un après-midi et tentera à tout prix de recréer l'extase inoubliable de l'étreinte avec le seul homme qu'il a eu « la certitude d'aimer ». De retour à Ottawa, il retrouvera quelque trace du défunt dans les corps qui l'avaient côtoyé. Il rencontrera Concorde, la petite bonne grassouillette et sympathique dans sa laideur, dont la sublime honnêteté et la bonté le séduiront et lui feront comprendre qu'« on continue d'aimer les absents dans des compagnons que la vie nous laisse ». Il y aura aussi la précieuse Amalia Driscoll, l'aristocrate manquée et la fausse fiancée d'Argenteuil, que Lusignan convoitera sans l'aimer—« c'était le souvenir d'Essiandre que je désirais en elle, rien d'autre. »

Le mélange des voix narratives, le changement des registres et le jeu des analepses rendent ce roman vibrant, émouvant et grouillant de vie, et l'humour brillant de l'auteur allège les éléments tragiques en leur donnant une allure comique. L'effet produit sur le lecteur peut être comparé à l'effet des récits de Concorde sur Lusignan : « C'est cela qui me trouble et me ravit chez elle : cette faculté qu'elle a de dire les pires horreurs mine de rien. »

Coming of Age in Canada

Sarah Ellis
Odd Man Out. Groundwood $9.95

Eva Wiseman
Kanada. Tundra $12.99

Tim Wynne-Jones
Rex Zero and the End of the World. Groundwood $12.95

Reviewed by J. Kieran Kealy

RAQ (Rarely Asked Question): What about Sarah Ellis?
A: She is one of Canada's most successful, honoured and readable children's authors, and, more importantly, has recently gifted us with yet another new chapter in her literary career.

Kip Coulter, Sara Ellis' odd man out, peppers his narrative with just such RAQs during his month's vacation with his Gran and five female cousins, one who lives on a ladder in hopes of becoming a mountain-climber and one who thinks she is a dog. Gran, a not-quite-reformed hippie, is almost too good to be true. Since her house is soon to be demolished, she allows her guests to tear up anything they like, writes rules to live by on the walls, and allows all to vote on daily activities, resulting in a hobo dinner replete with candy cigarettes, a try-to-stay-awake evening and a rather earth-shaking talent night. But there is also a serious side to Kip's adventures. Hidden in his attic bedroom, he discovers a journal written long ago by his father titled "Operation Mitochondria," which chronicles his father's experiences with the espionage-driven world. Think *A Beautiful Mind* meets *Little Women*. Overall, *Odd Man Out* provides the same deliciously

unique characters and meticulously detailed background that one has come to expect from Ellis. A wonderful read!

Wynne-Jones' hero, Rex Zero, actually Rex Norton-Norton—but Norton minus Norton equals Zero—also courageously faces a troubled world, one that, if we believe Alphonse, the park eccentric, is soon coming to an end. And, in 1962, when the novel is set, such predictions were not taken lightly. This was the time of bomb shelters, pseudo-atomic-attack exercises, the Cuban crisis, and Diefenbunkers. Drawing on his own experiences from this period, Wynne-Jones succeeds in both portraying the paranoia that dominated this period, and, perhaps more importantly, in describing how difficult it is for his adolescent hero to adjust to any new world. Rex has just moved from Vancouver to Ottawa, and he needs to find new friends. But this is a novel of maturation and so, not surprisingly, Rex quickly discovers a mysterious girl, a frightening monster lurking in the bushes, and a group of adventurers sworn to save the world from this monster. Wynne-Jones' meticulous attention to detail makes the early 1960s come alive, but as seen by a group of adolescents hopelessly confused by the chaos they find in the adult world about them. What if the Russians take over and all we get to watch on TV is ballet, they wonder. Rex's sister even breaks into a convent to investigate a nun that she thinks is particularly suspicious. This is a story of lost dogs, sometimes understanding parents, and the resiliency of the young souls. But, more than anything else, it is the tale of the immensely attractive Rex, who, the editors tells us, will soon return in *Rex Zero, King of Nothing*. Can't wait!

Eva Wiseman's *Kanada* is a far more serious book than either of the preceding texts. Simply put, it is a startlingly detailed first-person account of the Holocaust. Wiseman divides her text into three parts: Limbo, chronicling the events foreshadowing the actual internments; Hell, providing a graphic account of the heroine's experiences in Auschwitz; and Paradise, an engrossing account of the problems Jutka, the heroine, faces when the war ends, concluding with her need to make a decision on where she will go to build her future. Though the title suggests this decision is a foregone conclusion, it proves to be an extremely complex one. Unfortunately, graphic descriptions of the horrors of the Holocaust are not that unusual today, not even in young-adult literature. That is to say, though Jutka's ordeal is brutally presented, it is one that no longer surprises. Where Wiseman's account differs, however, is in her detailing of Jutka's life after Auschwitz. Though the section is called "Paradise," the world Jutka finds after the war is almost as hellish as her previous life. Jews are still openly excluded and even imprisoned in so-called DP (displaced persons) camps. In one heart-wrenching scene, Jutka and her friends look over their refugee camp walls, see the German village outside, and openly wonder who won this war. Much of this section deals with the refugees' attempts to find a place where they are not displaced, to reach Eretz-Israel, a place on this earth where they can establish a new world. In fact, the key scene in this section is the visit of Ben Gurion, who would go on to become the first prime minister of the state of Israel, a visit that provides for the inmates of the DP camp their first real vision of the promised land. Though *Kanada* never includes scenes set within Canada, Canada is the ever-present dream of Jutka, one that allows her to survive. The book is lovingly dedicated to Wiseman's parents, "who lived the horror and emerged triumphant." Jutka too triumphs. Despite having lost all of her family and most of her friends, her quest is one of love, not hate, as she reminds the reader, particularly Canadian readers, of the dream that Canada represents for so many of the oppressed.

Barefoot in the Margins

Susan Elmslie
I, Nadja, and Other Poems. Brick $18.00

Reviewed by Daniel Burgoyne

In the first trade collection of her poetry, *I, Nadja, and Other Poems,* Susan Elmslie revisits the woman at the heart of André Breton's surrealist romance *Nadja* (1928) in order to question Breton's appropriation of Nadja and his making of her into a symbol, a sphinx representing the enigma of woman.

In her online essay "Trailing Nadja," Elmslie clarifies her intent: "I knew that what I wanted to write was not just a personal projection of self onto my idea of Nadja, or essentially what I thought Breton had done." Instead, Elmslie set out to blur Nadja's voice with her own—"my purpose must be to let her voice meld with and challenge my own." I find that this melding of voices pervades the collection as a whole, not only with Nadja but in ambiguity that crops up in poems like "George Sand's Wardrobe," where the voice begins ostensibly as Elmslie but shifts to become that of an unnamed Aurore Dupin. The choice of Sand seems appropriate to the tension between dramatic monologue and lyric that runs throughout the collection. Early seemingly confessional pieces, such as the "Seven Letters to My Mother," assume a distinctly different cast after the historical and performative rigour of "I, Nadja," and the meditation on sexual abuse in the fourth section, "The Hard Disciplines," where Elmslie moves back and forth from personal experience to statistics that "clot the imagination": "*Two thirds of sexual assaults occur in a private home.*"

If the problem posed by Elmslie's return to Breton's Nadja is how to avoid simply reappropriating and casting the woman in her own image, then the answer potentially emerges as a means to resist the sufficiency of the lyrical voice. And it is the tension in this resistance that I find most promising about these poems.

Waiting Out the War

Ilona Flutsztejn-Gruda; Sarah Cummins, trans.
When Grownups Play at War: A Child's Memoir. Sumach $10.95

Reviewed by Susan Fisher

In the summer of 1939, Ilona Flutsztejn-Gruda was nine years old. She was living in a village outside Warsaw with her parents, her aunt and uncle, and her beloved cousin Hala. But when, in September of that year, the Germans bombed Poland, Flutsztejn-Gruda's childhood came to an abrupt end. She and her parents fled Poland, and for the next six years they were refugees, moving to Lithuania and then Russia. They ended up in Uzbekistan, where they waited out the war. (At first, Flutsztejn-Gruda's parents, who were Jews, wanted only to escape the fighting; it was not until after the war that they realized they would surely have perished—as all Flutsztejn-Gruda's maternal relatives did—if they had stayed in Poland.) Despite famine, harsh weather, and bouts of malaria, Flutsztejn-Gruda and her parents survived, mostly because of the initiative and energy of Ilona's mother, who took on the job of pigkeeper on a communal farm in Uzbekistan. The depth of the family's destitution is evident in the birthday present Ilona prepared for her mother: "I had the idea of scouring the streets for apricot pits. I broke them open to remove the kernel, which tasted like almonds. I gave my mother a whole box of these treats."

The great strength of this book is Flutsztejn-Gruda's fidelity to the child's point-of-view. Throughout the war years, she is dimly aware of the distant battles and of the political situation in the Soviet

Union; it is clear, for example, that many of the refugee families in Uzbekistan are victims of Stalinist purges. But what matters for her is much more personal: finding friends, getting a new dress to wear to school (to replace the nightgown belted with a piece of rope that is all she has to wear), having a boyfriend. Flutsztejn-Gruda remembers some moments of joy—hearing the Russian girls sing as they knit, playing with piglets, seeing little chicks hatch out—and these pleasures are described so freshly that one shares in her delight.

Perhaps the most poignant part of *When Grownups Play at War* is the epilogue, in which Flutsztejn-Gruda lists ten "vestiges of those years . . . so deeply rooted in my being that they will probably disappear only when I do." Among them are such habits as these: "when I see a piece of wood on the ground, I tell myself I should pick it up and use it to make a fire in our wood stove" and "whenever I move to a new apartment, I look for a spot that can be turned into a hiding place."

Originally written in French, *When Grownups Play at War* has been translated into limpid, natural English. This memoir seems an excellent way to introduce young adult readers to war and exile, experiences that children still must face in our world.

Nordicité et amérindianité

Alain Gagnon
Le truc de l'oncle Henry. Triptyque 19,00 $

Jean Désy
Au nord de nos vies. XYZ 20,00 $

François Chabot
La mort d'un chef. Triptyque 17,00 $

Compte rendu par Maxime Bock

Les trois romans dont nous rendons compte ici, bien que fort différents par leur forme et leur ton, sont reliés par le thème de l'amérindianité et par les rapports interculturels qui en découlent. Cette amérindianité, aspect fondamental d'un imaginaire nordique québécois lié à l'appropriation et à l'occupation du territoire, s'articule dans ces ouvrages autour de trois pôles : la réinterprétation des croyances séculaires, la fascination admirative et la culpabilité postcoloniale.

À Saint-Euxème, petite ville du Moyen Nord québécois, Olaf Bégon, chef de la Sûreté municipale, voit sa routine compromise lorsque des événements inexplicables viennent semer la peur dans sa communauté. Il doit alors élucider meurtres et disparitions, coincé entre la détresse de ses concitoyens, les manigances de politiciens corrompus, et les manifestations paranormales qui mettent son pragmatisme à l'épreuve.

Le pacte de lecture de ce roman à suspense est rempli sans surprise par un scénario enlevant et bien ficelé. Mais c'est de la maîtrise formelle dont fait preuve Alain Gagnon que *Le truc de l'oncle Henry* tire son véritable intérêt. Toute la tension du récit prend sa source dans un jeu d'ellipses et d'analepses, où la correspondance d'un marchand de Nouvelle-France et les extraits d'un mémoire du XIX^{e} siècle, enchâssés au récit de l'enquête de Bégon, dévoilent peu à peu les mystères de la région : depuis toujours, des êtres surnaturels, nommés Wendigos par les Amérindiens, hantent la forêt laurentienne, dévorant les hommes et les bêtes.

« Il est des milliers de kilomètres carrés où l'humain n'a jamais mis le pied. Alors les histoires, les légendes ont tout le territoire qu'il leur faut … ». Par ces simples phrases, Gagnon ancre son roman au cœur même de l'imaginaire nordique, et s'offre ainsi tout l'espace nécessaire pour entremêler, dans un plaisir d'écriture manifeste, les légendes amérindiennes, les récits fondateurs et la science-fiction.

On peut difficilement faire la part entre réalité et fiction en lisant *Au nord de nos vies*, de Jean Désy. Le narrateur des huit

récits, Julien Breton, médecin originaire du Sud québécois pratiquant au Nunavik, décrit la nature et les habitants du Nord avec une justesse et une proximité qui ne peuvent provenir que de l'expérience même de l'auteur.

Ces courts récits illustrent toute la beauté du Grand Nord du Québec, avec la sobriété qu'inspirent l'immensité du territoire, la pureté de la toundra enneigée, la majesté des aurores boréales. Mais ils en exposent à la fois toute la dureté. Des blizzards et des rivières imprévisibles, des froids aux conséquences tragiques forcent les personnages à trouver, pour survivre, une force équivalente à celle que déploie la nature.

Une telle opposition se retrouve dans les rapports qu'entretient le médecin avec ses collègues, ses patients, ses amis. Guidé par son admiration des Inuits, Julien est confronté à leur détresse, eux qui sont doublement prisonniers de leur culture traditionnelle et de l'occidentalisation du Nord. Dans son petit hôpital, des jeunes intoxiqués, blessés lors d'une rixe ou d'une tentative de suicide, côtoient des chasseurs dignes, fidèles à leur mode de vie, mais acceptant malgré tout l'aide de la science de Blancs. Son désir de panser les blessures d'une culture entière est une quête initiatique à la recherche d'amour, de contact humain véritable, d'exaltation devant la nature. Et cet amour s'inscrit irrémédiablement en lui : lorsqu'il quitte pour le Sud, il sait que le Nord l'appellera de nouveau et qu'il y reviendra un jour, non pas comme soignant, mais comme aventurier nomade.

Contrairement à Désy, François Chabot semble avoir perdu espoir de voir les Autochtones tirer profit de la rencontre des cultures. *La mort d'un chef*, teinté d'un grand pessimisme, n'est ni plus ni moins que le récit de la mort d'un peuple.

Confondant rêve et réalité, le roman met en scène les Innus de Uashat, près de Sept-Îles, sur la Côte-Nord, où l'ancien chef de la communauté vient de décéder. L'esprit du vieux chef entreprend alors une dernière expédition parmi les songes et les souvenirs, cherchant la voie qui le fera enfin devenir « Innu pour l'éternité ». Pénible mémoire, les Innus sont condamnés à errer dans un *no-man's-land* culturel, oubliant la tradition et le langage de la nature, abandonnant leur territoire au développement hydroélectrique, s'abîmant dans les jeux de hasard et la surconsommation. Sous ses yeux, les chamans deviennent vendeurs de drogue et la télévision, « totem des Blancs », achève leur acculturation.

Chabot ne tente pas de sauver la mise avec le mythe du « bon Sauvage ». Bien que le chef possède les qualités fondamentales perdues par la communauté, tous les protagonistes sont sur un pied d'égalité. Si les Blancs, indéniablement, sont montrés comme la source de la contamination des valeurs autochtones, les Innus ne valent guère mieux, ayant eu la faiblesse de s'abandonner avec cupidité à « l'industrialisation et la colonisation des esprits ». La violence désolante à laquelle ils s'adonnent se terre au cœur même de l'être humain, côtoyant ainsi l'avarice et l'hypocrisie des colonisateurs.

Liberalism and Its Discontents

George Grant
Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism. 40th Anniversary Edition. McGill-Queen's UP $19.95

Ian McKay
Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History. Between the Lines $19.95

Reviewed by Candida Rifkind

The conservative George Grant and leftist Ian McKay could not be more different in their ideological commitments, yet to read their intellectual engagements with Canadian political, social, and cultural history together is to gain a sense of the

force that liberal capitalism has imposed on the formation of the nation-state, often insidiously and invisibly but not without pressure and resistance. In 1965, George Grant published his influential treatise in Canadian political philosophy, *Lament for a Nation*, which continues to receive the accolade of "masterpiece" and makes regular appearances on lists of the most essential Canadian reading. *Lament for a Nation* is divided into seven chapters that move from the particular contexts of its composition (the fall of John Diefenbaker's government in 1963 and the Bomarc missile crisis) to a more general argument that Canada has ceased to exist as a nation because "the impossibility of conservatism in our era is the impossibility of Canada." Grant argues that his version of conservatism—a British-derived preference for public control and tradition with the Canadian inflection of small town populism embodied by Diefenbaker—has been the shaping force of Canadian nationalism since the beginnings of settler society. From Grant's perspective, the demise of conservatism in the twentieth century is due in some measure to the rise of socialism but, much more critically, it is liberalism's faith in progress and technology that will lead the nation into a universal and homogeneous state indistinct from America.

This 40th Anniversary Edition of Grant's *Lament for a Nation* argues for the work's ongoing relevance to contemporary questions about "Canadian identity, sovereignty, and national unity" to a "new generation" of readers. A lengthy new introduction by Andrew Potter provides historical, political, and philosophical contexts that will be valuable to students in need of general background. However, the final section of Potter's Introduction on "Post-Modern Canada," intended to assess the relevancy of Grant's philosophy today, is disappointingly brief. Potter argues that post-9/11 Canadian nationalism is characterized by "an almost gleefully individualistic and non-deferential hyper-cosmopolitanism" that "began in the 1970s as a combination of the political and literary." He cites attraction to Pierre Trudeau's internationalism and Margaret Atwood's *Survival* as examples of an English Canadian sense of collective identity expressed through "the cosmopolitan and emancipatory vocabulary of 1970s feminism and post-colonial theory." Potter suggests that this continues today in "the literary nationalism of the post-Atwood CanLit establishment" as well as a "post-modern nationalism" popularized by such theorists as Linda Hutcheon. Grant, Potter suggests, would dislike these movements and the "liberal principles at the heart of postmodern politics." Potter's linking of individualism and liberalism to feminism, postcolonialism, and postmodernism oversimplifies these complex theoretical and activist movements and the relations among them, as well as between them and multiple strains of nationalism, internationalism, anti-globalization, and cosmopolitanism. The state of nationalism studies among the "CanLit establishment" is much richer and more rigorous than his trajectory from Atwood to Hutcheon allows. Grant's *Lament* needs to be read today alongside the many English Canadian, First Nations, and diasporic writers, critics, and theorists whose work challenges the controversial and objectionable elements of Grant's 1960s Christian conservatism. Potter does list the common criticisms of *Lament for a Nation* in the Introduction, yet he concludes that it is "more than just a period piece, and it remains vital reading for even the most casual student of Canada." I would argue that these two points are not mutually exclusive, that in fact *Lament for a Nation* is very much a "period piece" exemplary of a particular moment in the life of the nation and one of its most revered public intellectuals. Its period specificity is precisely the reason students and scholars should read it, and read it critically.

The idea that intellectual histories of the nation must themselves be historicized is fundamental to Ian McKay's *Rebels, Reds, Radicals*, the first in this historian's multi-volume history of the Canadian left. On their central premises and readings of twentieth-century Canada, Grant and McKay could not be more opposed. For Grant, democratic socialism "is not, as it believed itself to be, the high crest of the wave of the future, but rather a phenomenon from the nineteenth century." For McKay, leftism has been fundamental to twentieth-century Canada and remains a possible way to think and live in opposition to liberal capitalism in the twenty-first-century. There are several refreshing aspects to McKay's book, intended for a scholarly and general audience, not least its lively and readable prose that achieves lucidity not through oversimplification but through deep clarity. This is an energizing account of the past 100 years of the Canadian left that makes several important political, historiographic, and theoretical interventions to rewrite the older traditions of left history-writing that focus on factional debates between the Communist Party and the CCF-NDP and disputes over the correct Marxist side.

Instead, McKay expands the definition of leftism to include "anybody who shares four key insights—that is, into capitalism's injustice, the possibility of equitable democratic alternatives, the need for social transformation, and the real-world development of the preconditions of this social transformation in the actual world around us." One of the strengths of the Canadian left is its plurality, the multiplicities of movements of Canadians who have attempted to "live otherwise," which McKay systematizes according to a series of "matrix-events" or formations rather than a strict chronology or vertical-history approach. Another particularly Canadian factor in McKay's analysis is what he, drawing on Gramsci, identifies as the national "liberal hegemony" that has operated alongside capitalism at the deepest levels of Canadian society as well as the more visible levels of formal politics. McKay argues that "Canada itself is a liberal project," founded in opposition to the republican democratic experiment of the United States. However, this liberalism has only developed into its more current ideology of democratic citizenship under pressure from the left. While there is a great deal of historical information about the Canadian left in this book, its strength lies in its synthetic approach that disagrees with but does not discount much of the prior scholarship. The broad scope of *Rebels, Reds, Radicals* may frustrate readers looking for more substantive discussion (which should come with the future volumes in this series), but McKay's "strategy of reconnaissance" to avoid "either sentimentality or sectarianism" and produce "a more politically useful and intellectually interesting approach" has produced a study admirable in its balance of past and present, reflection and urgency.

Changing Room

Susan Gubar

Rooms of Our Own. U of Illinois P $28.95

Reviewed by Kathryn Barnwell and Marni Stanley

"If we are women, we think back through our mothers." Virginia Woolf's strategy in *A Room of One's Own* was not only to look back, but also to look forward to a feminist literary culture in which the "incandescent mind" of Judith, the fictional sister of Shakespeare, would flourish. Three quarters of a century after the publication of Virginia Woolf's passionate essay addressing the exclusion of women from education and hence, from the full rights of citizenship, Susan Gubar revisits *A Room of One's Own* (and, to a lesser extent, *Three Guineas*) to assess the influence of feminism and women's studies on the academy, or at least on a

Midwestern US university. This book is a witty, polished, and thought-provoking homage, which perfectly captures Woolf's deft style, but which lacks the moral and political incisiveness of her classic essays.

While Woolf asks at what cost women were excluded from the academy, Gubar assesses the travails of inclusion. Like Woolf, she asks, "why was one sex still so much more powerful than the other, and why was this more prosperous sex more vindictive than and toward the other?" She then goes on to address more contemporary and specific questions: "Had [feminist] research and activism resulted in our good or the good of the world at large?" "What are the premises of geneticists, post-structuralists, or queer theorists; who (besides academics) should care about them; and have their conversations altered the situation of women or the evolution of feminism?" As with Woolf, Gubar's concerns are for both individual women (Mary Seton and Mary Carmichael/Marta, Marita, Mona, Melissa and Gubar's own narrator, Mary Beton) and for women as a category (women's collective aims and strategies).

Through a series of scenarios, which Gubar assures us are "fictionalized composites," she reflects on the still unsatisfactory status of women. Myeong-Sook may now be qualifying to begin her feminist thesis, but she is subjected to sexual harassment at her oral for her comprehensives; Marita is a tenured faculty member, but finds that her academic work is deferred because a black woman is endlessly needed on this or that committee; Marta is up for tenure, but the administrative demands of her appointment as Chair of Gender Studies could compromise her review; Chloe may now be a promising student, but she is killed while jogging; Gubar's narrator, Mary Beton, examines her own privileged position within the university, wondering if she is living up to Woolf's exhortations to such "insider" women to do everything they can to advance the careers of other women. She criticizes post-structuralist theories for not encouraging activism, but praises postcolonial and cultural studies theories for their usefulness to feminist praxis.

There is no failure to recognize the complexities of feminist praxis nor to employ Woolf's strategies for self-scrutiny. It was Woolf, after all, who warned that it is preferable to be an Outsider than to be an unscrupulous, self-serving Insider. Gubar takes us on a journey through a representative academic year, raising many of the ethical questions of our own time. She does so with Woolfian wit and rhetorical flourishes; she plays effectively with fragments of the overheard, compressing many voices into single paragraphs, balancing the sombre with the comic and following the little fish of her thought through the murky waters of academic life.

What Gubar does not deliver, however, is the political rage and incisive analysis that Woolf does. In *Three Guineas*, Woolf may expect too much of the "daughters of educated men" (that they can rebuild a world that one sex has already firmly established), but her anger is a powerful call to action. Gubar is much more cautious. A paragraph that begins "in anguish" at the horrors of wars waged abroad turns into a paragraph on consumerism and the failure of health care in the US. A party scene where she effectively uses fragmented voice to portray contemporary political debate in the United States is deflated when it turns into the unified-by-food dinner party of *To the Lighthouse* instead of an opportunity to offer a critique of pressing contemporary issues. *Three Guineas* was written in the midst of the Spanish Civil War and on the eve of World War II, and those conflicts were concretely in Woolf's mind as she mapped a future course. Gubar makes enough references to the war on Iraq for us to know where she stands, but she offers no criticism of the harm the "war on terror"

has done to academic freedom in the United States. With so many things in early twenty-first-century life that would still enrage her, it's hard to imagine Woolf being as restrained as Gubar has chosen to be in this otherwise engaging text.

Paving the Road

Jan Hare and Jean Barman

Good Intentions Gone Awry: Emma Crosby and the Methodist Mission on the Northwest Coast.
UBC Press $29.95

Reviewed by A. Mary Murphy

In 1874, Emma Crosby got married and headed west from Ontario with her husband to take the Christian gospel to the Tsimshian people of British Columbia's northwest coast. Her letters home to her mother span a quarter-century and make up the bulk and the foundation of this book, which will prove valuable to a variety of readers. As with any collection of letters home, maybe especially those to mothers, Crosby's century-old letters are striking for how much is not said, how brave and optimistic a tone is struck, and how many issues and fears are evaded. A missionary wife has many responsibilities and concerns, so it takes an active reader to sort the various threads Crosby is working here. Certainly, there is a cumulative poignancy in her loneliness, never made explicit by complaints (heaven forbid), but always an undercurrent in her remarks regarding when letters go, when they come, how long a lapse, how many, from whom. She lives from steamship to steamship.

Along with letters, the steamship brings people and supplies—the Governor General on one occasion and a cow on another!—and Crosby's dependence on that link to the outside world is made very clear. Jan Hare and Jean Barman provide editorial transitions, mostly to clarify situational contexts surrounding specific letters. These intertextual notes are very useful, although a little more guidance in each entry would have helped in the sorting process. It would be useful to have additional direction rather than plain data to help readers with analysis and synthesis. This help arrives in the last third of the book.

Crosby's letters open up discussion of "cross-cultural misunderstanding," as the book so delicately puts it, and "good intentions," among many other things, by revealing the earnestness of the missionaries, their interactions with the local people, and most especially by showing the moment when the personal becomes institutional. The mutation of Emma Crosby's genuine concern for a few local girls, whom she takes into her home, into an externally funded incarceration is inexorable and inevitable. Basic notions of racial, cultural, and spiritual superiority are the foundation of the missionary enterprise, and these assumptions are made clear in Crosby's narratives; the Tsimshian tolerance of the Crosbys and their work is an abundant irony that accompanies Crosby's accounts. Hare and Barman have done an admirable job of making sure that Emma Crosby does not become a one-dimensional figure. They allow the daughter, wife, and mother to flourish alongside the missionary, so that she is a sympathetic character, and while we all have heard that "the road to hell is paved with good intentions," there is much to be learned from how that road is travelled, by whom, and how that journey is begun. This book is no simplistic condemnation of Emma Crosby's life and efforts.

Ironically, Crosby becomes a much clearer character once her letters stop and her editors are required to take up the writing. The first six chapters of *Good Intentions Gone Awry* are one kind of work (edited letters) and the last three are another (critical biography). This is because Hare and Barman have a different set of obligations than Crosby did. For one thing, they set Emma's

self-effacing and sacrificial self up against her husband's self-promoting and egotistical self. Only when Emma no longer actively conceals do her editors feel the liberty to reveal, and while this is an understandable strategy, it may suggest a greater sense of responsibility to Emma Crosby than to those now reading her letters. Many questions and frustrations could be answered and forestalled with a modified organizational principle, making the reading experience more satisfying.

It may be, however, that drawing Crosby more fully from the start would have put the book in danger of overshadowing core social issues. Perhaps readers would be so stricken by intimate details of extreme isolation and child mortality that the fact of cultural imperialism, made most manifest in the story of residential schools, would not have been exposed as the insidious idea-*cum*-reality that it was. Ultimately, the book does satisfy, and it does so without pretending to be the last word on anything.

Lieux et paysages

Rosmarin Heidenreich
Paysages de désir : J.R. Léveillé : réflexions critiques. L'Interligne 17,95 $

Adelaide Russo et Simon Harel, dir.
Lieux propices : L'énonciation des lieux / Le lieu de l'énonciation dans les contextes francophones interculturels. Les Presses de l'Université Laval 35,00 $

Compte rendu par Jean-Sébastien Ménard

Paysages de désir : J.R. Léveillé : réflexions critiques de Rosmarin Heidenreich est un excellent ouvrage pour qui s'intéresse aux écrivains francophones du Canada hors Québec et particulièrement à J.R. Léveillé, « sans aucun doute l'écrivain de langue française le plus important dans l'Ouest canadien à l'heure actuelle ».

Constitué de textes qui ont tous déjà été publiés dans des revues ou des anthologies critiques, à l'exception de l'article intitulé « Nosara (h) : à la recherche du souffle perdu » et de l'entrevue avec l'auteur, ce volume permet au lecteur d'approfondir sa connaissance de l'œuvre de Léveillé.

Le thème de prédilection de ce dernier est l'association du désir à la création artistique. Quant à sa stratégie textuelle, caractérisée par l'omniprésence de jeux de mots, elle est « en partie ludique, en partie fondée sur l'allusion intertextuelle et sur la mimésis ». On trouve aussi dans son oeuvre une poétique du fragment sur les plans tant thématique que formel s'illustrant dans des assemblages textuels et visuels. Pour lui, « il existe un moment esthétique dans toute expérience humaine véritablement consciente ».

En plus d'aborder l'œuvre de cet écrivain, Rosmarin Heidenreich se préoccupe de la situation des écrivains francophones hors Québec, spécialement de celle des poètes de l'Ouest canadien, dont certes J.R. Léveillé, mais aussi Charles Leblanc, Janick Belleau et Louise Fiset. À partir de la production et de la réception de cet exemple franco-manitobain de littérature minoritaire, l'auteure remet en question la notion de canon littéraire et s'interroge sur la place des écrivains francophones hors Québec.

Pour Heidenreich, ces derniers sont « avant-gardistes, et profondément influencés par les grands mouvements poétiques français ainsi que nord-américains ». Ils s'inscrivent dans la même tendance que les œuvres transculturelles d'un Salman Rushdie ou d'un Derek Walcott par exemple, c'est-à-dire dans la grande littérature postmoderne et postcoloniale.

Avec elle, le lecteur est donc invité à s'inscrire au sein d'un paysage, une métaphore pour la vie selon Léveillé; paysage, toujours changeant, qui suscite le désir du Manitobain et s'imprime en lui avant de devenir son lieu d'énonciation et son port d'attache.

Lieux propices : L'énonciation des lieux / Le lieu de l'énonciation dans les contextes

francophones interculturels s'inscrit quant à lui dans une optique littéraire, philosophique et transculturelle. Sous la direction de Adelaide Russo et de Simon Harel, plusieurs auteurs s'interrogent sur la notion de lieu. Les chercheurs visent ainsi « un examen de la notion de lieu comme réseau d'interrelations qui met en cause la constitution et la perception de l'identité dans les contextes interculturels francophones depuis 1968 ».

L'analyse du lieu, au sens propre et figuré, et du paysage, qui est une « amplification du lieu », devient l'occasion de réfléchir à et de mieux comprendre la littérature et la pensée de notre époque, où « tout semble dé-localisé, sans être, pour autant, mondialisé d'aucune façon ». Dans ce contexte, comme le souligne Lucie Brind'Amour, le défi de l'ouverture au monde est « le maintien d'une singularité, d'une identité ». En ce sens, certains parlent, à la suite d'Édouard Glissant, de créolisation du monde, alors que d'autres articulent leur réflexion autour de l'œuvre de Jean-Luc Nancy, en particulier de son livre *La création du monde ou la mondialisation*.

Au centre de chaque article, la notion de lieu suscite donc la réflexion. Parfois synonyme d'appartenance ou d'altérité, elle permet entre autres de parler de géo-scopie, des lieux d'énonciation et d'inscription, de lieux perdus, passés ou futurs, du lieu d'écriture—cet espace sacré—, et du rôle joué par le langage ainsi que par la mémoire et la tradition dans la manière d'habiter, de regarder et de comprendre le monde. Les auteurs s'intéressent au passage à plusieurs écrivains, dont Yves Beauchemin, Charlotte Delbo, William Cliff, Jean-Christophe Bailly, Henri Michaux, Jean-Philippe Toussaint, Émile Ollivier, et Jean Babineau.

Dans la foulée des travaux des équipes de recherche « Le Soi et l'Autre », « Discours et pratiques du lieu habité », et de celles du Centre d'Études Françaises et Francophones de la Louisiana State University ainsi que du Centre Wallonie-Bruxelles en Louisiane, ce volume sera suivi par la publication d'un ouvrage pluridisciplinaire où l'apport des anthropologues, des sociologues et des spécialistes des arts visuels et du cinéma ayant collaboré au projet deviendra accessible et élargira l'univers de ce haut lieu de savoir et d'échanges intellectuels.

Suffer the Children

James Heneghan
Safe House. Orca $8.95

Kathleen McDonnell
1212: Year of the Journey. Second Story $9.95

Reviewed by Elizabeth Galway

Safe House, James Heneghan's novel for young adults set in Belfast in 1999, tells the story of twelve-year-old Liam Fogarty. The city portrayed in the novel is a place of violence, corruption, and religious animosity. The story begins with the brutal deaths of Liam's parents, murdered in their beds while their terrified son listens from across the hall. Liam flees, pursued by the killers, and seeks help from his neighbours and the earnest Protestant policeman, Inspector Osborne. The boy arrives at a safe house run by fellow Catholics, but when someone betrays his location he must again run for his life.

Highly suspenseful, the story depicts Liam's increasing fear and isolation. It follows a familiar convention of children's literature with its orphaned protagonist who abruptly discovers a menacing world and the need for self-reliance. Heneghan goes beyond this, however, to explore the danger and folly of religious prejudice, revealing the crimes and sufferings of both Protestants and Catholics. Liam's neighbour Mrs. Cassidy remarks, "The IRA is as bad as the police and the soldiers. I wouldn't trust any of them. They're all a bunch of murderers."

Mrs. Cassidy is critical of each group, but Liam also recalls the words of his

father, who "saw no important differences" between Protestants and Catholics. "They were all doing their best, he always said . . . to find work and bring up their families. It was just a few who were to blame for the violence and the hatred, a handful of ignorant thugs who knew no better." Heneghan's novel explores themes of religious prejudice and narrow-mindedness, portraying the cycle of violence that these attitudes perpetuate. It offers no easy solutions, but does teach children that the first step toward peace lies in asking questions and thinking critically and independently about religious difference.

Kathleen McDonnell's *1212: Year of the Journey* is another novel for young adults exploring religious intolerance. This work of historical fiction follows three French characters as they join the Children's Crusade, a march by children to the Holy Land in the summer of 1212. It is the story of a remarkable but tragic historical event that will interest readers who want to learn more about the history of this time. Like Heneghan's novel, *1212* opens with an act of brutal violence as young Blanche witnesses her town destroyed and her family killed by soldiers following orders from the Church of Rome. The massacre is in response to the fact that many of the people of Béziers are Cathars, a group of Christians deemed heretical by the Church. Blanche is able to escape with the help of a Jewish merchant and a soldier who takes pity on her, and she arrives at a convent. The nuns repeatedly tell her that, as a Cathar, she is doomed to hell and then promptly put her to work. Blanche runs away from this harsh existence and joins the Crusade where, surrounded by other children, she initially feels a sense of belonging, but where she must also keep her Cathar heritage a secret.

When Blanche joins the Crusade she encounters Abel, a Jewish boy hiding his own religious identity from those around him. Leading the crusaders is the charismatic shepherd boy Étienne, who believes he is following direct orders from St. Nicholas. Étienne enthralls both Abel and Blanche, who cherish his friendship. As the journey progresses, however, Étienne's increasing egoism and zealotry threaten these bonds, showing Blanche and Abel that they cannot reveal their true identities without facing scorn and rejection from their friend. *1212* is a poignant story that portrays the loss of idealism and growing disillusionment of its young characters in the face of prejudice, cruelty, and betrayal.

Both novels contain scenes of explicit violence and are suitable for older children. Set in times and places ostensibly different from contemporary Canada, they in fact allow readers to explore questions of religious violence, fanaticism, and intolerance, important issues of current relevance to young Canadians. Together, these two works highlight the dangers of religious bigotry and suggest that rejecting blind faith and asking questions are the first steps toward people of different religious communities finding a middle ground.

Words and Music

Karen Hines
Hello … Hello. Coach House $17.95

Constance Lindsay Skinner; adapted by Joan Bryans
Birthright. Playwrights Canada $16.95

Judith Thompson
Enoch Arden in the Hope Shelter. Playwrights Canada $17.95

Reviewed by Shelley Scott

In what ways can these three plays by Canadian women be compared? Two are musicals, two are melodramas, and two are adaptations. But perhaps the most useful point is that each playwright simultaneously relies upon and defies the conventions of her chosen genre, evidenced by the

necessity of unusually extensive introductory material and explanatory notes in each volume.

Karen Hines subtitles *Hello … Hello* "A Romantic Satire" and calls it "a self-consuming artefact, a musical that uses music to meditate on some of the more troubling impulses behind that most delightful of escapist forms." From its seed as a fifteen-minute piece for the Tarragon Spring Arts Fair, to a twelve-person version called *La Boom*, to workshops and performances as *Hello … Hello* (most recently at the Tarragon in 2003), Hines has struggled to find a form for her dystopic vision. The play is a pleasure to read, partly because of its attractive presentation, but mainly for Hines' gorgeously descriptive, funny/sad writing. *Hello … Hello* is told by Ben and Cassandra and supported by a Male and Female chorus, two actors who play over fifty characters each. There is no set, only indelible images created by words and music of a world in which dead birds fall from the sky, climate change has gone berserk, consumerism has reached both epic and intimate proportions, and the latest fashion craze is a shiny ball of poison to wear around one's neck. Hines has played Cassandra in all the productions so far, and there are echoes of her popular and subversive clown character, Pochsy, in the delicate balance between beauty and horror that makes *Hello … Hello* wonderfully effective but tricky to describe.

Birthright was written in 1905 by Constance Lindsay Skinner, a writer born and raised in British Columbia, who boldly made her mark in the United States as a New Woman. Historian Jean Barman came across the play in a New York archive and entrusted it to director Joan Bryans, who adapted and staged it with her own company, Vital Spark. Although *Birthright* had several American productions in Skinner's day, Bryans' production in Vancouver in 2003 marked its Canadian premiere. Along with pieces by Barman and Bryans explaining this genesis, the text also includes a scholarly essay by Michelle La Flamme that enumerates the multiple strategies Skinner employs for her controversial material.

Birthright is the story of Precious Conroy, a young woman adopted by Christian missionaries who, at the play's climax, learns that her birth mother was Native. The play walks a path between the realist conventions of Ibsen and the uneasy exoticism of any number of American melodramas that tackle race and ethnicity, from *The Octoroon* to *Showboat*. Precious is the object of desire for two men: Harry, the upstanding son of her adoptive parents, and Louis Prince, the "half-breed" son of the local chief. Precious is by no means a shrinking violet: we learn that she first encountered Harry when she saved him from drowning; they have premarital sex; and when Harry, after learning of her parentage, cruelly rejects her, Precious stabs and kills him. The play ends with Louis Prince claiming Precious as his woman, as one of his own "kind," and the two of them setting forth to a new life in the wilderness. Skinner pulls no punches in her depiction of the white characters' racism and hypocrisy, but Native characters also condemn the destructive effects of interracial relations. Louis Prince, for example, speaks in an embarrassing faux-Indian dialect, but only because it is what the white characters expect of him. La Flamme praises Precious as "a very unconventional representation of a woman, especially at the turn of the century," but also wonders if we read her as "unconventional because of her education as an artist, her romantic sensibilities or the presence of her wayward and demented Native blood." Throughout the play, Precious is "called" to the Native way of life, demonstrating an essentialist understanding of racial identity. Photos accompanying the text suggest an attractive cast and an intriguing production; as in this printed volume, any production would

require careful contextualization to make it palatable to a contemporary audience.

Director Maria Lamont does the same sort of contextualizing when, in her introduction to *Enoch Arden in the Hope Shelter*, she explains that melodrama merely means to combine music with spoken text or poetry. The melodrama *Enoch Arden* was written in 1897 by Richard Strauss, based on Tennyson's epic 1864 poem. At Lamont's request, Judith Thompson found a contemporary setting for the work, developing it through a number of workshops, culminating in a performance at Toronto's Theatre Centre in 2005. Kristin Mueller, who played piano and sang as Ciel, and John Fitzgerald Jay, who delivered the largely monologic text as Jabber, were no doubt essential to its creation and success.

Thompson chose to place the action in a halfway house, where the mentally ill lovers practise their act for a talent show. The narrative is multilayered, as Jabber conflates his own personal history and village on the east coast of Canada with Enoch's. What led Thompson to connect the love triangle of Tennyson's poem with these two marginalized characters is not apparent, although clearly the virtuosity of the performers and the emotional power of the music would go a long way to explain its 2006 Dora nomination for outstanding new musical.

These Beasts in Air

Matthew Holmes
Hitch. Nightwood $16.95

Tim Bowling
Fathom. Gaspereau $18.95

Miranda Pearson
The Aviary. Oolichan $17.95

Reviewed by Daniel Burgoyne

Hitch, Matthew Holmes' debut collection of poems, consists of five sections marked by international and navy code flags for the letters H (Hotel), I (India), T (Tango), C (Charlie), and H (Hotel). This arrangement fosters abstract attention and a stepping back to view the poetry as a larger whole. Holmes' method is precise, almost clinical at times, and yet unpredictable enough to sustain and recreate interest with an intensity signalled by the proem's image of Degas "writing [flying horses] on glass": "there is no way to stop things." So, the fifth section's title, "Hitch," works by synecdoche and repetition (Hitch/Hitch) but also by metonymy (Hotel/Hitch), and it complicates matters further because the 14 poems in "Hitch" are organized by figure, each illustrating a different knot. The premise of tying, we are told, is "to untie."

What Steven Heighton has called Holmes' versatility is apt not only to formal and tonal variations within this work, but to the range of embedded allusion, or perhaps simply influence, from the obvious homage to bpNichol to the speculative gestures of a Christopher Dewdney. A vivid demonstration of versatility can be seen by comparing the later knots ("FIG. 9: ALPHABET" exploits the graphic and phonetic orthography of the knot) with the prose poems at the centre of the early "Hotel," where there are five "science fiction" pieces based on "eponymous scientific theories." These five poems speak to Holmes' intellectual rigour and his humour. Laughter is everywhere in such poems as "The Life and Evolution of Dust Bunnies": "There's a sine for what it means when they've grown too big" / […] "Where *t* is time between / and the existence of brooms is a given."

Tim Bowling's *Fathom*, his seventh collection of poems, invited me with its promise of a childhood on the Fraser River, calling me back not only to my lived experience of this geography but also to the more literal and infinite folding of Daphne Marlatt's *Steveston*. The poems entice at once, tracking the coming to language in early childhood in Vancouver, 1969: "Vancouver—a

soggy mouse hole in a frozen attic." There is recurring tension, a sense of alienation or bewildered escape fraught with trauma. These blows can be vaguely external, a man slumped over his oars, muskrats bleeding in ditches, abandoned boats and bodies: "cold, / never to waken, rain mixing / with frost and slime." But I seldom gain a precise sense of the tension; impression substitutes for psychology, and gestures invoking an awareness or even exploration of language, signalled early, rarely follow through. However, there are notable and almost humorous exceptions. "In Response to 'Place of Birth' on the Government Form" tracks elements of the map; in this case, Spanish place names like Gabriola are proximate to "an island that drifted / and wrecked and blackened / till its history proved English." "A Change of Address Notification" observes, "Rain taps on the lid of the coffin of intention. / And the past is only as warm / as the day."

This last honesty epitomizes my main reservation about the collection. These are poems written almost entirely via memory, recollections rather than engagements. There are moments of clarity as in "Next Boat," an August night perched on a dike at the mouth of the Fraser River. But more often the promise of geography is interrupted by personal elements that intrude with errata, perhaps of interest to the miscellany of biography. Tapping rain obscures method and insight. The poems seem self-inscribed, a misplacement of map for territory, recollection for lived uncertainty.

Miranda Pearson's *The Aviary* also begins in and flits about Vancouver. But here the poems are present, almost fragmented by the insistence of the moment. The self-effacing voice of these poems works exactly to compromise the sufficiency of the lyric: "I'm often strange to myself. I have been / unable to replicate the family, only to take it apart / like an autistic child with a radio." In "Balcony," gazing at Carmen through opera glasses, "I become another / contamination."

I pause over a cynicism that emerges at points in *The Aviary*. It comes early in "The Aquarium," with the claim to be a family to get the cheaper admission rates. It creeps through the love poems: curdled expressions of sexual desire in the ant-infested "I Want You"; and qualified longing, the "decoy of romance," in "Here I am, Lover." I wonder about the relation between cynicism and fear. Anxiety jitters between line breaks: "afraid, / like a child in the dark"; birds "scared / by their own echoes."

There is a distinct and promising shift in the last serial poem of the book, "Silver Collection." Here the poems depart and return to pieces in the collection with a wit that seems to lose the earlier fear: "One for sorrow, two for joy—" and "I'm keen on the pair of small birds (Asprey's 1905)."

The Power of Ignorance

Monica Hughes
The Isis Trilogy. Tundra $24.99

Reviewed by Sarika P. Bose

Monica Hughes' classic science fiction trilogy, aimed at the young adult audience, has been released in a hardcover omnibus edition, which will be enjoyed by new and old admirers alike. The novels chart the development of a small human colony of Earth through three generations, and explore the origins and consequences of prejudice and ignorance. The message may be somewhat heavy-handed at times, and there are no easy answers or resolutions; nevertheless, these are enjoyable novels with adventure and engaging characters.

Olwen Pendennis, the protagonist of *The Keeper of the Isis Light* (1980), is a teenaged orphan whose respected ceremonial role on the planet Isis gives her responsibility and self-respect. Hughes takes care to introduce the reader to Olwen and her world through

her own eyes, partly to create a close bond with her, and partly to forward an important theme about the human weakness of judging others by surfaces. The primacy given to Olwen's experiences and attitudes reorients the reader's vision of what is beautiful in either a person or the natural world, so when the settlers arrive from Earth and have a clearly opposing view of her and of the planet she represents, the reader has become too much invested in Olwen to allow their vision to erase the powerful positive image already in place. As we encounter Isis through her eyes, we may wonder less about Olwen's physical appearance than about the exotic nature of her planet, and it is only when we are told more than once about the missing mirrors of her home that we are alerted to the question of appearance. Hughes carefully builds our sympathetic perspective toward Olwen and Isis to alert us to her underlying lesson about prejudice, a lesson that links all the novels. The settlers' fear of the alien itself becomes alien to us, and the ugliness of prejudice strikes us that much harder when it is directed toward someone whose beauty, both physical and inward, has been so carefully constructed for us, and by which we are completely convinced. The mirrors that Olwen's robot Guardian, her only parental figure, had hidden from her manifest themselves in the many eyes of the settlers, initially throwing back an image that causes self-loathing. Olwen's first steps toward romance cause the crisis that erodes her self-confidence and breaks through her Guardian's protective strategies, as the boy she loves, Mark London, rejects with horror her genetically altered face and body. It is a horror shared by the community, so even her actions in saving his life and that of a little boy, Jody N'Kumo, cannot make her acceptable to them. Olwen's reactions to these settlers move from resentment at their coming, to a shy desperation to belong to them, to hurt rejection and anger toward her Guardian for genetically altering her, to a fury prompted by the kind of ignorance that guns down her pet at sight, and finally, a resigned understanding of her own isolation in the context of these newcomers. The novel ends with Olwen's self-imposed exile to her luxurious aerie, high above the earth and ignorance-bound settlers, in the company of her loyal Guardian, ironically, a far more "human" character, if humanity is defined by compassion, love, and wisdom. The author's refusal to allow the community to recognize its faults or Olwen to become reintegrated into the community leaves us wondering about the settlers' fate, and about Olwen's, who may never find the human love for which she has longed.

The Guardian of Isis (1981) takes us several years into the future, when the seeds of bigotry in the first book, and particularly in Mark London, have exploded to create a primitive, conservative community which has allowed itself to forget its rational teachings and its technological knowledge, replacing them with myths and fearful superstitions. Prejudice has led to ignorance, fear, and Mark London's absolute power. The flawed teenager, London, has evolved into a more clearly evil character, a dictatorial patriarch who has established a dystopian community in which all curiosity and urge for exploration are suppressed, and the second-class status of women is actively encouraged. While the male Guardian, dismissed as an outdated machine in the first novel is now mythologized as the godlike "Shining One," the middle-aged and isolated Olwen discovers London has kept his people in a fearful thrall partly by mythologizing her as a dangerous monster called That Old Woman or The Ugly One, equating appearance and a subjective response to that appearance with character, and has punished all the women in his community for her own part in shattering his illusions. Personal experience has turned into social policy. Only

Jody N'Kumo questions received truths, for which he is cast out from his community, even when he proposes to save them from a natural disaster. Eventually, he encounters Olwen and her Guardian, with whom he saves the settlers. Yet his return to community is only tolerated, rather than celebrated, and the ignorance that made the settlers vulnerable to London now makes them vulnerable to a stereotyped Irish confidence trickster, Michael Joseph Flynn in *The Isis Pedlar* (1982). Here, Jody's nephew, David, cooperates with Flynn's daughter and with the reawakened Guardian, who had silently guarded Olwen's grave, to stop Flynn's plans. There is no easy denouement here either as Flynn escapes punishment and Olwen is never redeemed in the community's eyes; however, we are promised some hope for the future with David and Moira's impending marriage.

Hughes refuses her audience any easy certainties in this often damning examination of human nature. Rebels against prejudice and challengers of accepted truths are in the minority, and must often pay a heavy price for their rebellion. But the knowledge that some compassion and independent thinking can exist against such odds offers a hopeful resolution to the trilogy.

Gothic and Pomo History

Wayne Johnston
The Custodian of Paradise. Knopf Canada $34.95

Michael Redhill
Consolation. Doubleday $32.95

Reviewed by Barbara Pell

Canadian literature abounds and excels in historical fiction. Wayne Johnston is one of its finest practitioners, especially acclaimed for *The Colony of Unrequited Dreams* and *The Navigator of New York*, both novels about Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders in New York. *The Custodian of Paradise* not only follows Johnston's pattern of epic and gothic history but creates a parallel text to *Colony*, telling the story of Shelagh Fielding, the nemesis and unrequited love of its protagonist Joey Smallwood, and retelling many of the same times and events through her first-person narrative. Whereas the tension in *Colony* and *Navigator* was between fiction and the reader's knowledge of real historical events, the tension in this novel is between Fielding's story and the reader's memory of the earlier novel. The result is not only some dilution of suspense (since many of the plot details—though not the crucial denouement—are in the earlier book) but also a disengagement with reality, since this protagonist's life is purely fictional. The writing is lyrical; the characters, settings, and social contexts of the novel are impressively epic; the plot convolutions are pure gothic and, ultimately, implausible.

In the present time of the novel (the mid-1940s), the 41-year-old Fielding is camped on Loreburn, a deserted Newfoundland island, accompanied only by her old journals, letters, and two trunkloads of scotch that she is trying to resist drinking. Here she relives and rewrites her life: a giant (6 foot, 3 inch), heroic woman, deserted as a child by her mother (who moves to New York and remarries), rejected by her father (who publicly denies his paternity, but is unknowingly saved from social disgrace by Fielding), and expelled from school and St. John's society (to save Smallwood, who resents as much as loves her), she has struggled with grief and guilt for her whole life. Pregnant at fifteen by the snobbish school bully, she endures six months of solitary confinement in New York to then abandon her twins to her mother to raise. Desolate, alcoholic, and tubercular, she eventually returns to St. John's, where she finally lives in a whorehouse as a brilliant but bitter journalist who haunts the nighttime city with her cane and withered leg, recording its corruption and depravity. Here she is found decades later by her son

David (whom she, still preserving the lie, embraces as her half-brother), an American officer, born in the middle of World War I, on his way to death in World War II.

The outlines of this epic and tragic story we know from *Colony*. The gothic, melodramatic, and ultimately unbelievable, plot complications and suspense come with the addition of the character strangely appearing throughout the novel as The Provider, a seven-foot ex-priest, who, with his "delegate," has (implausibly) stalked and saved Fielding since New York and now appears on Loreburn to resolve the mystery with his death. Although he has always urged Fielding to forgive her mother, revenge has defined his life, and therefore Fielding's, since he finally confides that she is his daughter, the product of his rape of her mother, which he (irrationally) justifies as revenge for her mother's lie that he raped her earlier and her subsequent abortion. He further (illogically) claims that his revelation to David of his true parentage led, not only to the reunion with his real mother, but to his going off to death in the war.

Johnston thematically connects the human ravages of obsession and revenge, from generation to generation, even to the ends of the earth and the carnage of two world wars, with God's eviction of "his delinquent children" from "paradise." Because of His revenge, God, like those made in His image, becomes the "custodian of [a] paradise" that is "deserted." The only redemption possible is through forgiveness, as Fielding in the end absolves her Provider: "Father, I forgive you."

Michael Redhill's second novel sets a historical narrative within a postmodern interrogative framework. Clever, confusing, and without closure, *Consolation* asks the reader to cherish the past as a foundation for the present, but subverts the story with a final pomo sleight of hand.

In 1997 Professor David Hollis, dying of Lou Gehrig's disease, commits suicide in Toronto Harbour. A respected academic who has invented the science of forensic geology, he has recently been discredited professionally because of a monograph in which he speculated that a trunk full of photographic plates depicting Toronto in 1856 is in a sunken ship in a landfill site where the city's new Union Arena is to be built; however he refuses to supply documentation for his deduction, expecting his associates to "*show some faith*." After his death, his wife Marianne moves into a hotel overlooking the excavation site and awaits the discovery of the ship and trunk that will justify her husband's theories. The only person who shares her love, faith, and vigil for her husband is her daughter's fiancé, John Lewis, an orphan who has been to Hollis a son, a researcher, and a reluctant, secret accomplice in his suicide.

In the historical narrative interleaved with this modern story, the pharmacist J.G. Hallam leaves his family in England in 1855 to open a shop in Toronto. After his disillusionment with the primitive colonial outpost and the failure of his business, he becomes an apprentice photographer in association with a brilliant but dissolute Irishman and a destitute widow, Claudia Rowe. Their success results in an 1856 commission to photograph the city for the Toronto Committee for the Establishment of a Permanent Capital in the Province of Canada. Sadly leaving Mrs. Rowe, whom he loves but will not betray his wife for, Hallam returns to England and his family to present the official photographs to the imperial government. The narrative does not explain why (as Hollis conjectured) Hallam would have returned, with the photographic plates, to Mrs. Rowe and how he survived the shipwreck that took his baggage to the bottom of Toronto Harbour (see pomo indeterminacy below).

Although there are passages of boring research detail in the past and of soap-opera dialogue in the present (Redhill is also a

playwright), both narratives are generally interesting and compelling. The social and architectural features of Victorian Toronto are vividly (even photographically) captured. The characters are generally realistic in manners and mores within their period, and their relationships are complex and poignant (although the sheer bitchiness of Marianne and her daughters stretches credulity). The overriding theme (occasionally a too-strident message) advocates the conservation of the past for the present. In his photographs, Hallam captured the past for the future. Hollis constantly taught that today's civilization is built literally on top of yesterday's, and to ignore or destroy those historical artefacts (especially in the pursuit of crass commerce or mindless sport, both epitomized in the Toronto Union Arena—a.k.a. Air Canada Centre) is to commit cultural suicide. That is, of course, what happens in the novel. The ship's hull is unearthed, and Marianne and John are jubilant, but before any hypothetical trunk full of photographs can be discovered, the civic leaders, commercial interests, and corporate lawyers assert their power and priorities by pouring concrete over the past.

A related theme in the novel is the "faith" that people should have in the memories and the depths of their loved ones, beneath their surface disbeliefs. However, in this matter of meaning, a serious problem with both the initial premise and the final revelation of this novel cannot be erased with a simple appeal to postmodern indeterminacy. Hollis was not academically discredited because there was no possibility of a buried boat (which John had found in his research), but because he lied about his source (a non-existent 1856 diary)—definitely an academic no-no, despite his appeal to his colleagues' "faith" because "he was sick. There wasn't time to be honest." Moreover, he committed suicide because he was dying of ALS, not because he was professionally humiliated, so Marianne's hotel-room vigil to justify him seems both perverse and pointless. Most significantly, the pomo metafictional trick at the end, which reveals that the detailed historic narrative about J.G. Hallam is not, as the reader has supposed, a vindication of Hollis' integrity, but is, in fact, a creative fiction written by John to offer "consolation" to Hollis' family, begs the question posed by another character: "Then trying to fix a lie with another lie isn't exactly right. Is it?" Of course, realistic novels aren't "real," and historic fact isn't "fact" in our postmodern world. But, while the present is firmly built on the past, family relationships are not well built on lies, not even disguised as faith.

Surviving the Crack Up

Vivette J. Kady
Most Wanted. Porcupine's Quill $16.95

Reviewed by Héliane Ventura

Some canonical definitions of the short story immediately spring to mind when reading Vivette Kady's volume of stories *Most Wanted*. For instance, Frank O'Connor's from 1963: "Always in the short story there is this sense of outlawed figures wandering about the fringes of society." Consider some of Kady's characters: a cross-dressing pigeon-lover who keeps his wife's ashes in a dog-shaped cookie jar; a three-legged mutt with occasional bouts of depression who breaks its owner's heart with its flip-side energy and optimism, a defeated and slovenly wife who has her lips perfectly made up by a child before visiting her dying husband in the hospital. Kady's characters are imbued with the intensity of human loneliness, and yet, theirs is no unredeemed dereliction: somehow, in one character's words, "the patched tissue is resilient."

Kady has a gift for imaging moments of no sound; she conjures up silent episodes that are heart-stopping: the slow headlong tumble of a baby, crashing his head on the

floor, the dolled-up woman in her yellow sundress who happily rushes to meet her date only to be stopped in mid-flight by an epileptic fit, the narrator's teenage daughter sucking the fingers of her mother's boyfriend when he scoops out ice cream from an ice-cream tub. In her narration, she also includes photographic images of violent ambiguities such as the open gold lipstick case with a lethal-looking knife blade where the lipstick should be, and the caption which says: "If lips could kill."

More than the images themselves, the graphic quality of the writing creates its strength; words evoke images but they also invoke them: for instance, one of the narrators depicts Francis Bacon's screaming popes and discusses them, during a wedding party, with his brother's bride, who happens to be his ex-girlfriend. Like Francis Bacon, Vivette Kady is bent on perfecting the representation of the human cry, and the silently sonorous anguish of her characters is derived from the existential crack-up they seem to undergo. Gilles Deleuze said that Scott Fitzgerald's story entitled "The Crack Up" best exemplified the art of the short story. Vivette Kady's stories belong in this tradition of the crystallization of frustration and malaise into art. She is a gifted painter of emotional landscapes, and she renews the canonical voice because of the simple transparency of her stories. Kady has a gift of poignancy that springs from the linearity of the narration: there are few flashbacks or prospective leaps in the stories. The plots are not convoluted, intertwined, or deceptively self-reflexive: they progress along a deliberately straight line. Kady does not take us for a ride: she invites us on the road again, with the horizon richly receding toward infinity.

Origins Reconsidered

Sikeena Karmali
A House by the Sea. Véhicule $19.95

Reviewed by Anupama Mohan

Sikeena Karmali's novel rejuvenates a literary trope that became much maligned by many feminist and gay literary critics in the last century: the search for origins. Associated most powerfully with the foundational stories of the Western canon (consider Oedipus, Hamlet, Tom Jones) but also the driving force in much world literature (*Things Fall Apart, The Jungle Book, Desire Under the Elms*), the search for one's origins has often simply meant the search for one's father or a coming-to-terms with one's patrilineage. Often this process has signified a unilinear excavation of the past that either erases or peripheralizes the woman and her discursive significance. The trope has also seen amplification into allegory where stories of national resurgence (or the lack thereof) have been woven around those of an individual's self-actualization (*Midnight's Children,* the work of Senegalese icon Ousmane Sembene or Chinese writer Lu Xun). Though much writing has not subscribed to such configurations, much has, and interestingly women writers across the world have recognized the nexus between such all-male quests and the formation of national-patriarchal canons. So while many writers have, in the project of *l'écriture féminine*, jettisoned the trope altogether, indicating as it were, its irretrievability for feminist purposes, many others have created powerful female versions of the quest story (Chaucer, Charlotte Brontë, Henry James, Margaret Laurence, to name a diverse few). This is also the anima of *A House by the Sea*.

For this reader, such reflection was the (admittedly academic) surround to the story of Zahra Khan, who crosses continents, characters, and destinies to find out

who she is, where she came from, and what she belongs to. In a world where we have been told national, familial, and personal boundaries have blurred, the novel situates itself at the heart of precisely these and other categories of collectivity—Zahra's travels shake all fundamental definitions of her self as she discovers she is not who she thinks she is. A self-proclaimed bohemian, Zahra's postmodern ways have a very real intertext in her family's orthodoxies, and their common unstable pasts constitute the cache of the narrative, slowly unravelled as Zahra makes her journeys into time, space, and self.

The novel is structured on the phonemes of an ancient Indian dance form, *Kathak* (somewhat annoyingly misspelt in the novel as "Khatak," not unlike how so many people, equally annoyingly, will refer to "Mahatma Ghandi"), the dance beats marking the life of Zahra in her quest to find her grandmother's—the novel's other Zahra—history. The contrasts between the two women, their linked though disparate stories, their men and their loves, form the complex superstructure of the novel. Within it, Karmali folds the story of diasporic Africa, its amalgam of migrant and native populations, their common stories of mixing, changing and adapting, and of collective cultural memories. It is a heady brew, and the novel jumps often from vignette to vignette, character to character, a style initially discombobulating but slowly conveying in its choppy form, the fragmented nature of Zahra's past and becoming an allegory for contemporary Africa itself, as Karmali perceives it.

A House by the Sea is the story of a woman's coming of age and in that sense, a reworking of the arch-patriarchal genre, the male *Bildungsroman*. It is also however an interesting refutation of the form, and one wonders: are Zahra's dissatisfactions then those of a woman writer with rehashed genres or of an urbanite with older agrestic histories of migration and adaptation? Zahra's unhappiness in forming relationships based on love and mutual respect is a bleak comment on something: one is unsure what. Is this Karmali's perception of the twenty-first-century woman's predicament—the choice between embedded pasts and unknown futures, between knowing oneself and being with others, between having and giving? Zahra's meditations on the subject confound, indicating perhaps that there are no easy answers, for men or women—all the travelling and finding roots doesn't quite make her happy and one wonders, is that the point after all? The novel is in that sense an exploration of what it means to be in today's world where connections appear like the flotsam and jetsam of an irrevocable past, where to be young is to be dynamic but without direction, and to have a house by the sea is to discover perhaps woefully that the air doesn't agree with one.

Interpreting Masks

Ric Knowles, ed.
The Masks of Judith Thompson. Playwrights Canada $25.00

Reviewed by Marlene Moser

In one of the interviews in *The Masks of Judith Thompson*, the playwright refers to herself as a magpie: "I sort of just take it. I take things that I've seen. Things from when I was little. I'm like a magpie: I throw it all into the soup." In many ways, this book is a similar kind of wonderful soup that is afforded to the reader now. Details and anecdotes, philosophical musings and disarming confessions—we are privileged to see many aspects of Thompson through the variety of writings Ric Knowles has compiled. Arranged in chronological order, the pieces allow us to track Thompson's career and playwriting process. Or we can read the interviews and writings against

each other as we see her return again and again to key ideas, metaphors, or memories. She describes herself as an avid rewriter—and we can see that tendency, not only in her thoughts about her plays but in her thoughts about herself, her past, and her place as a writer. And, like the intriguing metaphors that recur in her plays and writings (the bees behind the wall, the snakes, the twelve Judiths) we are invited to make our own meanings.

A little over half of the selections are not interviews but writings by Thompson herself or transcriptions from panel discussions. Most of the pieces have been published previously, but compiled here, they make a valuable resource for scholars and students. They are also a fascinating read for the average audience member as Thompson makes for an excellent interview subject: she is frank and honest, and open to new insights. Some interviews, in particular, leap off the page, as Thompson is clearly engaged and enjoying the discoveries that the conversation brings, as in the interview with Robyn Read, a former student and assistant on *Capture Me*, or in the lively exchanges with Ann Holloway, an actor who brings her intimate knowledge of performing Thompson's characters to the table. In these cases, the special relation and trust that the interviewer enjoys with Thompson spark avenues of discussion and create synergies that would be hard to manage with a simple list of questions. Holloway and Thompson complete each other's sentences in a rush of words as discussion about *Hedda Gabler* and *My Pyramids* accelerates, for example, revealing Thompson's motivations for character and recognition of larger social issues. This energy lends itself best to Thompson's work and personality, the "creative volatility" that Knowles describes in the foreword. In my reading of the collection, the least successful piece is the one stitched together by Andrew Vowles: excerpts from other writings are intercut with scenes from Thompson's teaching, and Vowles' discussions with students and Thompson herself. It is tight and controlled and we don't find out much new that we can't find elsewhere in the book.

Included in this collection are a number of writings by Thompson, two in particular, which may seem anomalous, as Knowles points out, but I am grateful for their addition. In "No Soy Culpable" Thompson brings her relentless gaze to her own self in her probing of her fear of the foreign and the unfamiliar. "Mouthful of Pearls" is a vignette reminiscent of Howard Barker in its harsh and matter-of-fact turn into violence, recalling Thompson's sentiment in a previous interview: "I think, I'm sure now, that I almost died basically of being a girl." Again and again she returns to her own life and tries to make sense of how it feeds into her creative work. One of the most affecting new pieces in the collection is her reminiscence of her relationship with mentor Urjo Kareda and her regret at the way things were between them when he died. It is a simple, powerful, and very human piece. And again I am struck by how ruthless Thompson is in examining her own life—she brings the same intensity and examination to her own experiences as she does to her observations of others.

Finally, in addition to being an excellent resource for research into Thompson's plays and playwriting process, this collection is especially useful for those interested in researching conditions of production as they relate to Thompson's oeuvre. Throughout the interviews, in particular, Thompson freely discusses her relations with various directors, theatres, actors, touching even on advertising, casting choices and directorial decisions (her own and others) as well as venue and genre. These insights are valuable for those who are interested not only in Judith Thompson, but in larger questions about Canadian theatre production. With the companion

volume of critical writings on Judith Thompson, we can look forward to further development of the scholarship on both.

Inspiring and Uninspired

Myrna Kostash
All of Baba's Children. NeWest $18.95

Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch, ed.
Kobzar's Children: A Century of Untold Ukrainian Stories. Fitzhenry & Whiteside $14.95

Reviewed by Lisa Grekul

All of Baba's Children, first published in 1977 (by Hurtig) and re-released in 1992 (by NeWest), launched Myrna Kostash's career as one of Canada's foremost writers of creative non-fiction and as, arguably, the best-known contemporary Ukrainian Canadian author. Written in the probing journalistic style that she would hone in her later work, the book explores the history of Two Hills, a predominantly Ukrainian Canadian community in Alberta. Kostash divides the text into 16 chapters, each focused on a different aspect of Two Hills' past ("Emigration," "The Homestead," "Politics," "Mythologies"), combining information from archives and academic sources with first-hand insights and observations (she lived in Two Hills for four months in 1975, during which she interviewed many long-time residents). Not unlike some of her later work—*Bloodlines*, most notably—*All of Baba's Children* opens with Kostash's confession that her decision to write it was a "surprise": "[o]f all the things to write about," she asks, "why would I choose the Ukrainian-Canadians? I did not feel particularly attached to their community; I did not speak Ukrainian; lessons in Ukrainian history and literature had made no impression." Yet it is precisely Kostash's insider/outsider-ness vis-à-vis the Ukrainian community—her status as a second-generation "ethnic," relatively disconnected from her roots—that enables her to provide compelling and controversial commentary not only on the Ukrainian community in and around Two Hills but also on ethnic identity in Canada more generally.

Indeed, while residents of Two Hills were overwhelmingly delighted that a writer (one of "their own," no less) had written a book about their community (other readers, too, from across the country, thanked Kostash for retrieving "*their* history" from the "margins of official ethnic history"), *All of Baba's Children* caused a stir when it was first published because of its radical perspective on both national identity (questioning the celebratory rhetoric of multiculturalism, exposing the lingering aftermath of assimilation) and Ukrainian Canadians' experiences in Canada. As George Melnyk explains in his foreword to the 1992 edition, the book garnered "immediate national attention"; not all reviews, however, were positive. Some Ukrainian Canadians, angered by Kostash's discussions of sexism, anti-Semitism, and communism in the Ukrainian Canadian community, "attacked [her] for having aired the community's dirty laundry in public." But regardless of the varied responses it received, Melnyk is right when he draws attention to how the book "engages its audience," making it "difficult to be detached when reading *All of Baba's Children*." He is right, too, when he refers to the text as a "manifesto yet to be surpassed."

Kobzar's Children, by contrast, an anthology of short fiction, creative non-fiction, and poetry by twelve, primarily emergent, Ukrainian Canadian writers, promises much more than it delivers. In fact, technical inconsistencies will leave readers confused about what exactly the collection promises. The title, for example, on the front cover of the book (*Kobzar's Children: A Century of Untold Ukrainian Stories*) is quite different from the title provided on the copyright page (*Kobzar's Children: A Century of Stories by Ukrainians*). And while the Library of Congress summary

of the anthology suggests that the collection "chronicles the lives and struggles of Ukrainian immigrants during the past century," this isn't strictly true: neither Skrypuch's "The Rings," for instance, nor Stefan Petelycky's "Auschwitz: Many Circles of Hell" is an immigrant story, and several other selections explore the experiences of second- and third-generation Ukrainian Canadians. Tracing a rough chronology of Ukrainian and Ukrainian Canadian history (topics include homesteading in Canada, internment during World War I, the 1932-33 famine in Ukraine, the Orange Revolution), the anthology contains photographs, both "historical" and contemporary (one photo per selection). Readers may be distracted, however, from the writing itself as they ponder the purpose of those photographs which have little, if anything, to do with the selections that they accompany (the randomly-placed photograph of the "Caruk sisters of Pine River," taken in 1930, is just one example; it bears no relation to any piece in the anthology).

While not without accomplished contributions (Olga Prychodko's "A Home of Her Own" and Larry Warwaruk's "Bargain" stand out), *Kobzar's Children* is not the showcase of groundbreaking, provocative contemporary Ukrainian Canadian writing that it could have been. Some scholarly readers may lament the fact that, in choosing contributors from her "email critique group" (most of them novice writers), Skrypuch overlooked the most senior, established Ukrainian Canadian authors (Kostash, Janice Kulyk Keefer), the most exciting new voices (Martha Blum, Anthony Bidulka), and mid-career writers such as Marusya Bociurkiw, Sonja Greckol, and Nancy Holmes. Having said this, as a writer, I can appreciate that *Kobzar's Children* is not directed at an audience of academics: it is instead intended to motivate readers to find their voices and write their stories ("[w]hen you don't write your own stories, others will write their versions for you"). Yet precisely because the anthology seeks to encourage readers to become writers, selecting more sophisticated and more polished—in short, more *inspiring*—writing would have made sense.

And insofar as Skrypuch aims to introduce new readers (aged 14 and up) to Ukrainian and Ukrainian Canadian history, the most serious shortcoming of *Kobzar's Children* is that these readers will come away from the book—from the editor's preface, in particular—with a distorted perspective on its subject matter. According to Skrypuch, for example, the *kobzars* (the "blind, wandering minstrels of Ukraine") were massacred by Stalin's regime in the 1930s, along with "Ukrainian journalists, artists, novelists, and playwrights"—and, she goes on to explain, "[a]s the storytellers of Ukraine died, the stories died too." This oversimplification of Ukrainian history, which suggests that the production of Ukrainian literature abruptly ended in the 1930s, disregards the lively literary community in Ukraine, and Skrypuch's notion that Ukrainian *Canadians* shoulder the responsibility of filling the ostensible void in Ukrainian storytelling overlooks not only writers in Ukraine but also the large number of diasporic writers based in such countries as the United States, England, and Australia. The editor's claim, moreover, that Ukrainians who came to Canada to "escape the Stalin terror" (third-wave immigrants) "were farmers, pharmacists, engineers, and coal miners"—but "not writers"—is simply not correct: the "third wave" included a large number of intellectuals, many of them writers. Unfortunately, in the absence of better research on the part of the editor, readers who have little or no prior knowledge of Ukrainian or Ukrainian Canadian history will come away from this anthology misinformed about both.

In the short term, *Kobzar's Children* may well endear itself to the jury of the newly-established Kobzar Literary Award

(sponsored by the Shevchenko Foundation) and to members of the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association (which will receive all royalties from the book). But whereas *All of Baba's Children* remains an essential text for students of Canadian, as well as Ukrainian Canadian, history and literature, Skrypuch's collection is unlikely to make a similarly substantial and enduring impact on readers, Ukrainian Canadian or otherwise.

Inventorier ou créer un lieu de mémoire?

Yvan Lamonde et Didier Poton, dirs.
La Capricieuse (1855): poupe et proue. Les relations France-Québec (1760-1914). Presses de l'Université Laval 32,00 $

Compte rendu par Michel Ducharme

Dans ce recueil, Yvan Lamonde et Didier Poton nous présentent un recueil d'articles provenant d'un colloque tenu en octobre 2005 pour célébrer le 150e anniversaire de la venue de La Capricieuse, cette corvette qui a symboliquement marqué le retour de la France dans la vallée du Saint-Laurent en 1855, après presque un siècle d'absence. Abordant la venue de La Capricieuse dans une perspective globale, plusieurs historiens québécois et français ont étudié différentes facettes des relations entre la France et le Québec depuis la Conquête jusqu'à la Première Guerre mondiale.

L'ouvrage est singulier en ce qu'il porte sur un sujet qui n'existe pas vraiment. Les essais contenus dans le recueil démontrent que les relations entre la France et le Québec de 1760 à 1914 se résumaient à bien peu de choses, que ce soit au niveau commercial, politique ou diplomatique. Malgré le désir d'une certaine élite canadienne-française de se rapprocher de l'ancienne métropole, la France n'a jamais véritablement développé une quelconque politique à l'égard de son ancienne colonie après 1760. Même l'intérêt démontré par l'empereur Napoléon III et l'impératrice Eugénie pour les Acadiens et les Canadiens dans les années 1850 ne semble jamais avoir dépassé le stade de « caprice », l'anglophilie de l'empereur inhibant tout désir d'embarrasser le gouvernement anglais sur la question canadienne. Les échanges entre la France et le Québec étaient d'abord et avant tout l'œuvre d'individus isolés. Plusieurs articles mettent ainsi en lumière les relations entretenues par Louis-Joseph Papineau et Édouard-Raymond Fabre avec la famille Bossange ainsi que les efforts de Joseph-Guillaume Barthe pour intéresser les Français au Canada français avec la publication de son ouvrage intitulé *Le Canada reconquis par la France* (1855). D'autres éclairent l'intérêt manifesté par quelques Français pour le Canada français, surtout dans la seconde moitié du 19e siècle. Ainsi il est question, par exemple, des visites en Amérique du Nord de Mgr de Forbin-Janson et d'Alexandre Vattemare ainsi que de l'intérêt de Rameau de Saint-Père pour l'Acadie et le Québec.

C'est dans ce contexte, marqué par l'absence de véritables relations entre la France et le Québec, que s'inscrit la venue de La Capricieuse. L'idée d'envoyer ce navire dans la vallée du Saint-Laurent n'est pas venue du gouvernement français, mais du capitaine Henri Belvèze, l'officer responsable de la station navale de Terre-Neuve. La mission de La Capricieuse, qui ne se voulait pas politique mais bien économique, n'a guère donné de résultats, si ce n'est l'ouverture d'un consulat commercial français à Québec en 1859. Il est un peu triste de constater jusqu'à quel point les Canadiens français de 1855 se sont mépris sur les intentions de la France à leur égard et ont voulu donner à la visite de La Capricieuse un sens qu'elle n'avait pas pour les Français. La mémoire qui est célébrée dans cet ouvrage semble reposer sur un quiproquo.

Si plusieurs articles sont intéressants, quoique parfois redondants, l'ouvrage ne

réussit pas vraiment à « inventorier » et à « célébrer » la « mémoire commune » de la France et du Québec, comme l'aurait souhaité la Commission franco-québécoise sur les lieux de mémoire communs qui a organisé ce colloque. Il semble qu'il y ait bien peu de choses à inventorier en ce qui concerne les relations France-Québec entre 1760 et 1914. L'ouvrage inventorie moins un lieu de mémoire qu'il n'en crée un.

Far Regions of Canadian Jewish Studies

Robin McGrath
Salt Fish & Shmattes: A History of the Jews in Newfoundland and Labrador from 1770. Creative $17.95

Ruth Panofsky
The Force of Vocation: The Literary Career of Adele Wiseman. U of Manitoba P $22.95

Reviewed by Norman Ravvin

Canadian Jewish history is overwhelmingly a story told of major centres—Montreal and Toronto, with a nod to the once-major Winnipeg. The discipline has one overwhelmingly influential text, Hesh Troper and Irving Abella's *None is Too Many.* But vital, lesser known work has also been done by Richard Menkis, Frank Bialystok, and Ira Robinson, alongside Troper's studies of ethnic relations and immigration. Still, the centre holds, and it will take large shifts in the field for sustained work to be done on the Prairies, on coastal communities, or the north. Robin McGrath's *Salt Fish & Shmattes* contributes to a reordering of priorities. McGrath is a writer and folk historian with an ear for oral history, as well as the anthropologist's affection for kinship lines. She manages to convey the particularity of Jewish settlement in Newfoundland, both in St. John's and in the outports. And she accomplishes this without the common tendency to apply the Montreal or Toronto patterns as templates.

Early Jewish presence in Newfoundland is obscured by myth and a lack of reliable documentation. But McGrath makes a convincingly detailed argument for the presence, in the late eighteenth-century, of a number of "crypto-Jews," who had immigrated from such southwest English towns as Plymouth, Penzance, and Exeter. In particular, she sketches the family history of Simon Solomon, whose work as a watchmaker and unofficial postmaster on St. John's Water Street is marked today by the presence of a Solomon's Lane. Families with English Jewish backgrounds tended to disappear through intermarriage, conversion and outmigration to the eastern United States.

A second important period of Jewish settlement in Newfoundland and Labrador began as Russian Jews fled pogroms in the 1880s and 1890s. These newcomers spoke no English and found their way into peddling, after which many became shop owners or manufacturers in St. John's. McGrath does not say so directly, but an economic history of these men and women would reveal a distinctly Jewish character to the harbour thoroughfare of Water Street in early twentieth-century St. John's. There, Jews ran tailoring, dry goods and watchmaking outfits, while an early incarnation of the city's synagogue was installed above a barber shop. It is almost always impossible in contemporary Canadian downtowns to recover a sense of the early *yiddishe gasse*, the Jewish street where newcomers built their businesses and their ritual and devotional institutions, integrating themselves into mainstream culture.

A similar ethnic history is revealed in McGrath's description of the abandonment of an established downtown synagogue in St. John's for a newly built suburban building. This reflects the community's increasingly assimilated Canadian character, and its willingness to follow up-and-coming middle class postwar life away from the urban core.

To some extent, McGrath conveys the presence of Jews in Newfoundland folklore and literature, raising the possibility—however humorous and doubtful—that Joey Smallwood was capable of delivering a stump speech in Yiddish. Here she sketches a possible program of study for future students in the field. Among her discoveries is a "snapshot" from a children's book of a Jewish "packman as most Newfoundlanders knew him" in the decades after the turn of the century:

> A peddler dressed in black clothes
> Arrived at a place called Nick's nose;
> He sold powders and pills,
> And smocks with nice frills,
> And soap with the scent of a rose

Adele Wiseman arrived on the Canadian literary scene at a time when writing by Jews in English was still a novelty. Her first novel, *The Sacrifice*, fell into a genre that would become central in Canadian literature—the immigrant urban experience—though Wiseman gave this material her own grotesque spin. *The Sacrifice* won the Governor General's Award in 1956 and was well reviewed in the United States and England. Ruth Panofsky's *The Force of Vocation: The Literary Career of Adele Wiseman* portrays these early accomplishments to account for what came later, "the trajectory of Wiseman's career" and the "mixed reception of her later work."

The Force of Vocation is a compelling literary biography. It sets out to analyze "the significant events and literary connections that marked Wiseman's career as a writer: the writing, the publication, and reception of *The Sacrifice, Crackpot*, and *Old Woman at Play*; her relationships with literary agents, editors, and publishers." Through this analysis Panofsky contributes not only to our knowledge of Wiseman's case, but to the broader history of Canadian literary culture.

Wiseman's literary career was idiosyncratic in several ways: there would be no major success in her lifetime after *The Sacrifice*; she embraced a number of major projects, including an overlong play on the theme of the Holocaust, which went unproduced and ensured that her fiction output would be small; and she repeatedly made decisions regarding her career that limited her readership and future options. The most egregious of these was her rejection of an offer from publisher George Braziller to bring out an American edition of her memoir *Old Woman at Play*. Panofsky offers a detailed narrative of this book's germination and its life in print, which reflects the difficulty of promoting a book that booksellers cannot place in a clear generic category. Because it focuses on Wiseman's mother's doll-making to investigate women's lives and ethnic identity, *Old Woman at Play* found its way to bookstore "crafts" sections.

Panofsky is at work on a full-scale history of the Macmillan publishing house, and aspects of *The Force of Vocation* contribute to a history of Canadian publishing. Her area of focus is Toronto-centred and depicts the major established book publishers of the prewar and postwar era, including Macmillan, Clarke, Irwin, and, to a lesser degree, McClelland & Stewart. Wiseman maintained key relationships with figures such as Kildare Dobbs, Jack McClelland, and John Pearce, and Panofsky evokes the way such relationships—their back and forth, the vagaries of friendship and the market—direct a career.

In her last decade, Wiseman held positions as writer-in-residence at Concordia, the Universities of Western Ontario and Prince Edward Island, as well as heading the Writing Studio program at the Banff Centre for the Arts. Panofsky's final chapters examine Wiseman's role as mentor to younger writers, while also considering her long-standing friendship with Margaret Laurence. These experiences placed Wiseman at the centre of literary developments

in Canada, even though her own career unfolded, as Panofsky puts it, with "increasing difficulty."

What Is It That Happened?

Lisa Moore, ed.
The Penguin Book of Contemporary Canadian Women's Short Stories. Penguin $32.00

Reviewed by Héliane Ventura

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari provide a definition for the short story which seems destined to put an end to our endless attempts at pinpointing the specificity of the genre: "The essence of the short story as a literary genre is not very difficult to determine: in a short story everything is organized around the question: 'What is it that happened? What is is that could possibly have happened?'" This deceptively simple definition is more complex than it may first appear: it entails a vision of the "event" as a pervasive concept infiltrating the plot in all its ramifications rather than an easily identifiable occurrence in a single place at a single time. In other words, there is a sense of secrecy secreted by the short story. This is exactly the sense of irreducible mystery brilliantly highlighted in Lisa Moore's collection of the Canadian production of short stories by women writers in the last two decades of the twentieth-century and the beginning of the twenty-first.

Lisa Moore has adopted an alphabetical ordering starting with Margaret Atwood's story "Spring Song of the Frogs" and finishing with Alissa York's "The Back of the Bear's Mouth." The framing of the collection reveals its overall design: the famed practioners rub shoulders with the most promising writers, and the production of all provinces has been represented through the choice of 22 stories which unfold a *mari usque ad mare*, with the slightest emphasis, apparently, on Vancouver stories (from Madeleine Thien, Eden Robinson, Nancy Lee, Annabel Lyon, Zsuzsi Gartner) and perhaps also on stories by writers either born in the Atlantic Provinces or residing there (from Lynn Coady, Libby Creelman, Ramona Dearing, Elizabeth Harvor, Jessica Grant). But the geographical location has little to do with the strength of the story: a short story opens up tracts of emotional landscape, which are obviously dependent on a specific *milieu* and resonant with its social and cultural mores, but it transforms reality into art, and this process of transmutation creates the story. As Lisa Moore says in her introduction, after she read the stories: "Nothing was recognizable, nothing was simply itself. Everything felt foreign, altered and new."

Moore's choice has the glaring evidence of appositeness: she has brought into focus Atwood's astringency, Munro's humiliating transgressions in a still uncollected story of formidable subversiveness, Shields' miraculous moments of being, Gallant's searing sense of caricature, Urquhart's gift at recording moments of undiluted pain; and she has pulled seventeen emergent or already confirmed women writers around these foremothers to create a resonant system of "irritations beautified" as Tchekhov's art was defined. What all the stories have in common is the sense of an intrusion in the everyday legality, of a momentous alteration that shatters our vision of the world; something has happened which has far-reaching consequences and could be envisaged as a web of cross references not only between reality and fiction, but also within the world of stories inside and outside the collection. We hear about Proust and Housman at the same time as Clayton and Mr. Smythe and even the names of some of the characters conjure up the ghosts of past stories. When reading about Shields' Mr. Mooney I could not help thinking of another Mr. Mooney, his predecessor from Dublin. Moore's selection of stories is haunted, it is intense, and

it is beautiful. This Penguin collection confirms, if need be, that the Canadian short story is an outstanding production, which unfortunately happens to be unjustly marginalized and insufficiently taught and read outside Canada.

Short Stories Collected

Pamela Mordecai
Pink Icing. Insomniac $21.95

Kwai-Yun Li
The Palm Leaf Fan and Other Stories. TSAR $18.95

Sharon English
Zero Gravity. The Porcupine's Quill $22.95

Reviewed by Alexis Kienlen

Pamela Mordecai's collection of stories, *Pink Icing*, transports the reader to a Jamaica populated by a wide array of characters. One of the main strengths of this collection is Mordecai's mastery of the English language and her ability to transmit the rhythms and characters of the island. Mordecai is an expert at describing subtle or overt nuances of island life.

This is a collection that should probably be read out loud, so the cadence of the language is allowed to shine through. This is apparent in this selection from the story "Corinthians Thirteen Thirteen," in which a young girl and the women of a temple are affected by a homeless man who keeps drinking from their water pipe.

> Is on a Saturday that she first see the man drinking at the standpipe—the dirtiest man she ever see in her whole entire life!
>
> He stand up side of the pipe, rocking back as though he is slightly drunk. When he see her, he immediately start struggling to take off his hat. It take him some time for he don't seem able to use his hands properly. Once he manage to fiddle the hat off, the straight hair flop out and lie like a string of small dead lizards down his back, for it is all twisted up and greasy. No question though, that it is straight hair, so she know she is looking at a dirty white man.

People of various ethnicities and ages interact, sometimes in ways which result in friction and conflict. It's as if the reader is taking a walk down a street, and is given the chance to learn the stories of its inhabitants. Mordecai's lush descriptions add to the visual tableau in the reader's mind, and help create a portrait of Jamaican life and culture.

Kwai-Yun Li's *The Palm Leaf and Other Stories* explores the lives of Hakka Chinese living in Calcutta during the 1950s and 1960s. This collection of linked stories reveals the intricacies of a minority culture living overseas. To my knowledge, no one has written about this particular group before, and the result is a fascinating collection, which explores what the Chinese have done to fit into a larger Hindu society. The feelings associated with multiculturalism and life in a cultural diaspora are explored.

These stories have a great deal of heart; they explore family relationships and how the Chinese have adapted their lives in Calcutta. Traditions and beliefs from China make an impact in the Indian milieu. In return, the characters inhabit Chinatown, but are thoroughly affected by the Indian environment and customs, and the cultures blend into each other. The voice in these stories is mainly a child's, and the reader learns with the child, through her experiences. The heart, wonder, and descriptive nature of these narratives make this collection both entertaining and informative. In one particular story, the narrator watches as her classmate, who doesn't care to do well in school, pins her hopes on getting married. In another, the characters celebrate Chinese New Year with the dragon dance. The cultural flavour and nuances are what make this collection so compelling. A small history lesson at the end of the book helps put the stories into context.

Sharon English's collection, *Zero Gravity*, brings us back to the more familiar Canadian landscape. Many of the stories take place in a Vancouver recognizable by its geography. However, English's stories deal more with the inner workings of marginalized people. In one particular story, a man begins to disappear as his sexual appetite and aggressive nature take over his being. In "Devotion," Emily struggles to cope with her dog's death, as she slips further and further away from her relationship with her partner. Some of these stories deal with the fantastic; others embrace small, realistic scenes of what seem to be everyday life. In "This Side of Thirty," a character falls in love with an old family friend, and then struggles as she must reveal her feelings to him. The tension is so expertly managed that it seems like a true story being shared by a friend.

The stories in this collection work because of their careful attention to the strange details that make us different, that make us human. The tales deal mainly with internal struggles and landscapes, and reactions to other characters as they appear. They are rich with finely woven imagery, which makes this collection a true delight: both engaging and arresting.

Unsettling Female Artists

Gerta Moray
Unsettling Encounters: First Nations Imagery in the Art of Emily Carr. UBC Press $75.00

Evelyn Walters
The Women of Beaver Hall: Canadian Modernist Painters. Dundurn $60.00

Reviewed by Linda Morra

As suggested by its title, *The Women of Beaver Hall: Canadian Modernist Painters* is a study of those female artists who formed part of the Beaver Hall Group. With member of the Group of Seven A.Y. Jackson as their President, the Beaver Hall Group proclaimed that "individual expression is our chief concern." Its legacy, however, went far beyond its official years of formation, between approximately 1920 and 1922; although it held only four exhibitions, the Group did much by way of establishing the credibility of and creating both artistic opportunities and important liaisons for its female artists. In the first exhibit, for example, eight of seventeen artists were women, many of whom were to become lifelong friends and who were to explore new artistic terrain together.

Author Evelyn Walters has decided to examine the "expressions" of the women of the Beaver Hall Group by profiling ten of its female artists: Nora Collyer, Emily Coonan, Prudence Heward, Mabel Lockerby, Henrietta Mabel May, Kathleen Morris, Lilias Torrance Newton, Sarah Robertson, Anne Savage, and Ethel Seath. She traces their initial membership in the Beaver Hall Group, their continued association well into the 1940s, and the professional struggles that were alternately caused by financial challenges, strict moral and social codes, and the devastations wrought by World War II. The shifting of social values after the War, however, provided these women with greater latitude for development as artists: by the late 1940s, they were able to sell their paintings with considerably greater ease. Although growing attention has been paid to some of these artists, most notably to Heward, Roberston, and Savage, much of this public awareness has only developed since the 1990s.

To the heightening of this public awareness, Walters thus makes a contribution: she has published her book, albeit written some years ago, as a means of addressing the lack of proper attention paid to the Beaver Hall Group's female artists. The result is a finely researched document, and, in this sense, it would appeal to academics, although it lacks the theoretical underpinnings or orientation that would demarcate it as a

strictly scholarly enterprise. Unencumbered by abstract jargon, it is instead written in a fashion that would appeal to a broader audience.

Walters has selected an array of these artists' reproductions to complement the text. The Beaver Hall Group's work is shown off to advantage by the inclusion of these lavish colour-plates, since they further testify to the extraordinary range and abilities of the artists—from portraiture, to landscape, to city vignettes, to still-life. The reproductions of Kathleen Morris' paintings, as one example, bear witness to her skills and eye for village scenes, one that is reminiscent of artist Clarence Gagnon. It is time, then, given how their male counterparts like Gagnon and Jackson have been celebrated, to give the women artists of the Beaver Hall Group their due.

Like Walters' book, Gerta Moray's *Unsettling Encounters* focuses on and evaluates the accomplishments of—in this instance—one Canadian female artist: those by Emily Carr. Although Carr has certainly had the lion's share of critical attention, Moray's book is not just another casual treatment of her. Her definitive enterprise reassesses Carr's life and artistic production by using paintings that have been largely ignored. In so doing, Moray re-evaluates the work that has proliferated around Carr and her attitude towards Natives, and sheds light on her pivotal role as a North American modernist painter.

Divided into three parts, this thoroughly researched and handsomely arranged work also looks at the institutions—religious, political, and academic—that produced knowledge about Natives in this period. Missionaries, government agents, anthropologists, and the press all contributed to the ongoing debate about relations between white settlers and Natives, a debate to which Carr consciously contributed through her paintings and public statements. The first part, therefore, sets up such contexts for the second part of the book, in which Moray showcases Carr's artistic record of Native villages and totem poles, between 1899 and 1913. The third part examines shifting cultural and social currents, including her collaboration with the Group of Seven, which affected the shape of Carr's artistic development. Moray concludes that Carr was respectful of Native values and traditions, and "emphasized what she saw in their cultures as signifiers of pride, strength, respect for the natural world, and acknowledgement of women's power." Her book, therefore, also "unsettles" the Canadian reader's complacent "encounters" with or attitudes toward Carr.

Fittingly published by the West Coast publisher UBC Press, Moray's book demonstrates how much Canadians indeed still take Carr for granted "as a colonial artist and writer, of the Northwest Coast First Nations peoples and their cultures" and invites her audience both to reconsider her role and to see how that role might have had larger repercussions. The recent changes in our own political and social climate, Moray argues, oblige us to assess the implications of Carr's own unsettling encounters with and depictions of Natives, which were controversial given the socio-political climate within which Carr was working: at a time when governmental policies toward the First Nations of British Columbia were hostile, she showed herself to be substantially different by taking an active interest in the lives and cultural attitudes of Native persons.

That Carr is now attacked for her complicity in such policies, therefore, also needs to be examined because she cultivated and changed her attitude toward Natives throughout her artistic career. Moray claims that Carr arrived at a unique ideological position "through a process of learning [, which] she wanted to convey through her work." In a notable lecture on totem poles, Carr herself argued that the poles ought

to be seen in their original contexts, not in museums, so that, as Moray notes, they might "be observed as part of the larger systems that she glimpsed First Nations cultures to be—systems in which villages, ways of life and landscapes were interconnected."

The thoroughly engaging and well-documented narrative about Carr's accomplishments is a feat on its own. Yet Moray's elegant re-evaluation of perhaps Canada's most famous Canadian artist is also set off by exquisite colour plates, undoubtedly an expensive endeavour that was worth the effort. If Carr "would rejoice to know that Native cultures have been vindicated," Moray herself should rejoice for her contribution to correcting the record on Carr: *Unsettling Encounters* is intellectually stimulating and a visual delight.

Artists in Letters

Linda M. Morra, ed.
Corresponding Influence: Selected Letters of Emily Carr and Ira Dilworth. U of Toronto P $60.00

Reviewed by Faye Hammill

"Now age permits me to love my best friends with propriety just as *hard as I like*," wrote a seventy-year-old Emily Carr to her editor and confidant Ira Dilworth in 1941. "We are rather comical you know, you and I. My love for you is *something* like a mother's and your love for "Small" is *rather* like a father's and our love for each other is friendship as deep as an ocean." In order that they might each act as a parent to the other, Carr and Dilworth channelled their relationship through "Small," a persona representing Carr's childhood self. During the last years of her life (the period of her close friendship with Dilworth), Carr's focus on her own early development was intense since she was writing *The Book of Small* (1942) and also the autobiographical narrative which would be published the year after her death as *Growing Pains* (1946). The preparation of *Growing Pains* and the writing, publication, and reception of *The Book of Small* and *Klee Wyck* (1941) form a large part of the subject matter of these letters. The book provides fascinating insights into Carr's writing process and her editorial relationship with Dilworth.

During the early 1940s, Ira Dilworth, then in his late forties, was the British Columbia regional director for CBC Radio. He initially encountered Carr through her literary sketches, which he arranged to have read on the radio. Dilworth went on to read many of her stories himself on air, and also provided her with candid critiques of her manuscripts. As their friendship grew, Dilworth began to visit Carr in Victoria, and they also maintained a voluminous correspondence, sometimes exchanging several letters a week. Fortunately, both were sufficiently aware of Carr's importance as a painter and writer to realize the value of her papers to posterity, and therefore most of the correspondence has survived. The quantity of material has necessitated a process of selection, and Linda Morra's judicious choices have eliminated most of the repetition whilst preserving the sense of a developing narrative. However, the fact that not all the letters are extant leads to an inevitable imbalance: at the beginning of the book, most of the letters are from Dilworth, but in the last two-thirds, a majority are from Carr.

Morra explains in her introduction that Dilworth was a sympathetic and perceptive editor, whereas others managed to alienate Carr or damage her work. For example, R.W.W. Robertson, an editor at Clarke Irwin, deleted substantial passages from *Klee Wyck* for a 1951 school edition. Most of the cut sections expressed sympathy toward First Nations groups or contempt for the missionaries who had interfered with their cultures. Dilworth, by contrast, as Morra notes, "endeavoured to be faithful to Carr's wishes, from the articulation of her larger political and social concerns to the more

minute turn of expression." At the same time, he offered her valuable stylistic advice, which she appreciated. She told him that writing did not come easily to her: "born writer my hat! (N.Y. Times) I ain't," and explained, "I have to *sweat* to make my meanings *clear*." Her erratic, though engaging, writing style presents a challenge to any editor, and the manuscript letters are not only difficult to read (photographs are included in the book) but also contain many peculiarities of spelling, punctuation and syntax. It is much to Linda Morra's credit that she has allowed her editorial hand to remain visible whilst producing a clear and readable text. Many of the regularizations and alterations are listed in appendices or explained in the preface, rather than being marked in the letters.

The footnotes have also been meticulously prepared, and are particularly useful in explaining Carr's relationships with the numerous acquaintances, colleagues and relations whom she mentions. This book will be of interest to those researching Carr's contemporaries, especially Lawren Harris, who figures repeatedly in the letters. There are also references to other important writers and artists, notably Duncan Campbell Scott and also Arthur Lismer and A.Y. Jackson, who, Carr writes, "resent me a little—I'm a woman." In addition, the book illuminates the development of the CBC and its role in wartime Canada.

As well as charting the final stages of Carr's career, these intimate letters express a range of personal feelings, from her delight in poetry (especially Whitman) and her love for her dogs to her recollection of a fifty-year-old romance and her regret at not having been a mother. Her letters are very often joyous and mercurial, but occasionally anguished. It would be an injustice to Carr to read the book through steadily; it is best taken in shorter sections, but in chronological order, because Morra has worked hard to maintain a narrative structure in terms of Carr's career and the progress of the friendship.

Dilworth was firmly convinced of Carr's significance to Canadian culture, and shared her devotion to her country. He wrote: "working with you during the past two years has meant more to me than I can ever tell. It has helped me to realize a bit of myself and has given me a small share in a great piece of work for Canada." His efforts on her behalf were untiring. As well as broadcasting Carr's stories, editing her manuscripts, and acting as her agent, he wrote numerous articles for magazines on her work. Following the publication of one of his essays in *Saturday Night* in 1941, Carr expressed her fear that she did not deserve such praise. Dilworth replied: "Someone is going to say these things of you and your work *afterwards*—I want to say them now so that you can hear them with your earthly ears." This was a prescient comment: Ira Dilworth's belief in Emily Carr's art has been amply justified in subsequent decades, and this book presents a fresh and valuable testimonial to her importance as both writer and painter.

Feminine Hygiene

Tamara Myers
Caught: Montreal's Modern Girls and the Law, 1869-1945. U of Toronto P $35.00

K.I. Press
Types of Canadian Women. Volume II. Gaspereau $19.95

Reviewed by Berkeley Kaite

Tamara Myers notes that girls' delinquency has an "intimate nature." As well, the coding of the female body as fluid has a long philosophical and cultural history. Myers goes a long way toward establishing how fears of feminine fluidity—movement especially—were encoded in Canadian law as well. One of the many interesting, if troubling, things one discovers in *Caught* is that

the legal market for "feminine hygiene" emerged at the same time the commercial market for "feminine hygiene products" was taking hold (the early 1920s). Tamara Myers doesn't mention this explicitly in her discussion of "mental hygiene" and the committees and institutes of the same name created to handle the problem of juvenile delinquency. While there were many suggested causes of, and solutions for, delinquency, one thing was clear: in the popular imagination, it was tenaciously linked to the female body. The "mental hygiene movement" thus referred to attempts to diagnose and clean up the behaviour of "wayward" girls. It was assumed there was a connection between "feeblemindedness" and, among others, gambling, drinking, vagrancy, sexual activity, pregnancy out of wedlock. Blood is, in fact, mentioned in Myers' discussion of the legal, religious, and social conceptions of "immorality" in Montreal in the early 1900s. In perhaps the most compelling chapter in this richly documented and well written book, "'Did you bleed?' The Juvenile Court, Girls' Bodies, and the Sexualization of Female Delinquency," various case reports from the Montreal Juvenile Delinquents' Court are studied to reveal how the "clean and virginal" girl was treated with more leniency than one who was deemed neither. Myers writes: "Marie Rose B., a fifteen year old, was accused of stealing two watches, a pair of glasses, and some cash. . . . Dr. Amiot performed a gynecological examination. Although Marie Rose denied her role in the theft, she could not deny the physician's findings that she was 'deflowered' and infected with venereal disease. When Judge Robillard interviewed Marie Rose he exhibited little interest in the stolen property and her denial of the charge. Rather, Robillard wanted to know the frequency with which she had sexual relations and the extent of her knowledge concerning the venereal disease." Girls who reported seduction, rape, and sexual coercion might be asked "Did you bleed?" in order to ascertain if they had been "truly" raped. Blood is a metonym for fear, fascination, prurience, punishment, and sexual violence. Blood, and its regulation, also brings together women and their bodies *as threatening interior space*: gynecological exams were routinely administered to delinquent girls to determine their mental state.

And it is another kind of space—the city and its many and rapid changes wrought by urbanization, industrialization, immigration—that uses the female body as its foil. Several perceived threats to the French-Canadian patriarchal family, including the movement of young women out of the *foyer* and into paid work and the enticements of urban leisure pursuits, meant that the female body could be too easily seen as out of place, "ripe for trouble." This body which refused to be contained became the site for the negotiation of protective services, surveillance, metaphoric and real boundaries, as well as the disciplines of medicine, psychology, and sociology. Myers writes of *la jeune fille moderne*: "Parents and juvenile justice officials saw bodies that could not be constrained or contained, that left home for paid work, that swayed suggestively to modern music, and that were seemingly available for exploitation by men."

Myers looks at *les jeunes filles modernes* in Montreal and situates their construction by and treatment in the juvenile justice system, itself a nexus of class, race, gender, culture, and national imagination. She begins with the inauguration of the Montreal Juvenile Delinquents' Court in 1869 and walks through the Juvenile Delinquency Act, the interference from Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish religions, and the practical gendered matters of the courts (among others). She concludes with a chapter on reform schools (the Girls' Cottage Industrial School), the most interesting section of which notes its geography (set in nature to reinforce

perception of women's innate innocence and delicateness) and architecture (different cottages for those with venereal disease, those who were immoral but without disease, and those who were incorrigible). Here the interior space of the reform schools mimicked the imagined (defiled) interior spaces of these young women.

Myers is careful to document instances where young female delinquents were not just victims, or acted upon. These young women "suspended between freedom and dependence . . . with their wages . . . could be found in dance halls, moving-picture theatres, restaurants, even brothels, stealing themselves away from traditional sources of surveillance." While this did allow their parents to resort to the courts "to bolster their waning authority," it also served as a precursor to our secular confessional culture. When court officers asked girls about their sexual encounters, many would use the opportunity to talk of instances of incest, rape and seduction at the hands of family members. Myers also discusses riots and rebellions at reform schools. She notes these latter events contributed to "an era in which children and youth gained an unprecedented political presence, for better or worse." Little has changed, Myers concludes, when current attitudes, reflected in media coverage, support the idea that adolescent daughters "still spark outrage and exasperation." This idea is also found in current court sentences which justify violence against "wayward" girls.

K.I. Press' *Types of Canadian Women* is an unorthodox collection of, one could say, wayward thoughts. It is a fictional, poetic, and whimsical embellishment of early twentieth-century photographs of Canadian women. Press' aim is to tell the imagined background musings to these photos, the unofficial story, the suppressed material revealed only through its surface clues and Canadian contexts of geography, immigration, colonial history. The most explosive material Press gives voice to has to do with anger, sexual longing, and sexual abuse. Still, the many narratives Press imagines, from stories of working on fishing boats to nursing to writing, are a kind of discursive *Dinner Party.* All the possible stories are uncategorizable, and this is why they resonate. Unlike the unforgiving categories into which the young women in *Caught* were placed, the women's lives here are recognized as full and unbound by real or symbolic law.

« *Cosi fan tutte*? Nenni! L'éternel féminin dans tous ses états »

Clara Ness
Ainsi font-elles toutes. XYZ 20,00 $

Guylaine Tousignant
Carnets de déraison. Prise de parole 17,00 $

Compte rendu par Kathleen Kellett-Betsos

Ainsi font-elles toutes, premier roman de Clara Ness, et *Carnets de déraison*, premier ouvrage de Guylaine Tousignant, pourraient presque mériter l'étiquette de littérature féminine telle que décrite par la libraire Agnès A., personnage dans le roman de Ness : « Tu as lu ça? C'est le dernier truc de littérature féminine. Encore. De la Jeune-Fille à l'état brut. Chaque fois, c'est la même chose : elles mêlent leurs souvenirs personnels à l'Histoire. Incapables de se contenter d'une fiction … On croirait lire leurs journaux intimes, c'est d'un ennui … ». Il est vrai que Ness juxtapose des éléments de l'Histoire au récit de vie d'une jeune femme tandis que Tousignant compose un récit poétique qui tient du journal intime. Heureusement, ni le roman de Ness ni les poèmes de Tousignant ne sont ennuyeux. Clara Ness est le pseudonyme d'une jeune femme dans la vingtaine qui partage son temps entre le Québec et la France. Marqué de l'influence de Philippe Sollers, son roman a fait des remous au Québec par

son audace et son érotisme. Tousignant est originaire de Kapuskasing et a travaillé comme coordonnatrice de marketing pour la Société Radio-Canada. Son ouvrage se compose de poèmes en prose narratifs dont la voix principale est celle d'une femme au bord du désespoir face aux exigences de la vie moderne.

Le titre faisant allusion à *Cosi fan tutte* de Mozart, *Ainsi font-elles toutes* est un roman débordant de références culturelles comme il se doit quand la narratrice est amoureuse d'une libraire ainsi que d'un musicien et d'un auteur, pour ne pas mentionner ses autres amants dont un doctorant en théologie. Lectrice de Casanova, la narratrice établit son propre itinéraire érotique à Montréal et à Paris, en faisant le circuit des bars aux noms extravagants : le Callas, le Pandore, le Sappho Bar. Elle étudie de près la masculinité et la féminité, « *la* homme dans *le* femme » et vice versa. Éprise de sa liberté de femme, elle ne reconnaît qu'après coup la nature taboue de ses amours avec le meilleur ami de son amant Luiz : « La règle est simple et universellement connue : on ne touche jamais, JA-MAIS au meilleur ami. Évidemment, les filles sont toujours amoureuses du meilleur ami. » Elle discute avec ses amis des sujets les plus exaltés : la littérature, la musique, la nature de Dieu. On ne néglige pas non plus les actualités : Luiz l'informe, par exemple, de la mort du Pape et plus tard de celle de leur amie Isabelle, membre des Médecins sans frontières, qui est morte lors des attentats en Tchétchénie. Étudiante en médecine, la narratrice s'interroge sur la signification profonde du « Travail ». Elle est obsédée des vérités générales, bien que celles qu'elle se fabrique soient assez superficielles; par exemple : « L'amour est peut-être une affaire d'hommes, mais le plaisir reste l'affaire des femmes. » Pour clore le roman, la narratrice autodiégétique « déflore » un nouveau carnet en griffonnant les mots qui commencent ce premier roman de Clara Ness.

Après l'exubérance du roman de Ness, le recueil de Guylaine Tousignant offre un ton bien plus sombre, établi dès le début par l'exergue, un fragment de la Première Méditation de Descartes sur l'angoisse d'abandonner la douceur des illusions pour une vérité souvent douloureuse. Les poèmes en prose font le portrait d'une communauté dans le Nord, peuplée de personnages sans nom—un grand-père qui emmène son petit-fils cueillir des noisettes, un homme qui menace les enfants d'un désir sinistre, mais surtout une femme écrasée par les attentes impossibles que son milieu impose aux femmes. La poète crée un contraste entre la voix de la femme qui boit jusqu'à la déraison et une voix autoritaire, que ce soit celle de la mère, du prêtre, de la société, du surmoi—on ne saura jamais : « *Ayez de beaux enfants propres et intelligents. Ne vous trompez surtout pas. Définissez à partir d'aujourd'hui votre chemin. N'acceptez pas les obstacles de la vie. Vainquez-les. Ignorez-les. Et tout. Tout ira bien*. » La femme est convaincue qu'elle ne saura jamais se battre, ne saura donc pas élever des enfants forts, ne saura pas les nourrir sans toujours recourir aux produits artificiels d'une société de consommation. Avec un désir teinté de masochisme, elle implore : « Fais-moi des bleus à l'intérieur. » Pourtant elle accueille son amant avec une tendresse maternelle : « Je le déshabille, comme un enfant qui revient de l'école »; elle s'enveloppe avec lui dans des draps fraîchement sortis de la sécheuse. Elle cherche le salut dans les travaux ménagers : « Faire le ménage. Frotter les planchers comme une femme en délire. » Pour combattre la grisaille de cette vie désespérée, la poète propose le rêve : « Je rêve d'une vie remplie de poésie. De fleurs, de verdure, à perte de vue. » Malgré la tentation de l'immobilité, la femme continue de marcher et de s'affirmer : « Et drôlement, ce rêve naïf, enfantin—croire en l'impossible—ce rêve idéal et vert et jaune et impossible, déraisonnable, me fait continuer. »

Ness et Tousignant offrent donc deux visions opposées de la vie au féminin : chez l'une, les jeux d'amours compliqués mais sans profondeur; chez l'autre, l'angoisse du quotidien, la lutte contre les contraintes sociales. Texte de plaisir, le roman de Ness se démarque grâce à un style effervescent, joliment rythmé, alerte et vif, quoiqu'un tantinet précieux. Texte de douleur, le récit poétique de Tousignant fait voler les mots dans un jeu de langage rythmique et imagé, en soulignant la difficulté d'être. Le contraste entre les deux ouvrages contredit le titre de Ness : l'éternel féminin est plutôt multiple, imprévu et insaisissable.

A Logger's Life Revisited

Henry Pennier; Keith Thor Carlson and Kristina Fagan, eds.
'Call Me Hank': A Stó:lō Man's Reflections on Logging, Living, and Growing Old. U of Toronto P $24.95

Reviewed by Manina Jones

'Call Me Hank' was first published in 1972 under the title *Chiefly Indian: The Warm and Witty Story of a British Columbia Half Breed Logger*. The original publication was part of a wave of Aboriginal autobiographies published in the 1970s, often written in collaboration with non-Aboriginal editors and/or anthropologists. This new edition, produced by University of Saskatchewan historian Keith Thor Carlson and literary scholar Kristina Fagan, makes Pennier's engaging memoir newly available and undertakes an important reframing of Pennier's life story from historical, cultural, and literary perspectives.

In 1969, Henry Pennier, a non-status elder from the British Columbia Stó:lō First Nation community, was contacted by linguist Wyn Roberts, who sought the former out for his knowledge of Halq'eméylem, a traditional language, and his expertise in Stó:lō culture. Roberts asked Pennier to relate Aboriginal myths, which Roberts initially intended, in conventional fashion, to record and translate. In response to Roberts' request, Pennier chose to write in English, rather than orally recount his stories in Halq'eméylem. He also chose to tell, not ancient legends, but personal anecdotes, reminiscences, and jokes. Pennier expounded, for example, on his work as a logger, salmon cannery employee, and agricultural labourer; his play at lacrosse and bingo; his role as a "half breed" in Canadian culture and politics; his life after injury and retirement. As Carlson and Fagan put it, Pennier "refused to be identified only as a voice of tradition." The text of the memoir he eventually produced is reproduced in this 2006 edition almost exactly as it appeared in 1972.

There are, though, important changes in the way Pennier's stories are now presented. The new title, for starters, highlights both Pennier's insistence on acts of self-definition and on the informal engagement his distinctive storytelling establishes with readers. Pennier's is very much a vital voice, marked by the present-day circumstances of his retrospection, his associative train of thought, and an immediacy of interaction with his audience: "I suppose you want to hear some altar boy stories," he writes, or "Don't suppose you under-forty types know what [car knockers] is either do you?" or "I suppose you think [having multiple electrical appliances] is funny because I am Indian sort of." His address, and his consideration of what it means to be "Indian sort of," however, is far from artless; Pennier's autobiographical voice—and the limitations he places on it—is clearly considered. He often counters what he perceives to be his audience's expectations of a "half breed" speaker, and while his account is informal, it is far from intimate (he barely references his family life, for instance).

Carlson and Fagan's excellent critical introduction suggests a variety of contexts

for reading Pennier's tales, including his personal idiosyncrasies, his negotiation of racial politics, his engagement with prevailing models of masculinity, his place within historical labour and technological practices in the logging industry, his attitudes toward injury and aging, and the relation of his autobiography to other more activist-minded Aboriginal life stories published in the 1970s. In addition, the editors provide framing materials, including a foreword by Pennier's son (Pennier Senior died in 1991), Roberts' original preface, explanatory end notes, photographs and illustrations, a glossary of logging terms, a biographical sketch of Pennier's grandfather, the transcript of a 1972 interview with Pennier, and a list of critical readings. In short, this edition provides a compelling model for carefully contextualizing and broadening the audience for such vital life stories.

Personal Narratives

Teresa Godwin Phelps
Shattered Voices: Language, Violence, and the Work of Truth Commissions. U of Pennsylvania P $25.58

Wendy Roy
Maps of Difference: Canada, Women, and Travel. McGill-Queen's UP $44.95

Reviewed by Bettina Stumm

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* concludes with Hamlet entreating Horatio to "tell my story" rather than continue a cycle of revenge and senseless death. In *Shattered Voices*, Teresa Phelps draws on this example to question whether language and storytelling can end revenge cycles and gain justice in countries struggling to overcome a violent past. In this process, she steps back and asks the fundamental but often neglected questions: "What constitutes revenge and retribution and what role, if any, does language play in those processes?" And more specifically, how can we fulfill the human *need* for revenge—rebalancing the scales—without perpetuating *acts* of revenge?

In tackling these questions, Phelps begins with a highly informative retrospective study of the etymology of revenge. She shows how the concept shifts from a private, honourable action linked to justice (ancient Greek culture), to *retribution*—a "dispassionate state punishment" that separates justice from revenge (sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England). From her perspective, this divorce continues to dominate the current Western understanding of justice, often to the detriment of individual victims and families in oppressive regimes. In response, Phelps explores how recent nationally-instituted Truth Commissions work to reunite justice and revenge through the possibilities of language. For victims of atrocity, language—telling stories and hearing truth—can function to legitimate and fulfill the need for rebalancing, gaining justice for their losses, and reinstating meaning in their lives. Phelps theorizes how the storytelling activities of Truth Commissions offer an "alternative justice" by helping victims "take back" the language and agency taken from them by individual perpetrators or oppressive regimes without resorting automatically to retributive or punitive justice.

Assessing the reliability of such theories, Phelps examines the practice of storytelling in the specific instances of the Argentinian, Chilean, and Salvadoran Truth Commissions, and the South African Reconciliation Commission. These Commissions reveal both the problems and possibilities that accompany storytelling. Phelps clearly supports the work of Truth Commissions, but is nonetheless quick to acknowledge their shortcomings. She is particularly concerned with the limitations of language when confronting mass atrocity, the problems of psychic numbing from story overload, the practice of premature closure, and the appropriation of traumatic

stories for personal, political, or economic ends. As she discovers, telling one's story does not automatically produce a sense of rebalance, nor does it result in the punitive justice a victim may desire. Phelps maintains that telling one's story and hearing other stories helps many victims share their emotions, feel acknowledged, regain their identity, learn the truth about their loved ones lost in silence, and re-member their lives. Moreover, the heterogeneous voices gathered in Commission Reports can function to destabilize the report's master narrative and evade the closure or imposed healing the narrative may try to produce for the country. Phelps strives for objectivity and balance in her analysis while at the same time offering innovative ways to think about the intimate connection between revenge and justice. As Truth Commissions become one of the predominant ways for countries to deal with a violent national past, *Shattered Voices* is seminal in understanding both the possibilities and limitations of language in the pursuit of truth and justice in this context.

On a rather different storytelling note, Wendy Roy, in *Maps of Difference*, examines the autobiographical travel narratives of three Canadian women: Anna Jameson (1838), Mina Hubbard (1908), and Margaret Laurence (1963). All three "map" their travels literally by documenting in sketches, photographs, and maps what they see, and figuratively by positioning and representing themselves in terms of their interactions with others. While they record the physical and political features of their travel locations and their own cultural positions within these locations differently, they share anti-racist viewpoints and gender-related concerns about their role as women explorer/writers and the position of women in the societies they visit.

Roy's exploration combines two trends of critical analysis: the postcolonial thought of Mary Louise Pratt and Sara Mills, and feminist theories of positionality and relationality. She effectively argues that these trends complicate each other. On the one hand, as travel writers, Jameson, Hubbard, and Laurence *produce* the world for others and characteristically see others with "imperial eyes." At the same time, as Canadian women, these writers are positioned at the margins of a British, male, imperial centre and as Roy observes, "are often held in disdain by it." They at once slide into and are located outside imperialism and reveal a keen awareness of this vexed position in their writings.

In her analysis of Jameson's ethnographic project on Indigenous tribes in Upper Canada, Roy reveals the ways Jameson both relies on and critically evaluates her imperialist heritage in her writings and sketches in *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles*. She fluctuates between a relational desire to align herself with and an imperial need to define herself against the Indigenous groups she meets. Critiquing the assumption that imperial power is unidirectional (British influence on Indigenous victims), Roy illustrates how Jameson is profoundly influenced by what she sees and experiences, finding her imperial ideas unsettled and even, at times, transformed. Roy similarly reads Hubbard as complicating an imperialist tradition with her female relational position. Hubbard locates her narrative within imperial conventions of exploration, geographical mapping, and naming the landscape in *A Woman's Way through Unknown Labrador*. At the same time, she justifies her female participation in the "male" world of travel by situating herself relationally to her deceased husband (taking up his travel cause) and domestically to the landscape (describing it as "home"). As Roy meticulously demonstrates, Hubbard empowers herself by stepping around gender hierarchies but, in that very process, engages in imperialist practices.

Much more aggressively than the two other women examined in this study,

Laurence situates herself against imperialism and colonialism in *The Prophet's Camel Bell*, her narrative of her Somaliland experiences. As Roy insightfully observes, Laurence only gradually comes to see her participation in the British imperial project in Africa and recognize the dilemma of negotiating imperialism with gender equality. She wants to "speak for others" whom she sees as oppressed in their culture, particularly the women in Somalia. At the same time, she realizes that she cannot interpret African culture except through her own Western biases. Roy highlights how Laurence attempts to negotiate such dilemmas by choosing to be sensitive to cultural difference rather than intervene in traditional female practices of which she knows very little. In short, *Maps of Difference* is an engaging and informative study. Roy locates her work in the well-developed areas of race and gender studies from which she opens the less-traversed field of women's travel. In thoughtful and substantial ways, she encourages the rethinking of travel literature in Canada from a female perspective and reveals fresh insights for those revisiting the work of Jameson, Hubbard, and Laurence.

Poets from the Island

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha
Consensual Genocide. TSAR $16.95

Rienzi Crusz
Gambolling with the Divine. TSAR $16.95

Reviewed by Indran Amirthanayagam

A poet publishes her first volume, and another releases number ten, yet with the freshness of new milk, in these recent collections from TSAR which celebrate the creative writing of immigrant Canadians.

Sri Lankan-American Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha has refined her poetry on the platform in cities throughout North America. She delights now in the rigour necessary to make sounds work in lines, on the page. These are home-spun tones, informal, written to be spoken on the tongue, and they extend to titles presented in lower-case letters. The lead-off poem is the marvelous "eating a $5 plate of string hoppers, I think of my father."

> Snoozing in front of Seinfeld on the beige
> on beige recliner
> his belly folds after years
> of American chop suey, hamburgers and
> Michelob
> .....
> I think of that man
> who cried three times in my life
> once when *appamma* died
> once when our dog died
> and once when I sent him
> a 99-cent package of tamarind candy
> and he called me long distance after Ma
> went to bed
> weeping from tasting tamarind
> for the first time in thirty years

This evocation of her father's exile as he tastes tamarind is beautiful and the craft understated: the way the poet moves easily from television's Seinfeld to immigration-laden images like "American chop suey," to remembering father's Tamil mother "appamma" in an intimate conversation with the reader, and ending with that tamarind punch in the heart "for the first time in 30 years."

Piepzna-Samarasinha then gives us "a love poem for Sakia Gunn," described as "a black, queer youth murdered 11 May 2003." While string hoppers and tamarind serve as madeleines in the first poem, Sakia's story inspires a sensual, frank, and whimsical reflection on the poet persona's growing up on Brooklyn streets and trains: "When I was 18 I rode the N train home at 5AM / smelling like Night Queen in a bra under a bomber jacket." Earlier, the poet addresses Sakia: "I know I could've fallen in love with you / so easy when I was sixteen. . . . We could've been taking that late train back to Newark / falling sticky stars all over each other in the

vinyl seat / my titties poking out pussy humming / stupid fearless."

There is spatial sense to the ordering of the poems. The first two lay out territory she will explore throughout the collection. It is a space rich with longing for stories from a faraway island. It is a landscape where a young girl discovers tastes in love and identifies her politics with concerns of the marginal, the different, and the once left out communities—gays, Tamils, women—both in such Western metropoles as Toronto and New York, and in cities elsewhere. This is urban poetry conceived in the developed world but with a recent immigrant and disadvantaged consciousness: "the guy who let me be seventeen cents short / on my bulk food store food / making pancakes outta 46 cents a pound mix," she says in "1997-1999." She complains elsewhere about six-dollar juice drinks she cannot afford.

Almost all the poems moved me, and some deserve a wide readership. In "landmine heart," "there is an unexploded land mine heart in me / waiting for a footstep a breath / for troop movements a tsunami." In "tsunami song," "I am used to no one being able to find my country on any map. . . . Then this wave hits my television / and I am transfixed / half a world away / and a block / from the dosa mahal." That dosa mahal sounds absolutely right, like Cho fu Sa at the end of Pound's translation of "The River Merchant's Wife, A Letter." As the poet journeys through the world's cities, she needs to be firm with the language she uses to bear witness and show solidarity with the world's downtrodden. This collection's few weaker poems suffer from an easy use of slogans and commonplaces. In the uneven "I didn't want the end times to be like this: 9/11 in seven slams," we read "all us brown folks / Nepali to native / it doesn't matter to them." Try to identify "them," I say to the poet. Specificity would strengthen your argument.

Rienzi Crusz writes with grace and wit as he gambols with God in these confessions of a mercurial, passionate older man seasoned in lyricism. Crusz writes from the force that through the green fuse drove the flower. He leads off "The Maker," paying homage to Ted Hughes' crow on the way: "on shoulders burnt under sun fire / he grows a head pitch as crow, / shapes arms / to thin sparrow bones, / has me walking with elephant feet." This is earthy and contradictory writing. Who is this scarecrow with elephant feet? Crusz gives more detail to feed the reader's imagination: he says, "I am crow / that lifts the last thimble of water." Again, the reader is perplexed. What could he mean? Is he talking of a desert, a drought? Yet, this is confident poetry. Crusz does not tie the poem up neatly and serve it on a platter. He wants the reader to complete her side of the contract: to digest images and make sense of them in the contrary states of her own soul.

But Crusz also writes engaging direct utterance without high flown lyricism:

> "Let us now
> in the embracing love of the Father,
> wish each other
> the Peace of Christ" so says Pastor
> Malone of St. Michael's.
> So, my brown hand stretches
> to greet the old lady standing beside me.
> She turns, glares, extends
> a thin pale index finger.
> I accept this one-fifth brotherhood,
> still believing, still refusing to snuff out
> the last candle to our darkness.

There are 56 poems here, all worth reapeated reading. Discovering Crusz has also brought me back to the far-away island that unites both these poets and their reviewer. Crusz writes about mother in "For Cleta Nora Marcellina Serpanchy": "Dead and not dead, gone and here, / you serve breakfast as usual: hoppers and chicken curry, / coconut sambol, tea in the old pot." And later in the poem: "And me, your immigrant child

of the snows? . . . Mother, you are dead and not dead. / Gone and here: love, as the pappadams / crackle on your skillet again, / and you are shouting and chiding, / raving and ranting loving, / praying, always praying."

Serpanchy's prayers or blind nature have given us Rienzi Crusz, and we are blessed with his own addresses to and about god and man in these poems.

L'homme derrière les mots

Michael Posner; Hélène Rioux, trans.
Mordecai Richler : Le dernier des francs-tireurs.
XYZ 25,00 $

Compte rendu par Louise Ladouceur

Comme l'annonce son titre, cet ouvrage dresse le portrait d'un esprit libre qui exprimait ses idées sans détours et allait droit au but. Ce trait de caractère semble avoir dicté non seulement le style de l'auteur mais aussi ses rapports avec sa famille et son entourage. C'est sur ces aspects plus personnels de la vie de Mordecai Richler que se penche Michael Posner, journaliste et chroniqueur artistique au *Globe and Mail* après avoir été directeur de rédaction au *Financial Times of Canada* et rédacteur en chef adjoint de *Maclean's*. Qualifié de « biographie orale », le livre est conçu sous forme d'entretiens puisés dans les écrits et la correspondance de l'écrivain ainsi que dans les souvenirs de quelque cent cinquante personnes interviewées à Londres, Montréal, Toronto, New York et Los Angeles.

Divisé en seize chapitres qui vont des premières années sur la rue Saint-Urbain aux derniers jours dans un hôpital de Montréal, l'ouvrage nous fait suivre l'itinéraire de Richler au Canada et en Europe en s'attardant sur certains éléments particuliers de sa vie : le polémiste, le personnage public et le personnage intime, la vie de couple, la famille, les enfants, les amis, les relations de travail, l'amour du scotch et du cigare. Chaque chapitre rassemble des témoignages soigneusement identifiés qui mettent en lumière différentes facettes de l'homme. Il s'en dégage un portrait composite formé par la superposition de multiples expériences, impressions, souvenirs et anecdotes racontés par des narrateurs et narratrices qui construisent son histoire selon divers points de vue.

À travers ces témoignages, on découvre un être franc et loyal, peu porté aux compromis, exigeant envers lui-même et envers les autres. Révolté et iconoclaste, refusant le statu quo, rejetant l'identification à un groupe au profit d'une intégrité individuelle et dénonçant un nationalisme québécois qu'il jugeait étriqué, Richler fut rejeté par la communauté juive dont il était issu et par les Québécois qui n'appréciaient pas la causticité de ses écrits. On retrouve cette même causticité dans les plaisanteries dont il était friand et dont il faisait un emploi généreux. L'humour déployé pour jouer des tours à ses amis ou pour animer une soirée en leur compagnie constitue un des traits les plus attachants de l'homme.

On apprend par ailleurs que ce géant de la littérature canadienne était avare de mots dans la vie quotidienne, taciturne et renfermé. Très attaché à ses habitudes, il avait peu de patience pour ce qui l'en détournait, à moins que cela s'accompagne d'un ou de plusieurs whiskys pur malt. Toutefois, peu importe la quantité d'alcool avalée et le nombre de cigares fumés la journée précédente, ce travailleur acharné et infatigable s'assoyait fidèlement devant sa machine le lendemain matin. Une fois le manuscrit terminé, il le confiait encore frais à sa femme Florence, qui en faisait une première lecture critique. Florence fut ainsi sa lectrice privilégiée, celle à qui il faisait entièrement confiance pour juger de la valeur de son œuvre. On se réjouit que soit reconnue cette collaboration longtemps demeurée dans l'ombre.

Les témoignages présentés sont parfois empreints d'une émotion qu'on devine intense mais qui ne cède jamais

au sentimentalisme. En ce sens, le travail d'édition des témoignages est réussi. Ils sont livrés avec le souci de renseigner, de faire connaître l'homme, sans biffer les tensions et les malaises qui ont parfois marqué les rapports qu'il entretenait avec ses proches et avec ses collègues. En suivant la carrière de l'auteur, on apprend beaucoup sur le milieu littéraire anglophone canadien et, plus particulièrement, sur celui de Montréal, dont Richler était un point de repère incontournable.

La version française de l'ouvrage est signée par Hélène Rioux, traductrice chevronnée dont on apprécie l'aisance et la concision. La langue est élégante, le texte se lit avec plaisir et on ne sent jamais l'effort que demande tout travail de traduction. Ce livre bien conçu et adroitement construit jette un éclairage nouveau sur l'homme derrière l'auteur et l'œuvre magistrale qu'il a signée. On y découvre un être de principe à l'humour mordant, un reclus difficile d'accès et peu enclin à se livrer, mais d'une loyauté sans borne envers ceux qu'il aime. On se surprend après la lecture à vouloir en savoir plus et on se promet de lire ou de relire l'œuvre de Mordecai Richler avec une sensibilité accrue, un regard attentif à ce qui se cache derrière les mots.

Animal Souls and Tales

Rod Preece
Brute Souls, Happy Beasts, and Evolution: The Historical Status of Animals. UBC Press $34.95

Tina Loo
States of Nature: Conserving Canada's Wildlife in the Twentieth Century. UBC Press $29.95

Robert E. Kohler
All Creatures: Naturalists, Collectors, and Biodiversity, 1850-1950. Princeton UP US $35.00

Reviewed by Nicholas Bradley

Animals—that is, non-human animals—have lately received considerable attention from literary scholars. Essays in recent special issues of the journal *Mosaic* and in the collection *Other Selves: Animals in the Canadian Literary Imagination* (2007), for instance, examine animals in terms of genre, philosophy, and critical approaches, and investigate the representation and function of particular animals in particular texts. Historical studies of the relations between humans and other animals can offer valuable insights to critics studying the portrayal of animals in literature. Rod Preece's *Brute Souls, Happy Beasts, and Evolution* treats the history of religious and philosophical attitudes toward animals; Robert E. Kohler's *All Creatures* addresses American zoological and botanical collecting practices; and Tina Loo's *States of Nature* focuses on ideologies and strategies of conservation in Canada. Each of the three books is fascinating in its own right; all three will also be of special interest because of their extensive use of literary sources.

The most broad-ranging of the books is also the most contentious. *Brute Souls, Happy Beasts, and Evolution* begins somewhat antagonistically, offering itself as a corrective to inaccurate scholarship. "A premise of this book," Preece writes, "is that, despite some works of great merit, much recent writing on the development of the status of animals is seriously misleading." He contends, too, that the "intellectual integrity" of the field of critical animal studies "has often been subordinated to politically correct goals concerning the value of animals." He suggests that works as different from each other as Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1975), Mary Midgley's *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature* (1979), and Carol J. Adams' *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (1990)—and many more, besides—misrepresent the respect accorded by the western tradition to animals and animal-lovers and exaggerate the degree to which non-western traditions respect animals. Preece insists that greater attention

must consequently be devoted to accurately understanding the historical place of animals. To this end, he demonstrates convincingly that "there is no orthodoxy in the history of animal ethics," suggesting instead that "the history of ideas in Western society" should be understood as "as an ongoing unresolved debate, with different views and emphases in the ascendant at different times, and none at all in the ascendant at some times."

To support his thesis, Preece refers to a range of literary texts reaching from antiquity to the twentieth-century. Goethe, Kant, Coleridge, and Steinbeck receive substantial attention; dozens of other writers are also mentioned, among them one Canadian, Ernest Thompson Seton. Preece uses the evidence provided by these writers to support his contention that animal studies lacks sufficient historical perspective: "Many scholars set out to prove the importance of animal wellbeing … and then pretend they are in the vanguard of thought in suggesting such a novel proposition, when, in fact, the selfsame view has been proclaimed throughout human history as one side of a continuous debate about the relative status of humans and animals." Preece concludes that "[w]hat matters is not *proving* that animals deserve consideration," but extending the pragmatic reach of the belief, which he suggests is nearly universal, "that animals are entitled to some consideration."

The "debate about the relative status of humans and animals" also dominates *States of Nature*. Loo takes as her subject "the efforts of Canadians to conserve and manage wildlife over the twentieth century to about 1970," a year that "marked the beginnings of a shift in the nature and tactics of the debate over how to treat wildlife—something associated with the establishment of Greenpeace." The focuses of Loo's investigation include laws and governmental policies, the Hudson's Bay Company, Jack Miner ("Canada's first celebrity conservationist"), and the management of large predators. These case studies, Loo proposes, represent notable parts of the "history of wildlife conservation" in Canada, which in turn "[provide] a particular perspective on the history of environmentalism in Canada … and specifically on the attitudes and roles of the state, urban sportsmen, and rural peoples, from resource workers to First Nations."

Loo alludes to the animal stories of Seton and Charles G.D. Roberts, "two of the genre's most important and prolific authors," in the course of observing that "the wild animal story" was a counter-Darwinian genre that "rejected the idea that the natural world was cruel and amoral, inhabited by organisms engaged in a ruthless and unrelenting struggle for survival"; she notes that Roberts and Seton instead portrayed "animal heroes." Loo also discusses Farley Mowat at length, suggesting that the "far-reaching effects" of Mowat's *Never Cry Wolf* (1963) were instrumental in "rehabilitating" the reputation of wolves. She observes that in Mowat's book, as in the stories of Roberts and Seton, "wolves were noble creatures whose commendable conduct highlighted the morality of nature." Other writers, including Archibald Belaney ("Grey Owl"), Roderick Haig-Brown, Duncan Campbell Scott, and Thomas King also appear in *States of Nature*, although Loo discusses Scott in his capacity as deputy superintendent of Indian Affairs, not as a poet.

All Creatures provides an account of a certain kind of natural history—what Kohler terms "natural history survey," a mode of collecting specimens and creating inventories of species—as it was practised in North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. "Scientific collecting in the age of survey," Kohler writes, "was accomplished mostly by small parties … whose purpose was to send back not exotica and accounts of heroic adventure and discovery, but rather crates of specimens."

The volume of specimens collected—natural history survey "aimed at a comprehensive, total inventory"—would ideally make possible a complete catalogue of the extant species in a given region and record the ranges of a region's species. Kohler's very readable study pays close attention to the characteristics of surveying expeditions and to the social and environmental conditions that made this form of collecting possible. Of crucial importance was the existence of a North American landscape that "afforded an unusual intimacy between settled and natural areas. Densely inhabited and wild areas were jumbled together" in the period between 1870 and 1920, making "relatively undisturbed nature … accessible to people who lived in towns and cities, with their cultural and educational institutions," including the museums, universities, and government agencies that funded surveying expeditions. The concept of the "middle landscape" that Leo Marx advances in *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964) is central to Kohler's discussion of "middle landscapes" and "inner frontiers," which "encouraged Americans to see nature neither as a commodity to be used up, nor as a wilderness to be left alone, but as a place of cultural and scientific interest, to be surveyed, collected, conserved, and understood." Other writers to whom Kohler refers include John Ruskin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and John Burroughs.

These books, although their subjects and approaches vary, each demonstrate, as Loo writes in *States of Nature*, "the extent to which culture and nature are interconnected." Their examinations of various aspects of such interconnectedness will doubtless be of great interest to critics concerned with the vast menagerie of literary animals.

Being at Home

Harold Rhenisch

The Wolves at Evelyn: Journeys Through a Dark Century. Brindle & Glass $24.95

Reviewed by Lisa S. Szabo

In *The Wolves at Evelyn: Journeys Through a Dark Century,* Harold Rhenisch continues his recollection of relations among regional affiliations, family memories and the land that he began in *Out of the Interior: The Lost Country* (1993). A conflation of family memoir, autobiography, history, and oral storytelling, Rhenisch's "dark journey" moves through conflicting ideas of land, and the colonial/immigrant experiences of twentieth-century rural British Columbia and Germany. He contemplates diverse ideas of homeland that grow out of these associations and tensions in regional stories that variously challenge and conform to perceptions of a unified national identity. Rhenisch claims in *Out of the Interior* and intimates in *The Wolves at Evelyn* that these are histories that he "would not have chosen, but they are his." These may be his histories, but as Rhenisch illustrates, these are also universal stories built out of poverty, war, and personal sacrifice and struggle; these are memories both sweet and bitter, perhaps more so the latter.

The ironic and gentle humour found frequently throughout *Out of the Interior* and Rhenisch's recent *Winging Home: A Palette of Birds* (2006) is rare here, as the shadow of the English immigrants—the "flock of crows" as Rhenisch describes them—darkens the narrative's tone. What stands out in *Out of the Interior* is Rhenisch's deftness at expressing stories "that should be loved" through a balance of sensitivity and humour. *The Wolves at Evelyn*, by contrast, seeks lightness but labours under the weight of so many memories that seldom sit comfortably. His attempts to convey so many moments from the past, however, are what

make this text less successful than *Out of the Interior* at maintaining coherence. The brevity and control of language that heighten the emotion and imagery of *Out of the Interior* elude *The Wolves at Evelyn*. Rhenisch sacrifices linguistic precision for a fragmented, dense format. Subsequently, the intermittent lightness amid the darkness that should illuminate only flickers. Digressions, colloquialisms, seemingly random connections, and non-linear narratives are characteristic markers of oral storytelling, and Rhenisch employs these strategies. However, effective oral storytelling sustains listeners' focus by keeping the story simple (by simple I do not mean a lack of complexity, for this is a complex text). But, just as it is when hiking through the bush, a clearly marked trail makes the effort much more manageable and rewarding.

Highlights include moments when Rhenisch the naturalist-poet emerges, when he enters his "own land made out of aspen trees and black spruce, rust-red pines riddled with beetles and woodpeckers hammering insatiably through the Month of May," a land he professes he is "looking for a way in to" but has "no words" to access. These frequent images of the landscape belie such claims of wordlessness. Rhenisch's poetic imagery crafts new perceptions of home and land by shucking off proprietary colonial interpretations of settling in place. Indeed, his title *The Wolves at Evelyn* intimates a resistance to Anglo-European relations to place. The unusual use of *at* rather than *of* seems at first an odd choice of preposition. *Of* suggests location, belonging and ownership, whereas *at*, though implying geographic location, acknowledges transitory presence and unfixed boundaries: the wolves do not belong to a region—*at* resists possession of land. Similarly, the wolves, which accompany his mother on her early-morning two-mile treks both to and from the school taxi, linger for only six weeks (a passage recounted in *Out of the Interior*, also called "The Wolves at Evelyn"). Wolves, as Irene Klaver has observed, "[roam] *through* the land, *through* the seasons." And "lingering in the journey", she adds, "implies porous conceptual borders, which dissolve in the complexity of different modes of participation in the landscape." Rhenisch's oral storytellings illustrate that histories are made from commonplaces and the contributions of shared lives. Rhenisch contends that the history of British Columbia's Interior is not the story of politics; instead, history is "a hundred thousand stories, of people living on this land and making a living here." Regional histories are

> the taste of bear meat on Bruno's table, the way a river moves through grass in flood, the way you can thread a hook through a grasshopper and pull trout out of that grass as wood ticks hang off the end of the grass stems at your back.

Through these stories Rhenisch moves through the land, lingers, participates, and continues on with his journeys, and so finds his way back to the land. I just wish he had planned out a clearer itinerary for his fellow travellers.

Can Lit, "Enormously"

Noah Richler
This is My Country, What's Yours?: A Literary Atlas of Canada. McClelland & Stewart $37.99

Reviewed by Duffy Roberts

I must preface this review with a warning: this is my review. For a slightly less annoyed and less rhetorically acerbic approach, although nonetheless critical, I recommend Alex Good's review in *Quill and Quire*'s November 2006 issue.

"I have the first line of your review," T. interjected, responding matter-of-factly to a book review session that had regressed into S. wanting to read, out loud, passages

containing an "organ." "How about," he continued, "Noah Richler is a bad cartographer?" I, as the self-convicted voice of reason, had tried earlier to save the book from J.'s extratextual complaint that she had to pay money for it, when K. had signed it out for free from the library, by quoting Richler's epilogue—"Being Canadian demands a constant effort of the imagination, a working definition of the country that must be conjured"—only to be interrupted by M.'s ebullient retort that others have argued similarly, and where is the dialogue with them? L., silently sipping red wine, listened; the book didn't inspire her to make time to read past the introductory chapter.

This is My Country, What's Yours?: A Literary Atlas of Canada is organized geographically, which is to say the authors that Richler interviews are loosely grouped by traditionally named Canadian regions, as well as by what Richler terms "AGE"s (the caps are his), which he further divides into chapters: THE AGE OF INVENTION includes "Stories and What They Do," "Igloolik," "The Circle in the Square," and "House and Garden"; THE AGE OF MAPPING includes "The Company Store," "Traces," and "Our Myths of Disappointment"; THE AGE OF ARGUMENT includes "Making Things Up," "Je me souviens—de quoi?" and "Home and Away." The work is framed by an entrance strategy that discusses "The Virtues of Being Nowhere" and a neatly packaged "Epilogue" exit strategy.

Richler's foray into a historical, "psychogeographical," and thematic interpretation of Canadian literature begins with a quotation from Borges' *The Maker*: "A man sets out to draw the world. A short time before he dies he discovers that the patient labyrinth of lines traces the lineaments of his own face." In a book where the accompanying and enticingly enigmatic line drawings by Michael Winter invite more introspection than the argument itself, because they offer relief from reading the text, Borges' epigraph signals the fact that there is too much of the mapper in this text to make good on its subtitle, "A Literary Atlas of Canada." The collection of six very good readers whom I asked to help me think through this text all came to the same conclusion: the idea of collecting interviews with Canadian authors into a whole is a good idea, one that the canon of Canadian literature would benefit from, but this book doesn't quite do the project justice. We were also willing to admit that this book might engage other readers. The failure as we see it, in part (well, in part of the many parts) is that Richler attempts a scholarly argument, writes capital-T Theory per se, without engaging in the scholarship that has come before, and further, his writing contains implicit suspicion of the whole academic community in general. While none of us expect a more popular or populist book, one for writers and readers, to contain theory, or theory to be popular, this book's flip-flopping between the two realms (the problematic binary aside) doesn't work very well.

Richler comes at the problem of Canadian literature, and many of the interviews he conducts, with preconceived understandings of the complex. The problem with this approach is that Canadian literature is not algebra, and the authors he interviews, many of them teachers and keen thinkers and academics, are not prone to answering rhetorical questions. Richler misses the opportunity to learn and adjust his understanding based on the new data that his interviews generate. Michael Ondaatje speaks to this failure: "writing is archaeological," he suggests, but "if I *know* . . . the thing that's going to be uncovered before I start, then the book just doesn't interest me." The books and authors that Richler examines in Vancouver, for example—Timothy Taylor's *Stanley Park* and Nancy Lee's *Dead Girls*—turn Richler's desired Vancouver

into a "tense and febrile place" preoccupied with class struggle that clashes with his own romanticized description of, for example, Kingsway: "the day was coming to an end in a gentle, misty haze, and the buildings that lined the street were hoarding the dying light." And the writing, at times, is awkward, especially when Quebec writer, Gaétan Soucy, "teaches philosophy, enormously." Richler's literary Canada—his ownership belied, but not successfully excused, by "This is My Country" in the title—is one practically bereft of poetry and drama, and his Canada reads as a defense of the novel as the quintessential argument *for* Canada, the problems with novels as directly proportional referents for a country's or region's quiddity notwithstanding.

Why does Richler's *Atlas* not have poetry, particularly the long poem, as part of the topography of place, and very little drama to boot? The book also inspires many other questions about Richler's Canada. Why is a history that might in fact "incarcerate" writers, a history that drowns out imagining into the future, be so important to Richler's understanding of contemporary Canadian literature? Why does this reading of Canadian literature not attempt to update or at least riff on Atwood's and Frye's dated and problematic readings? Why does Richler wait until page 259 to invoke the imagination with the Rod Serling-esque "Imagine if you will . . . "? Why, when talking about fictional novels does Richler need to include "a discussion of the ethics of making things up" at all? And why, after reading that "metaphors [are] shortcuts to meaning," do I not want to read the final six pages? I wonder if, as the shoe salesman who got so good at her job that she sees shoes everywhere, the fact that Richler "enjoy[s] the dread in . . . stories" only allows him to choose *those* stories, and if that approach makes sense on a decidedly non-derivative Canadian literary landscape, especially when *choice* is named "Atlas" and "Canada."

In twenty years, then, this book may not be consulted for the author's arguments—or even, as Aritha van Herk writes in a review for *The Globe and Mail*, for its "piercing observations"—but for the transcribed interviews it contains. W.H. New's *Borderlands: How we talk about Canada* and Edward J. Chamberlin's *If This Is Your Land, Where are Your Stories?* are better companion pieces to the quoted authors, while for accessing their quotations an index would have been extremely useful.

Winds of Change

Lorna Roth

Something New in the Air: The Story of First Peoples Television Broadcasting in Canada. McGill-Queen's UP $29.95

Reviewed by Madelaine Jacobs

Although many Canadians struggle to define a single Canadian identity, the "true north strong and free" is a powerful theme of both domestic and foreign imaginings of Canada. Early Canadian policies worked to unite the country with sturdy rail lines while later efforts to link Canadian communities focused on the cultural content of Canadian media. Broadcasting has been intentionally employed by Canadian governments as a method of propagating and defending particular Canadian identities as distinct from those popularized by the enormous cultural influence of the United States. In *Something New in the Air*, Lorna Roth traces the evolution of "northern" Canadian First Nations broadcasting from its foundations in 1973, when the Anik-1 satellite became operational, to its sophisticated use as a nation-building tool within the Canadian state.

When the Canadian government decided to use satellite technology to reach the remote communities existing on the fringes of their jurisdiction, they conceived of a neocolonial outward flow of information

from a culturally developed centre to isolated areas that appeared to be desperately in need of development. Academics like Roth, now an associate professor of Communications Studies at Concordia University, had the opportunity to observe and advise on what was meant to be something of a social experiment. From her long personal experience, sound theoretical grounding, and extensive research, Roth demonstrates how legislation and policies governing northern television could proscribe access to this media, yet could not control the myriad ways in which Aboriginal peoples would respond to it. Roth takes a postcolonial approach to Aboriginal broadcasting as she delves into its emancipatory capacities.

While television did expose northern Aboriginal Canadians to the cultural influences of the Canadian "south," it also compounded their sense of alienation from southern Canadians. In the early days of Aboriginal broadcasting, Inuit parents acknowledged the educational benefits of television; however, they were concerned that a relative lack of Inuit-specific programming might cause their children to lose their Inuktitut language skills and instill in them a desire to conform to the cultures of the south. A seed of discontent was sown in northern communities when individuals found themselves "*wanting* a Southern lifestyle, yet being unable to *actualize* it in the North." Roth recalls a pivotal moment when she realized that an Inuit man named Mr. Teemotie was using a soap opera as an anthropological field site where he could examine the lives of "white people." Northern peoples intuitively felt the societies depicted in mainstream cultural media were "other."

Northern Aboriginal peoples asserted their rights to govern the media that increasingly flooded their lives and perceptive leaders recognized it was imperative that these rights be protected by legislation. The 1991 *Broadcasting Act* guaranteed rights to the reception and transmission of Aboriginal broadcasting. After achieving this vital goal, Aboriginal media changed and diversified. The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) held its inaugural broadcast on 1 September 1999. Roth contends, as northern Aboriginal Canadians utilized media as a means of empowering their communities, they drove their own development. In Roth's estimation, the Canadian Aboriginal broadcasting system is now the most advanced in the world and will soon become part of an international indigenous broadcasting system. As Aboriginal-run broadcasting spread, critics suggested Aboriginal stations should only broadcast "traditional" Aboriginal content. Aboriginal media sources effectively responded that indigenous identities are constantly in formation and can include elements which situate themselves in the greater Canadian society. Aboriginal broadcasters did not want to be confined by an "electronic media reservation." The APTN takes "multiperspectival approaches to critical issues common to both native and non-native constituency groups in Canada, but of interest to international communities as well." Surely this sort of inclusiveness is another of the intangible Canadian values.

At first glace, *Something New in the Air* may appear to be a documentary of Aboriginal Canadian television broadcasting. Certainly, Roth's book represents a career of extensive research and clear writing. *Something New in the Air* contains such a well-developed story and is constructed so skillfully that it will draw interest beyond narrow scholarly categorizations. *Something New in the Air* is about Canada, and its peoples, cultures, geographies, histories, politics, technologies, and futures. Roth's incredible synthesis of detail gives it a depth which makes it an asset to university courses in a variety of disciplines.

Made from Stardust

Stan Rowe; Don Kerr, ed.
Earth Alive: Essays on Ecology. NeWest $24.95

Reviewed by Anne Milne

Earth Alive is a posthumous collection of selected essays by Stan Rowe who died in 2004. Rowe was a lifelong pacifist, jailed as a conscientious objector in 1941 and assigned to "alternative service" teaching math and science in a Japanese internment camp in New Denver, BC. Rowe fell in love with New Denver and eventually returned there to live and write following his retirement from the University of Saskatchewan, where he was a professor of Plant Ecology. An earlier collection, *Home Place: Essays in Ecology,* was published in 1990, also by NeWest Press. Rowe is also the author of several books on forestry.

Rowe has much to teach us about relations between humans and the natural world, and his impulse is to create a cognitive dissonance in readers to awaken reflection, engagement and, he hopes, change. In his engaging, accessible, sometimes folksy prose, Rowe challenges readers to reassess their fundamental orientation toward nature. Eschewing the term "environment" as a "weak word" and the phrase "*homo sapiens*" as "ignorant," Rowe urges the reader to understand "the artfulness of metaphor-making and the definition of 'definition'" as a means of confronting how language creates and entrenches ecological degradation. Rowe suggests that humans can use language more thoughtfully and come into new ways of accurately describing and thus experiencing our humanity-in-nature as mammals, as "*homo ecologicus*." Rowe asserts that we fail if we continue to view nature as merely external, as "environment," and he urges readers to actively embrace their identity as "Earthlings, made from stardust, humans from humus."

Rowe's heartfelt descriptive passages in chapters such as "The Eagle's Eye View" display his love and lament for the lands he perceives as threatened fundamentally by reductionist thinking. In one of the strongest essays placed at the centre of the book, "What on Earth is Life?", Rowe argues that the privileged view that "life" equals "organism" is deeply flawed. He compels the reader to practise a small-scale holistic thinking which mirrors his own thinking later on in the book when he discusses how humans can and will face the challenges of living in a severely damaged ecosystem. Indeed, Rowe argues continually that traditional Western scientific ideologies and practices stand in the way of holistic vision and stifle new ways of engaging in ecologically respectful behaviours that can work to integrate humans into the natural world. While he suggests that the social sciences and humanities must be treated as equal partners with the sciences in redefining the human within nature and making "meaning without measurement," he is also highly critical of the ways that entrenched liberal cultural traditions of individualism, progress, and modernism have contributed to the denigration of what he calls the five marvels: air, water, land, sunlight, and organisms. Always optimistic, though, Rowe believes that change is possible. He exhorts and teaches the reader to "think like an Ecosystem"—to bring connectedness, internal balance, rough, fluctuating equality and steadiness to our eco-interactions.

It is possible to nitpick and say that some of Rowe's assertions are arguable; for example, the equation of gender and brain hemisphere dominance which has not been borne out by my experience as a teacher. Neither do I agree with his view that contemporary artists uniformly perpetuate an ideology of individualism, for there is much thoughtful, challenging ecological work being done by artists who have taken up exactly the kind of activism Rowe advocates; however, truly, this *is* nit-picking. For what Rowe engagingly offers

to readers is genuine food for thought. This inspiring, readable, intelligent collection is a gem. Well-edited and contextualized by Don Kerr, the book includes as its epilogue, "A Manifesto for Earth" by Rowe and Ted Mosquin, an afterword by Mosquin and a bibliographic essay by Rowe's daughter, Andrea Rowe. A fitting tribute to Rowe himself and an important gathering place for much current theory and thinking on environmental issues, *Earth Alive* is highly recommended.

Ethics and Identification

Barbara Sapergia
Dry. Coteau $19.95

Rob Harasymchuk
The Joining of Dingo Radish. Great Plains $19.95

Kathryn Kuitenbrouwer
The Nettle Spinner. Goose Lane $21.95

Reviewed by Jodi Lundgren

Ecological concerns crop up in three diverse works of fiction: *Dry,* a speculative novel; *The Joining of Dingo Radish,* a thriller; and *The Nettle Spinner,* a re-spun fable. In each novel, tenderness, ruthlessness, and guilt abound among people and toward the land. Successful navigation of this fraught terrain hinges largely on the reader's relations with the point-of-view characters.

Set in 2023, a time of global drought, *Dry* centres on a sister and brother team of Saskatchewan agricultural scientists, Signy and Tomas Nilsson, who are developing a strain of wheat that thrives in arid conditions. Next door to the Nilssons lives their arch enemy, Magnus Dragland, a 125-year-old bionic billionaire who covets their land and their research results. In spare, controlled prose, Sapergia uses recognizable conventions of characterization and dialogue to guide the reader's response to the villain. After a failed attempt to murder Signy's twelve-year-old son, Dragland addresses his faithful assistant as follows:

> I may be old, Kuiva, but I'm old in cunning, too. Do you hear? They'll find out how dangerous it is to be in my way. I'm not ready to go for a good long time, not till I see them gone. But first I'll know their secrets. How did the boy stop the tractor? Why is their wheat growing?

An antagonist as unequivocal as Dragland would seem to call for an equally clear hero, but Sapergia creates an ethically muddy protagonist who does not provide this balance.

The opening of the novel aligns the reader with Signy as she surveys the parched land of Southern Saskatchewan in a "skyboat" (or flying car). Despite the access to Signy's consciousness, it is difficult to identify with her, for she soon reminisces about a murder she committed four years prior. Although she has acted in self-defense, she buries the body in secret and prides herself on "[getting] away with it." If such vigilante justice were symptomatic of the moral and legal deterioration of this future society, perhaps it would not interfere as much as it does with Signy's credibility. But without details to suggest an anarchic state (the RCMP respond promptly to a crisis later in the book), this behaviour, given such prominence early in the narrative, alienates sympathy.

With an unreliable narrator, the reader's inability to trust becomes part of the pleasure of reading. The kind of mistrust that Signy inspires, however, provokes detachment: we watch her rather than experiencing the story through her, anticipating further lapses of integrity. Ostensibly concerned about world hunger, the Nilssons attempt to market their drought-resistant wheat globally. In the process, their priorities threaten to shift toward power and profit. The distinction between the Nilssons and their enemy, Dragland, eventually collapses in an ominous, yet ambiguous, conclusion to the book.

Whereas in *Dry,* only the villain poisons the land with pesticides and herbicides,

in *The Joining of Dingo Radish* (also set in Saskatchewan), the anti-hero, Dingo, unapologetically steals and fences such products, including the high-end "Guardian." No confusion exists about the ethics of this straight-talking narrator, whose parents have committed suicide to escape foreclosure, leaving him, at 18, responsible for his younger siblings: "I couldn't let myself be bound by any sort of foolish concepts of virtue or morality, otherwise I'd end up like so many others. A pathetic failure. I had to be willing to fuck over anyone who stood between me and what I wanted and not suffer a moment's regret because of it." Fiercely protective of his developmentally-delayed brother and remarkably tolerant of his violent, promiscuous sister, Dingo aims to fund the family's escape from their inhospitable home town with a final, massive heist of Guardian from its producer, Steigman Biotechnologies.

Dingo explains how the substance works:

> The best way I can describe it is to say that Guardian could sort of … well … think.
> I know it sounds like science fiction. Guardian somehow altered its chemical structure. First it identified which plants outnumbered the others. If in a square foot you had ten wheat seedlings, two shoots of kochia and a thistle, Guardian then reformulated itself to be compatible with the wheat—and destroyed everything else.

The implications of such destruction do not trouble Dingo, and he remains initially unswayed by his encounter with a beautiful activist, Emily, whose organization polices the "biogenetics trade" and targets Steigman. But when Dingo robs the Steigman plant on the same night that Emily bombs it, their destinies intertwine, and soon murder, kidnapping, and car-chases propel the fast-paced narrative. As in *Dry*, we accompany the protagonist in committing murder, but because it happens long after the reader has both cemented an identification with Dingo and recognized the book as a thriller, it produces none of the distancing effect that Signy's actions do. Neo-fascism, eugenics, and the threat of genocide escalate the stakes of the novel (if to rather top-heavy heights) and force Dingo to enlarge his family-centred worldview. The novel's greatest strengths lie in its suspenseful, action-based scenes and its intelligent, unpretentious narrator.

By far the most complex in structure of the three novels, *The Nettle Spinner* interpolates an Andrew Lang fairy tale of the same title. Inset in brief third-person snippets, the fable concerns a lecherous count, Burchard the Wolf; a twelve-year-old peasant girl, Renelde; and a woodcutter engaged to the girl. Although Renelde cannot escape the count's sexual attacks, she discovers that by weaving with nettle thread, she holds the power of life and death over him.

In the contemporary, first-person narrative, a treeplanter named Alma hears Lang's fable, gathers nettle, and begins "weaving the story cloth, reciting and recreating the old story in fragments." Alma confesses that she has woven a Renelde who resembles her, adding that "history repeats itself." She thus alerts the reader of parallels between the inset tale and the treeplanters' story, though the overlay is neither tidy nor complete (and all the more intriguing as a result).

Much emotional drama takes place in a third narrative tier—an eerie, enigmatic frame story set in an abandoned mining camp, where Alma lives with an infant and a small man who may be a leprechaun. In contrast, the treeplanting scenes ground the novel in critical realism:

> It was easy to look around at the heaps of ripped-up brush, at the forest floor trying to regenerate, at the lumber left behind and take the high ground. But that was crap and I knew it. I wasn't there for the ecosystem; this wasn't a system anymore. I was there for the money and the

> escape and they were what kept me. Sustainability, renewable resource, ecology were just words.

Although Alma stops short of "crewcutting the roots," a practice that makes planting easier but decreases the trees' chances of survival, she admits her own complicity with the treeplanting industry. Like Harasymchuk's Dingo, Alma acknowledges but does not rationalize her own failings, and thus invites identification.

Haunting and sensual, Kuitenbrouwer's novel merits re-reading for its well-phrased wisdom as well as for a fuller appreciation of its structural intricacy. Like a compelling action film, Harasymchuk's novel calls to be absorbed in as close to one sitting as possible. Finally, despite the distance that Sapergia creates between her protagonist and the reader, *Dry*'s dystopia of global drought and planetary ownership prompts serious reflection.

Re: Composing Biotexts

Joanne Saul
Writing the Roaming Subject: The Biotext in Canadian Literature. U of Toronto P $45.00

Fred Wah
Diamond Grill. NeWest $19.95

Reviewed by Guy Beauregard

The term *biotext*, introduced by George Bowering in the late 1980s, has taken on a critical life of its own. As Sally Chivers recently observed, the popularity of the term has leapt forward since it appeared prominently in the Acknowledgements of the first edition of Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* (1996), where Wah referred to the biotext as "an innately cumulative performance." The two books under review—Joanne Saul's scholarly study of "the biotext in Canadian literature" and a tenth anniversary edition of Fred Wah's celebrated *Diamond Grill*—revisit this term from readerly and writerly perspectives. If, as Wah noted, the biotext is "innately cumulative," what is at stake in revisiting this term now?

Joanne Saul's *Writing the Roaming Subject* attempts to answer this question by providing a systematic introduction to the biotext and its potential significance in the field of Canadian literary studies. Saul explains that she uses the term because of the way it "captures the tension . . . between the 'bio' (with an emphasis on the 'life': including the family, relationships, and genealogy) and the 'text' (the site where these fragments are articulated in writing)." The Introduction and first chapter map out the genealogy of the term, its relation to the project of theorizing life writing in Canada, and its critical potential to "bring to the surface the power relations that constitute any notion of belonging." Particularly valuable here is the way Saul links the biotexts she investigates with "the challenge to genre" that had been put forward by the Canadian long poem. In this respect, Saul builds upon and extends the argument she put forward in a 2001 essay published in *Biography* where she situated the biotext in the context of debates concerning "the contestatory long poem of the 1970s." Saul contends that the biotext, like the long poem, "demands a reader who does not just consume some prefigured meaning (or the subject) from the text, but is also an active participant in constructing the text's meaning."

The main argument put forward in *Writing the Roaming Subject* is that the term biotext can function "as a way of theorizing the writing of displacement in Canada"—a line of argument about which I have more to say below—and "as a tool for thinking through" four texts: Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*, Daphne Marlatt's *Ghost Works*, Roy Kiyooka's *Mothertalk*, and Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill*. Because the principal outline of this argument had already appeared in print in Saul's 2001 essay, readers may find the

individual chapters dedicated to reading these four texts to be the book's most valuable critical contribution. And of these individual chapters, Saul's acute discussion of Kiyooka's *Mothertalk* and the convoluted and controversial process surrounding its publication deserve particular critical attention. Saul's original contribution here is to track the various stages in the production and publication of *Mothertalk*, returning to Roy Kiyooka's manuscripts, which, as Saul observes, "clearly demonstrate a different kind of project in process" than the posthumously published version edited by Daphne Marlatt. Readers of *Canadian Literature* who recall Susanna Egan's and Gabriele Helms' critical essay on this topic published in the pages of this journal in 1999 will note that Saul, while investigating the same set of manuscripts as Egan and Helms, arrives at a markedly different conclusion: that "the manuscripts of *Mothertalk* provide an important example of a biotext that develops the concerns Kiyooka explores in his long poems." While Saul states unequivocally that the published version of *Mothertalk* "does not capture the process of cultural recovery at work in Kiyooka's manuscripts," she nevertheless elegantly observes that "[t]he layering of voices and the various fragments of the [published] text allow for glimpses into the possibility of another text—a biotext—lurking in the margins."

Writing the Roaming Subject suggests that the "complex poetics of displacement" in the texts by Ondaatje, Marlatt, Kiyooka, and Wah "disrupt settled categories both of the whole self and of the whole nation." Yet while the individual readings it puts forward convincingly support this position—and persuasively underline that "[t]he biotext has the ability to open up the space of writing as a space of creative potential"—readers may nevertheless wonder how this generalized notion of "displacement" can account for the varied colonial and postcolonial histories represented in these texts (cutting across colonial Ceylon, British Malaya, China, Japan, and Canada). In this respect, readers may sense that the notion of "roaming" foregrounded in the title of the book and used by Saul to sew together her book's critical project sits uneasily alongside the various histories of restriction, forced movement, and incarceration starkly represented in these texts. So while Saul suggests that "[r]eading the 'roaming subject' in Canadian literature challenges us to rethink conventional boundaries of cultural and political identity," readers may also productively use this opportunity to stop and rethink the ethical stakes involved in reading these colonial and postcolonial histories—in Canada and elsewhere—as they become visible through figures that do not "roam."

In light of these concerns, NeWest's decision to reissue Fred Wah's magnificent *Diamond Grill* in a new tenth anniversary edition should be warmly welcomed. The new edition—which follows three print runs of the first edition, and which appears in the press' Landmark Edition series dedicated to reissuing literary texts by western Canadian authors—faithfully reproduces the 132 short sections that appeared in the first edition, retaining the same pagination, and adds a generous Afterword by Wah (who revisits with teacherly warmth *Diamond Grill*'s compositional genealogy) and a list of additional references (which includes references to key scholarly articles and an interview focusing on Wah's text). While it is difficult to imagine readers who would be unhappy with the continued circulation of *Diamond Grill* and the addition of these helpful new materials, it seems unfortunate that the reissued text reproduces the typos that appeared in the first edition and—in the Afterword and the list of additional references—adds additional typos too. Given *Diamond Grill*'s astonishing compositional precision, the reprinted

manuscript deserved greater care at the copyediting and production stage.

Revisiting *Diamond Grill* ten years after its initial publication nevertheless remains a rich readerly experience. One textual detail that remains imprinted on my mind as I revisit Wah's text is a scene representing the discovery, 30 years after the figure of Fred Wah Sr. passed away, of a box of IOUs stored in a cedar chest: a box containing an unpaid IOU in the amount of two hundred dollars signed by "Tom Greenbuck" in 1953. What could the discovery of this textual marker of an *unpaid debt* signify in the aftermath of the history of the Chinese head tax and the exclusion of Chinese immigrants to Canada? And what could this textual marker of an *unpaid debt* signify following the Canadian federal government's apology and its announcement on 22 June 2006 of a non-negotiated redress settlement for living head tax payers or their living spouses—an announcement that was made just before the publication of this new edition of Wah's text? In light of these developments, the work performed by *Diamond Grill* remains cumulative and sharply resonant and unsettled: a teaching text that forcefully conjoins the *bio* and the *text* and the ethical stakes involved in their recomposition.

Chaucer's Dreams

Susan Schibanoff

Chaucer's Queer Poetics: Rereading the Dream Trio. U of Toronto P $75.00

Reviewed by Stephen Guy-Bray

As Susan Schibanoff points out in this interesting new book, Chaucer's three dream poems have usually been read for what they can tell us about the *Canterbury Tales*. That is, critics have tended to turn Chaucer's literary career into a strongly teleological narrative. Part of this narrative is the idea that Chaucer was originally in thrall to French literary models—models seen as artificial, inauthentic, and feminine—but that he eventually freed himself and became the virile, natural, and English poet we love today, and on whom so much of our literary history depends. While this idea may seem outmoded now, Schibanoff demonstrates that even some of the most recent and highly regarded Chaucerians today still produce versions of the escape narrative in their work.

Schibanoff's thesis is that the dream poems deserve study in their own right and that rather than show Chaucer's subservience to the literary models popular at the beginning of his poetic career they display his sophisticated negotiations with the literary theory of his day. This thesis is reflected in the book's organization. After the pleasingly polemical introduction, Schibanoff divides her book into three parts, one on each of the three dream poems. Each part consists of a chapter on what she sees as the intellectual and literary contexts for the poem and then a reading of the poem itself. There is also a brief conclusion, which is both a summary of her own discussion and an indication of where the discussion could go.

In her analyses of the poems, Schibanoff focuses on those aspects of them which we could now call queer; her interest is particularly in the narrators. She makes valuable comments about the ways in which Chaucer formulates and positions his narrators, paying careful attention, for instance, to the allusion to Ganymede in the *House of Fame*. Schibanoff's argument is that the queer figures we can see in these three poems are not dead ends, as the prevailing narrative of Chaucer's career would have us believe, but rather important parts of his poetic self-presentation. One of the advantages of Schibanoff's view of Chaucer is that it makes the early poems an essential part of his career rather than more or less failed attempts at becoming a great English poet, which is how they have typically been seen.

The first of the three chapters on theory deals with courtliness and courtly literature and with the various forms that the escape narrative of Chaucer's career has taken. This is perhaps the most closely argued of all the chapters, and it is probably here that Schibanoff makes most of her original contributions to scholarship. To say this is not, however, to denigrate the other chapters on Chaucer's literary contexts. Both Chapter 3 (on Dante) and Chapter 5 (on Aristotle, Alain de Lille, and Jean de Meun) are well-researched and well-argued, and medievalists at all levels will get a lot out of them.

The bipartite division of *Chaucer's Queer Poetics* is not, I think, entirely successful. While Schibanoff's erudition is considerable and her analyses are generally persuasive, there is often an imbalance between the different kinds of work the book does. In some ways, *Chaucer's Queer Poetics* appears to be two books: one a study of Chaucer's poetics, the other a study of medieval theories of textual production (this is especially the case as the chapters on intellectual and literary contexts are approximately as long as the discussions of Chaucer). Still, both parts of the book—both books—are very good in their own right. The chapters on the three early poems will be valuable to Chaucerians at all levels, including undergraduates, and the chapters on Chaucer's contexts make an important and original contribution to our understanding of medieval literary theory. The book will also be of interest to literary historians and anyone interested in queer theory.

Prologues in Final Acts

Neil Smith

Bang Crunch. Knopf Canada $29.95

Reviewed by Duffy Roberts

Neil Smith's *Bang Crunch* convincingly demonstrates the capacity of the short story to be, as Clark Blaise has suggested, a more expansive form than longer fiction. The demand for economy requires packing more stuff in with fewer words. *Bang Crunch* is a smart collection: the characters are interesting and engaging, the plots carefully crafted, and each of the author's strategies meticulously thought through, the thinking amplifying rather than limiting meaning. As Lisa Moore has done in *Open*, Smith's crafting of metaphors and similes is masterful, engagingly and enigmatically wonderful. Some examples: a preemie baby's organs are visible under skin "the way shrimp is visible under the rice paper of a spring roll"; a "stripper wag[s] his genitals like a clown twisting a dachshund out of party of balloons"; "auburn dreadlocks [are] tied atop [a] head like a bonsai tree"; "ten fingerprint swirls [on the inside of cashmere-lined gloves] li[ght] up like the elements of a stove"; and a young woman's orgasm is similar to "a hundred glimmering goldfish expelled thorough the hole in an aquarium." These metaphors should convince you to read Smith's collection, much as the wind convinces "willow trees to swa[y] in the breeze like giant hula dancers."

Smith's craft also shines like a freshly minted nickel in his control of patterns and symmetry. In the opening story, "Isolettes," An is a translator, and names her child B, but didn't finish her major in English literature because "the professors were so fiercely intelligent that their IQs," more letters, "left scratch marks on her ego," but she can translate a "thumbs-up" as "Finally!" even though it has little to do with her education as a translator. An is not married, a condi-

tion to which a bystander responds, "That doesn't sound natural," to which her friend Shiela responds, "Show me one thing in [the ICU] that's natural," which precedes a description of "Natural air," which is "twenty-one-percent oxygen." But An is not married because the father of her child, Jacob, is unreliable: "on an errand to pick up his dry cleaning, he'll fall in love twice." In "Jaybird," the last story, Benoit is a "natural" actor, an actor who is convinced to perform a play in the nude and who convinces himself that he might be in love with his scene partner, but that love, in the end, might just be a Jacob kind of love, a moment imagined, and not necessarily natural. These repetitions are not simple repetitions; each is a rearticulation, a making new, and entirely wonderful in its ability to hold the reader and the collection together.

Peggy, the narrator in "Funny Weird or Funny Ha Ha?"—who is also the Mother of Carl, the young voice of "Green Florescent Protein," another example of complex weaving—notes that Lucille Ball's comediennicity was a product of her being able to "*play* funny but she was not naturally funny." Lucille's self-critique, or self-knowing, functions as segue into my critique regarding the overt structuring of *Bang Crunch*'s stories. The strategizing, the comprehensive planning, the structuring of each story, at times, reads like it is what it is: a literary vehicle that structures the story. I wonder if the structure needs to disappear a little more into the showing. Not that the structures do not make sense: "Scrapbook" reads like a scrapbook, the title story's lack of paragraph breaks is intelligently chosen—the temporal logic of the story dictates that the reader reads without pausing, reads as fast as Eepie Carpetrod ages, reads as fast, that is, as Eepie ages both forward and backward. But naming a support group of malignant tumor owners and the story itself "The B9ers," is too, well, cute and contrived. And, while I'm all for magic, and like to imagine that gloves do tell their own stories ("Extremities") because it is less interesting to think that they can't or don't, if you're going to introduce a story told in the voice of gloves (or is it "the voice of glove"?), it *has to be* okay to end a sentence with a preposition: the "pale pink calfskin of which the gloves were made" just doesn't sound like any glove I've heard before.

The last story of *Bang Crunch*, "Jaybird," is the best, allowing the collection to end smashingly with its title onomatopoeia, rather than a fizzle splat. As a student of Somerset Maugham's short stories and Gabriel Garcia Márquez's argument that if you don't engage your reader in the first paragraph of your story don't bother writing it at all, I find "Jaybird"'s Benoit Doré wearing of a "shirt that lied that he didn't spend time thinking about shirts," and the phrase's assertive negation, to be paradoxically unique and enticingly cerebral. And I assume that Benoit's late understanding that his play script contains a prologue in the final act is less about closure than about expansion, and a signal for, among other things, more stories. Look forward to them.

Writing, Coupling

Marjorie Stone and Judith Thompson, eds.
Literary Couplings: Writing Couples, Collaborators, and the Construction of Authorship.
U of Wisconsin P US $60.00

Reviewed by Manina Jones

Moving from "snapshots" of contemporary authorship that urge examining the practices by which authorship is conceived, to engaging historically-situated essays, *Literary Couplings* examines how "intimate relationships" between authors complicate conceptions of "solitary genius." Its contributors focus on frictions and felicities contributing to and arising from joint composition; their analyses resonate beyond their periods to encompass theories of

editing, translation, pedagogy, biography, composition, reception, and intellectual property.

Patricia Demers' discussion of The Countess of Pembroke's translations of the Psalms with brother Sir Philip Sidney, for example, asks readers to consider the text as a set of "experiments in expressivity," while John B. Radner's exploration of Samuel Johnson and James Boswell's accounts of a 1773 Hebridean journey reveals authors struggling for control of the narrative in a process of mutual self-constitution.

Gerard Goggin analyzes William Godwin's editorial interventions in Mary Wollstonecraft's unfinished novel *Wrongs of Woman*, highlighting the dynamics of gender and sexuality in their personal and working relationship, represented as a scene of pedagogy. Anne D. Wallace identifies shifting domestic economies of Romantic composition in William and Dorothy Wordsworth's sibling-anchored household, which exemplifies "changing valuations of corporate production and domestic labor." In Alison Hickey's essay, Sara Coleridge's editing of father Samuel Taylor Coleridge's corpus is imagined as a filiative labour, comprehending Sara's co-editor/husband, and literary "parentage," the Wordsworth-Coleridge-Southey triumvirate.

Corinne Davies and Marjorie Stone contribute an informal scholarly correspondence on Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, writers whose engagement with one another's writing lives destabilizes distinctions between influence, editing, and collaboration. In an essay on Victorian women travellers' coordinate accounts to their husbands' narratives, Jill Matus argues that such accounts adjudicate "competing claims of gendered authorship, personal relationship, feminine propriety, and national superiority." In their analysis of *Teleny*, an erotic novel of the gay subculture of the 1890s, written in chain-letter fashion, Robert Gray and Christopher Keep find a model of "queer writing practice characterized by fluidity, circulation, and exchange."

Two essays turn to couples at the heart of literary Modernity, with Lisa Harper's commentary on W.B. Yeats and Dorothy Wellesley's "competitive reciprocity" in their friendship, correspondence, commentary, influence, and advocacy paired with Amber Vogel's revisiting of the composition and reception of Robert Graves' *The White Goddess*, which exposes sexist violations of intellectual property, by which Laura Riding was represented as avatar rather than co-author.

Rebecca Carpenter addresses Romanian scholar Mircea Eliade and Bengali poet Maitreyi Devi's competing fictionalized accounts of their love affair, viewing their struggle for authority over shared life episodes as part of the racial, colonial, and sexual politics of intercultural narratives. Sarah Churchwell examines that infamous literary coupling, Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes, through Hughes' *Birthday Letters*, a volume situated between secrecy and revelation, art and life, collaboration and appropriation. Finally, Lorraine York investigates the problematics of shared physical, textual, and cultural space in lesbian collaborations, from late nineteenth-century to late twentieth-century partnerships.

For readers with an interest in authorship, *Literary Couplings* is essential reading, not just for individual essays, but for its framing materials, including a superb overview of theoretical issues and a wide-ranging survey of scholarship on literary couples, contextualized within collaboration studies.

Hope For Networked Society

Michael Strangelove
The Empire of Mind: Digital Piracy and the Anti-Capitalist Movement. U of Toronto P $33.95

Reviewed by Michael Truscello

Michael Strangelove's *The Empire of Mind*, a 2006 finalist for the Governor General's Award for nonfiction, posits a litmus test for readers and their perception of the future of the Internet: Will the Internet, like previous media, be consumed by the various forms of corporate control, as predicted by proponents of the *normalization thesis* such as Robert McChesney, Lawrence Lessig, and Noam Chomsky; or will what Strangelove calls "unconstrained expression," the often subversive and archived chatter of online communities, ultimately transform the social order in a substantive way? The prevailing wisdom is that the Internet will be no different from other media, and that transnational capitalism will find a way to control and commodify that which traffics on the global networks. Strangelove's conviction that the Internet "has in all probability achieved a stable state," and that newfound communicative freedoms on the Internet will not so easily be dominated and incorporated by capitalism, appears on the scene as a faint but astutely argued splash of optimism in an otherwise fatalistic ocean of cultural theory. "The fundamental significance of the Internet," he writes, "lies in its production of an alternative symbolic economy and its expansion of the number of contenders that may participate in the normative debate." If this sounds like the hope that numerical superiority will eventually overcome obstinate structural disincentives, that's because it is.

The promise of the Internet is in the way it encourages "non-commercial cultural production" on a global scale. This "new" ability made it impossible, for example, for Mattel Corporation to prosecute successfully Internet patrons who published parodic images of their Barbie doll, a case that reveals "the extent of the failure to extend property rights and definitional control into cyberspace." Control online is also less comprehensive for "non-corporate online news," which has the capability to counter the "propaganda function of commercial news."

Strangelove is quick to point out, repeatedly, that he is not projecting utopian ends for Internet communication; rather, his "concern" is with what he calls "*embryonic* dynamics," emergent possibilities that may not realize a transformation of the social order for some time. In essence, "by simply allowing all voices a forum, the Internet subverts the hegemonic construction of reality." Hegemonic appeals are unsustainable in an environment of "unconstrained communicative action," he suggests, and this is "the heart of the Internet's most probable long-term social effect."

While Strangelove disagrees with Hardt and Negri's specific outline of Empire, he similarly focuses on "the communicative mechanisms of empire": "*The Empire of Mind* argues that capitalist economy operates as a form of empire wherein the economy is the dominant site of symbolic production." The vast collection of home videos, blogs, and various reworkings of copyrighted material that dot the Internet landscape, much of which shows contempt for intellectual property regimes and opposition to capitalist discourse, constitute an alternative symbolic economy from which a new social order may emerge. Where representation is transformed into structural transformation, Strangelove's thesis must confront its most formidable obstacle, and he is quite aware of this: "Barbie, McDonald's, and corporate journalism are in no immediate danger from the Net," he writes, "Yet a tight close-up on any one issue addressed by Internet activists has the

potential to overlook the long-term significance of a massive shift in the structure of the public sphere."

How would Strangelove feel about recent events: the $1.65 billion purchase of popular video-sharing website YouTube by Internet behemoth Google; the purchase of MySpace, the enormously popular social networking site, by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp.; or the US military's declassified plans to "fight the Net," a slogan the Pentagon is using in its "Information Operations Roadmap"? I suspect his optimism would be undaunted. *The Empire of Mind* provides a provocative and incisive corrective to contemporary cultural theory, which tends to undervalue "decommodified online behavior and non-market cultural activity." Some may see Strangelove's optimism as myopic, but most will simply hope he is right.

Playing Saskatchewan

Theatre Saskatchewan, ed.
Write On! Theatre Saskatchewan Anthology.
Playwrights Canada $34.97

Reviewed by Monica Prendergast

As a former Saskatchewan resident and current theatre artist and educator, I was most pleased to see the appearance of this 2005 anthology of plays. I grew up on the plays of Regina's Globe Theatre and its resident and guest playwrights such as Rex Deverell, Ken Mitchell, and others, and these early theatre experiences greatly affected my belief in theatre as a tool for community celebration and social development. While other plays by Saskatchewan playwrights have been published (as in the two playwrights already mentioned), this anthology marks a new generation of plays and playwrights working in Saskatchewan.

Theatre Saskatchewan, an umbrella organization for community theatre in the province, sent out a call for contributors to this volume, and the five plays published were selected by a committee including Lorna Batycki, Kathryn Bracht, and Dan McDonald. Some have been professionally or otherwise produced, others have not. There is much to admire in this collection; however I was left wishing for a more comprehensive and well-thought-out gathering together of the very best that Saskatchewan playwrights have offered in a more historical and critical framework.

The collection opens with a play by Sharon Butala, *Rodeo Life*, that was produced in 1993 at Twenty-Fifth Street Theatre in Saskatoon. It is resonant of Sam Shepard's work in its focus on a highly dysfunctional rural ranch family coming to terms with many demons from the past. The three McCarthy sisters and their "moderately mentally retarded" brother Drew have gathered together at the family ranch as their mother is dying. In the unravelling of tensions between and among these siblings, we see choices and compromises made in the face of physical, emotional and sexual parental abuse. The play veers dangerously toward melodrama at times and is verbose with little action, but it does gather some emotional force as it moves toward disclosure and potential healing.

The second play is Mary Love's *Prairie Tomten*, about a 12-year-old girl and her friendship with an elderly Aboriginal man called Mr. Bitternose. The play has been workshopped but not produced to date. I read Love's play as a Theatre for Young Audiences piece, and it has much potential as a touring show to schools. Love addresses issues of bullying both large and small as she weaves together the story of Laura—and her attempt to protect a feral cat from the "Town Girls," who seem to enjoy tormenting her with little or no motivation—and the story of Mr. Bitternose. "Mr. B" seems to know more than he wishes to remember or to tell about the "starlight rides" given to Natives by police officers who dump their

passengers on the outskirts of town, sometimes in the dead of winter, to find their way home on foot. The scandal of the freezing death of a young man in this manner underpins the play. My one concern about this piece is that it reads more like a radio play or screenplay than a stage play, with directions calling for multiple and detailed settings, live animals, and even a snowstorm on stage.

The next piece is *Choices* by Dennis Hunt, produced at Saskatoon's Persephone Theatre in 2000. Described as "a play about ambition, betrayal, selfishness, forgiveness and love," it reads as a work about none of the above, with characters who refuse to move beyond ciphers and stereotypes in the telling of supposed family secrets between a mother and daughter. One can only hope that it found more life on stage than on the page.

The Scarborough Four by B.D. Miller, produced by Regina's Little Theatre in 2002, is the only comic play in the collection and tells an engaging story of four rebellious Toronto suburban teens who get jailed for the offence of horse stealing in Middlin, Saskatchewan. The play features a large cast of colourful local characters who trick the teens and then have their tricks turned against them, in the manner of the Pied Piper (an allegory that the playwright hammers into our heads). With a cast of 20 and lots of comic action, this play could have a popular and successful future in community theatre and high school productions.

The final play in the collection is *The Armoured Heart* by Ian C. Nelson. Set in the European middle ages, the play takes place in a Rouen dungeon around the time of Joan of Arc. For the most part, this is a two-hander between a male and female prisoner with a guard who appears on occasion. The play has not been produced to date, for reasons that are not difficult to deduce. It is meandering, pedantic, and confusing, lacking dramatic action to drive it forward. It seems to have been written for an audience of one, the writer himself, never a good sign in the essentially social art form of theatre.

Because *Write On!* is published by Playwrights Canada Press, this collection could find itself in international libraries as representative of Saskatchewan playwrighting. It is at this level that I find the collection fails. If the publisher, in partnership with Theatre Saskatchewan, had taken the time and effort to put together a truly representative collection of Saskatchewan plays, then a more historical and critical collection would have to contain plays by Rex Deverell such as *Boiler Room Suite* or *Drift*, and iconic plays about the province such as *Paper Wheat* (collective creation, 25th St. Theatre, 1977), *Cruel Tears* (Ken Mitchell, 1977, revived in 1999/2000), *Saskatoon Pie, Cyclone,* and *Medicare.* These plays, and many more shaped my consciousness of both theatre and the province in childhood and youth, and these and other plays would make an excellent anthology of what Saskatchewan theatre has to offer both Canada and the world.

Parcours de femmes. Entre anciens et nouveaux mondes.

Chantal Théry
De plume et d'audace. Femmes de la Nouvelle-France. Triptyque 25,00 $

Thérèse Renaud
Un passé recomposé. Nota bene 22,95 $

Compte rendu par Julie Roy

De plume et d'audace rassemble les travaux et réflexions réalisés par Chantal Théry sur le parcours et l'écriture des femmes missionnaires de la Nouvelle-France. De la perception de ces amazones par leurs contemporains à leur propre acclimatement à un univers qu'elles devront apprivoiser, Théry donne la parole à ces pionnières et à

ceux qui les ont côtoyées selon des thématiques qui sont autant de points d'ancrage dans ce vaste « matrimoine » culturel et littéraire que l'on connaît encore bien mal. Si Marie de l'Incarnation constitue le personnage principal de l'ouvrage, en raison de son abondante production, la fondatrice des ursulines de Québec y côtoie plusieurs de ses contemporaines, dont Marie Morin et Marguerite Bourgeoys, qui ont elles aussi laissé des traces écrites de leur expérience du Nouveau Monde. Théry nous permet également de découvrir les écrits de deux religieuses établies à la Nouvelle-Orléans, montrant le caractère encore mouvant des frontières de ce corpus.

De plume et d'audace lève le voile sur une partie de l'histoire de la Nouvelle-France, encore largement méconnue. On y découvre des écritures de femmes fortement teintées de spiritualité certes, mais où les mots deviennent parole agissante à travers des pratiques aussi diverses que la correspondance, les annales ou les écrits spirituels. La portée intellectuelle de ces textes permet aussi de voir l'importance de la vocation enseignante à laquelle la plupart de ces pionnières se sont consacrées et leur rôle indéniable dans le développement de la colonie. L'abondance des citations issues d'un ensemble varié de textes donne de la perspective aux analyses et permet de découvrir des femmes audacieuses, non seulement pour avoir pris le beau risque du Nouveau Monde, mais également pour leur résistance et leurs idées novatrices. Cette abondance permet également d'entrer en contact direct avec les textes et de saisir les rapports particuliers de ces femmes à l'écriture. *De plume et d'audace* s'avère un incontournable pour quiconque souhaite découvrir l'histoire et l'écriture de ces pionnières. Malgré un certain effet de collage, l'ouvrage offre une belle réflexion sur l'apport des femmes au développement de la Nouvelle-France selon un point de vue neuf. Fruit d'une lecture attentive des textes et de l'utilisation des classiques de la critique littéraire et historique, cet ouvrage s'avère une source importante pour tous ceux qui souhaitent introduire ces corpus dans leur enseignement.

L'ouvrage signé par Thérèse Renaud nous fait emprunter le chemin inverse, du Québec à la France, au lendemain de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Thérèse Renaud, la poète et l'artiste qui vient de publier le recueil de poèmes *Les sables du rêve*, quitte le Québec le 22 octobre 1946 pour aller séjourner à Paris. Le voyage durera jusqu'en 1953. Dans *Passé recomposé*, Renaud renoue avec cette période et raconte sa propre vie au quotidien et celles des artistes québécois exilés en France qu'elle a côtoyés pendant cette période. Puisant autant à sa mémoire qu'à la correspondance de ses proches (la sienne, nous dit-elle, ayant disparu), Renaud donne à lire la fébrilité qui marque cette période d'effervescence artistique pour les signataires du *Refus Global* dont elle fait partie. On y retrouve les parcours de son conjoint Fernand Leduc, venu la rejoindre à Paris, de Paul-Émile Borduas et de Jean-Paul Riopelle qui tentent également de percer en France et de se tailler une place dans un Québec où le monde de l'art annonce les bouleversements qui marqueront la société québécoise des années 1960. On découvre aussi les doutes et les remises en question, les difficultés du quotidien et le dénuement auxquels le couple d'artistes a eu à faire face ainsi que la relation particulière de Thérèse Renaud à la maternité. Ces mémoires sont empreintes des rencontres avec des personnages exceptionnels et d'une certitude tranquille d'avoir participé à une époque marquante de l'histoire, mais elles témoignent aussi d'une grande sensibilité à la beauté des petites choses. Recomposer le passé, c'est le remettre en forme et l'agencer pour qu'il prenne sens. Celui que lui donne Thérèse Renaud, loin de constituer un simple tribut à des peintres exceptionnels ou de reconduire les idées reçues, nous fait

découvrir l'univers au jour le jour d'un couple qui marqua le monde des lettres et des arts à sa manière.

Going Beyond Prose

Betty Warrington-Kearsley
Red Lacquered Chopsticks. TSAR $16.95

Dan Jalowica
Newer Lies. Guernica $15.00

George Bowering
Vermeer's Light: Poems 1996-2006. Talonbooks $29.95

Reviewed by Douglas Barbour

Back at the beginning of the twentieth-century, Ezra Pound demanded that poetry be written at least as well as prose; well, that is the gist of "Don't imagine that a thing will 'go' in verse just because it's too dull to go in prose." It seems as strong an admonition now as it was then. He also said, quoting Eliot, "No *vers* is *libre* for the man who wants to do a good job." How soon we forget.

Betty Warrington-Kearsley has many stories to tell, especially of her extended Chinese family and its history, and some of them are fascinating. Indeed, the best pieces in *Red Lacquered Chopsticks* have to do with her grandmother, her parents, and her own early life in Singapore. These, at least, support Armand Garnet Ruffo's comment that her poems "cross time and cultures" and express "a vision that draws from a tradition of storytelling." Her poems are generally narrative, personal, or journalistic; at their best these stories catch the reader's imagination.

Too often, however, this reader cannot see why these pieces have been broken up to look like verse. They almost all move through standard sentence structure, and the line breaks make little rhythmic sense. In some there are occasional rhyming couplets and triplets, but these are seldom set in a continuing pattern from stanza to stanza. The poems tend toward clear sharp closure, often as if to close an argument. In the service of storytelling, this is fine, but I prefer a poetry that remains open, in process; too many of these pieces, especially those attempting to argue a case, as many based on headlines do, fall flat.

In the poems about her grandmother and her way of life and belief, Warrington-Kearsley achieves a power lacking elsewhere in this book; they at least tell fascinating stories. But on the whole, *Red Lacquered Chopsticks* lacks poetic force.

Newer Lies is Dan Jalowica's third book of poetry, and it demonstrates Jalowica's love of the epigram and the aphorism. He cuts his sentences and sententiae to the bone, playing with fragments throughout: "Summer. No music. / No touch-tone friendship. / No storm." What verbs he does use tend to be strong active ones. He only falls into the softer copula in some of the apparently more personal poems, where the lyric "I" (or "we") speaks.

What exactly are the "newer lies" Jalowica parses and passes on in this series of small poems? They are most often the lies of progress, good government, technological assumptions, but often tied to the lies of the self that accepts or resists. This can lead to a hortatory tone, addressing a "you" who might be someone within the poem or the reader. The tone tends to a certain sameness, but individual poems have a definite power:

> I need your love. I need
> to throw down roads
> across these painkilling continents
> with their soft illogical music,
> their frightened animals,
> their moody heartbeat not yet
> my own. Not yet possessed.

Vermeer's Light offers up a large, generous, and varied selection from our first Poet Laureate. No one ever accused George Bowering of lacking chutzpah, and in *Vermeer's Light* he happily ranges from the slightest joke to powerful elegiac works, including a complex essay on poetics,

"Rewriting My Grandfather," illustrated with a series of re-writings of one of his most famous poems. If some of the lighter poems seem throwaways, they still entertain, and many others offer up the riches of a lifelong pursuit of a wide open and demanding poetics that refuses to allow the writer any easy outs.

Bowering has long been fond of what he calls "baffles" for his poem, those stringent little, made-up rules that force a writer away from the usual lyric egotism. This does not mean that powerful, and deeply personal, emotions do not get into the poems, but it does help to stave off the kind of emotionalism or sentimentality that can creep into unthinking lyricism. Thus "A, You're Adorable" takes on a female author, Ellen Field, as well as working off each letter in turn. "Sitting in Vancouver" specifies each site in which the poet looks outward to what can be reported from that spot. There is a series of "sentence poems" about other Canadian poets, in which the style attaches to some particular aspect of that poet. It is worth noting that Bowering insists that his prose poems be as good as other prose, let alone his verse.

"Imaginary Poems for AMB" is the true elegy for Angela Bowering, and one of Bowering's finest and subtlest works; the "imaginary" in the title applies on many levels, all catching the sense of loss the poem seeks to assuage and knows it must fail to do.

> I am surrounded by ghosts
> here in this ghost world.
> They are all alive
> they say, you are looking good
> they say.
> I don't tell them
> I only want to be where
> I can look at you, even
> from a distance
> if there is distance there
> and that is not
> what I want here.

But to suggest how life does continue, there are the first few poems of what Bowering promises will be an ongoing series for his new sweetheart. All in all, then, *Vermeer's Light* offers just the sense of poetic possibility that keeps a reader interested, intrigued, and off balance. Writing of all its anthology appearances and of the ways "Grandfather" has been interpreted, Bowering says, "But we are in a new century now, free to talk about how poems are written, rather than about what they are used for by their readers from time to time." Which is why he puts his poem through new paces while explaining how it happened. With its wide range of poetic possibilities, and its insistence on composition as process, *Vermeer's Light* is a delight.

To Wear or not to Wear a Wedding Dress

Susan Whelehan and Anne Laurel Carter, eds.
My Wedding Dress. Vintage Canada $24.95

Reviewed by Maria Noëlle Ng

A collection of 26 true stories on the theme of the wedding dress could be quite predictable—there must be a bride, a groom, and a wedding. So it is to the editors' credit that some of these memory pieces are quite unconventional in their treatment of the clichéd "most important day" of a woman's life. The collection does contain the usual high-octane emotional ride of a bride-to-be's preparation for a wedding, but it also features some eccentric and original perspectives on both marriage and its concomitant rituals.

For instance, Edeet Ravel ("Waiting-Room Wedding with Veil") writes: "[W]hen I fell in love in what I considered to be a permanent and final way, I had no intention of marrying my true love." When she did marry, in Israel, it was because married

women "were exempt from service" and Ravel had been called up to join the army. Her account of the pre-marriage requirements, her choice of the wedding outfit, and the "shtetl-like atmosphere of burlesque and improvisation" of the marriage ceremony are delightfully comical.

Another entry that is equally indifferent to the required solemn social rituals of the wedding is "The Art Project" by Jessica Ruth Harris. The narrative begins deceptively: "What I wanted was the most traditional wedding dress possible." It transpires that Harris was an art student and the wedding dress was needed as a prop in a performance art project. The dress eventually contributed to various pieces of textile art works, a costume at a fetish ball, and a graduation dress: "The full tulle and lace overskirts had been cut off" and "the burst seam in the bodice was mended with safety pins." Woven into the life of the wedding dress is the writer's growing awareness of love and sexualities. As Harris realizes, the dress "taught me that the accepted forms and meanings are not the only possibilities open to us."

Similar to Harris' narrative, "Two Suits and a Closet" is also told from the perspective of someone in a same-sex relationship. Rosemary Hood married in the conventional sense in 1946. After 22 years, Hood left her husband and moved in with Kay, whom she met at work. The story ends with Hood and Kay's marriage. Both were in their eighties and their desire to formalize their relationship after 34 years was touching. The wedding, then, became more significant than the usual ritual. It was a test of both their friends' and relatives' acceptance of their sexuality and their own comfort with being integrated into conventional society as a married couple.

Though the conventional wedding dress conjures up the picture of a white gown, lace, satin, and so on, several narratives feature a wedding dress that is anything but. Michele Landsberg's "Unbearable Whiteness" is also a critique of the hypocrisy towards women and virginity in the 1950s. Landsberg emerged from her background smarter and stronger: "Most of the negative things that happened to me in childhood served me in good stead." These included anti-Semitism, patriarchal attitudes, her parents' unhappy marriage, and a stifling social culture. Landsberg's choice of a wedding dress, "run up swiftly by a seamstress in time for the wedding," stood for "my rejection of a woman's role, my scorn for the concept of virginity, and my reluctance to adopt, even for my mother's sake, any of the usual symbols of marital bliss."

Not surprisingly, the mother plays an important role in many of the narratives in this collection, either as someone supportive and wise, or as someone whose experiences and values spurred her daughter in another direction. In "Dark Water," Lorna Crozier paints a more vivid portrait of her mother than of herself as bride. Crozier's mother got married in 1938 when Saskatchewan "had suffered eight years of drought." Money for the wedding dress came from "the scarce eggs and cream produced in that dry year" and money for a perm came from selling a duck and a chicken to the Chinese café in town. The couple was going to live in a shack abandoned by some homesteader and Crozier imaginatively retells the scenes of her parents' wedding during these very hard times: her mother prepared the stuffed turkey and raisin pies before changing into her blue-black velvet dress; the next day, she walked to the nearby town to buy formaldehyde in order to make a "deadly home remedy" to kill off the bedbugs in the shack. Juxtaposed against this naturalistic picture of depression-era life is Crozier's poetic images of her mother's wedding dress: "The velvet, the colour of pooled ink, must have drawn the moonlight into its folds and dewlaps as it lay draped on a chair by the bed, the couple

young and naked in one another's arms, their lives together stretching in front of them." Maybe that's what the reader of *My Wedding Dress* is hoping for as well, a future of promises and gifts, the possibility of disappointment and failure kept at bay.

(Re)presenting Cultures

Leo Yerxa
Ancient Thunder. Groundwood $18.95

Antonio Ramírez; Elisa Amado, trans.; Domi, ill.
Napí Goes to the Mountain. Groundwood $18.95

Jorge Luján; Elisa Amado, trans.; Mandana Sadat, ill.
Tarde de invierno/Winter Afternoon. Groundwood $16.95

Reviewed by Suzanne James

A close interweaving of visual and textual elements, a potentially broad range of audience—toddlers through beginning readers, and the parents, teachers and other adults who purchase the texts—as well as a significant social role, are dominant generic characteristics of picture books. The socialization function of such texts is particularly relevant in the context of works which strive to represent non-European cultures for a youthful Canadian audience.

Leo Yerxa's *Ancient Thunder*, a celebration of First Nations culture and the wild prairie horses which fascinated him as a child, received the 1996 Governor General's Literary Award for Children's Literature (Illustration). Using an original technique of painting on hand-made watercolour paper treated to appear like leather, and integrating traditional Native clothing designs, Yerxa has created 15 evocative illustrations. From the cover onward, a sense of movement is conveyed by the often overlapping images of galloping horses and reinforced by Yerxa's sparse poetic text. Suitable for a wide age range, the text and illustrations are open to a breadth of interpretations. More a poem of praise than a story, the work opens with the evocative line, "To hooves of ancient thunder" and closes with "On hooves of ancient thunder." While the poetry and images draw a reader onward, conversely, Yerxa's illustrations beg one to slow down and savour the fine-details and idiosyncrasies of each painting.

Napí Goes to the Mountain, which takes us into the world of rural Mexico and the culture of the Mazatec people, is another visual delight. Aimed at an older pre-school audience, this collaboration of the husband-wife/author-illustrator team of Antonio Ramírez and Domi has been translated from the Spanish by Elisa Amado into a smoothly evocative English, punctuated with a few words of Mazatec.

The dedications which open the text encapsulate two significant undercurrents: a plea for the rights of the dispossessed poor ("To the boys and girls, children of landless farmers, the victims of capitalist greed") and a nostalgia for the traditional world of the Mazatec ("To Paulino, my father, and Carenia, my mother, with whom I lived through the adventure of the founding of Nuevo Ixcatlán, my village, over half a century ago").

Written in the first person from the perspective of Napí, a young Mazatec girl, this mystical quest narrative traces the narrator's search for her father who has mysteriously disappeared and may be in some danger (she overhears one of his friends declare "someone told me that he had seen some men hit him, then take him away"). Accompanied by her younger brother, Niclé, the determined Napí plays truant and sets off upriver to find her father. The children's adventure rapidly becomes magical as their raft is piloted by turtles and they find themselves miraculously transformed into deer with "little fawn antlers." In a "fresh and new and beautiful" Edenic environment where even coral snakes are kind, Napí and

Niclé are assisted by a series of talking animals, the last of whom directs them home with the prophetic message: "The family is finally together again."

An engaging narrator, Napí closes the book with an admission of her truancy and the declaration, "Because even though I love to dream, I never tell lies." While her father's reappearance remains unaccounted for, and the political subtext remains undeveloped, we are drawn into the warmth of the family reunion. Equally compelling are Domi's unique one-dimensional water-colour illustrations. In a direct and deceptively simple style reminiscent of traditional folk art, she uses vibrant colours to accentuate aspects of each painting against a background of inviting earth-tones.

By comparison, *Tarde de invierno/Winter Afternoon* is a quieter and more emotive text that evokes the loving bond between a mother and child. In this bilingual Spanish/English book for very young children, Mandana Sadat's illustrations and Jorge Luján's minimalist text (also translated by Elisa Amado) explore the feelings of a child as she scratches a picture in the frost on a windowpane, impatiently watching for her mother's return. More universal than local, the childlike drawings open with a cityscape of multi-coloured buildings set against a dark hilltop threaded with intersecting paths of vehicle headlights. As the story progresses, the focus narrows to the girl and the windowpane, the colours becoming richer and warmer as the mother and daughter are reunited.

As a bilingual text, *Tarde de invierno/Winter Afternoon* has the potential to expose non-Spanish speaking children to a foreign language within the familiar context of urban family life. More richly suggestive, *Ancient Thunder* and *Napí Goes to the Mountain* speak directly to children of First Nations and Mexican/Spanish ancestry, affirming their heritage, yet they also encourage cross-cultural understanding by presenting aspects of these cultures in the highly accessible format of beautifully designed picture books.

Flight of Birds

A Note on the Significance of Katherine Govier's *Creation*

María Jesús Hernáez Lerena

> What do different languages do, not with these artificially isolated objects but with the flowing face of nature in its motion, color, changing form; with clouds, beaches, and yonder flight of birds? For, as goes our segmentation of the face of nature, so goes our physics of the Cosmos.
>
> BENJAMIN LEE WHORF

In her novel *Creation* (2002), Katherine Govier recuperates the lost three months in which John James Audubon travelled to Labrador in order to add new bird species to his masterpiece *Birds of America* (1838). Her account of that doomed voyage is strictly in accordance with historical evidence—mainly Audubon's journals [1]—and the animation of Audubon's figure as both conservationist and bird-butcher seems to spring naturally from the contradictory nature of a man never portrayed with paint and brushes, but with a gun. In the novel, the lyrical evocation of Audubon's past runs parallel to an intricate examination of the main force which compelled him to become a naturalist: the pursuit of knowledge. A third factor which overlaps the biographical review and the epistemological critique is the presence of Labrador as the supreme wilderness; never before had Audubon been appalled at nature because he had never regarded its elements—water, rock, earth, air, sky, birds—as an inextricable mixture, impossible to name separately. Through an awareness of these three merging levels of significance—the temporarily defeated American frontiersman, the dissection of inherited notions of knowledge, and the mystique of Labrador landscape—this note meditates on the implications of a novel which exposes the reader to ingrained rationalizations of cruelty to animals.

Audubon belonged to a society frantically obsessed with reducing the volume of unknown animal and plant life in the New World: the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries engaged both empires and colonies in a race to name and describe wildlife. In 1735, Carolus Linneus devised a linguistic strategy to pin down living organisms yet unidentified by means of a two-word code (genus plus species), a system which lent universality to the apparatus of natural history. Heroes of this scientific cause such as Audubon worked for other causes besides the spread of knowledge because their catalogue of environmental resources contributed to form a clearer sense of their emerging nationality, and, through their adventurous seeking of new creatures, they achieved a sense of epic self: they became the first namers of life forms never seen before by Euro-American eyes, achieving a stereotyped mental climax originally sanctioned by God when, according to the Book of Genesis, he made Adam think of himself as a taxonomist.

The perverse ways in which science and religion have become accomplices in the

apparently benign universal effort to gain knowledge through the ordering of the wilderness are unearthed in the novel, primarily in Audubon's numerous acts of introspection, in his bearing witness to the extinction of bird species, and in the insistent intervention of a landscape that frustrated conventional observation and verbalization.

A painful prelude to the voyage to the dangerous passage between Labrador and Newfoundland in 1833 is the eagle's episode, which Audubon recalls when lying on his stomach on a patch of the foggy Labrador coast, trying not to be swallowed by the mud. Audubon had been given a golden eagle caught in the White Mountains and had to decide whether to keep it or to kill it. "And if I kill it, I do not damage it, only stop it, fix it in its perfection, to make the painting" (68). After unsuccessfully trying to suffocate the animal, he sticks a sewing pin through the eagle's heart. Out of that killing he had painted a triumphant flying bird piercing its prey's eye; Audubon had collapsed after the effort, and then he turned to set up his trip to Labrador. This event is depicted in the painting on the dust jacket of Govier's *Creation*, and within the novel it becomes one of the most salient examples of Govier's describing how Audubon *executed* a painting. Audubon himself, in his journals, did not skip the killing and evisceration of animals; he did not pretend, like other naturalists, that science was harmless, an innocent annotation about life in the raw (*Creation* 224, *The Missouri River Journals*). However, it is the impasse produced by his time in Labrador that allows him to ruminate on these afflictions.

Audubon finds himself "north and off the map" (3), and this voyage has him confined to an ill-fitted ship, desperately gazing at an unapproachable shoreline. He is a name-giver suddenly in a place where he cannot engage his descriptive system, a describer in a place where the shore cannot be distinguished from the water, where the land cannot be walked on but at the risk of drowning, a continuously rough ocean full of hidden rocks, a maze of islands where thousands of birds form an indistinguishable mass. The birds Audubon expects to see, the Labrador Duck and the Great Auk, are already extinct. And true to Audubon's journals, the novel records that Audubon's powers to locate and draw distinct species of birds, fail him for the first time.[2]

Audubon's awareness of the dramas and filth necessarily preceding his visual representing of birds (stalking, shooting, eviscerating, measuring, stuffing, and wiring) are somehow alleviated by his belief in absolute mimesis (188). Like his contemporaries, Audubon considered nature to be "God's book of life" (Souder 32), a book which could be equally reproduced on paper; every bird, which he painted in real size, secured another page of his personal treatise. He imposed a paradoxical stillness on the most ethereal of creatures—wild birds do not stay put, they do not naturally lend themselves to observation. Nevertheless, Audubon promoted himself as the only bird artist who drew birds from nature, the only "living bird artist". He felt the tragedy first and then rejoiced at having found a new species ahead of his rivals. That naming and killing happen simultaneously can be seen in the following passage from the chapter titled "Baffled":

> The body is there, in the moss. In a moment Audubon is holding it in his hand, its wings spread open in his palm. He strokes its feathers. He can feel the life ebbing, the heartbeat diminish.
>
> It is lovely. It was even lovelier when it sang, and now the air is lonely without it. When the young gentlemen catch up with him, he is still gazing into the palm of his hand.
>
> "A new species", he says. . . .
>
> "I'll name it for you, Tom. Tom Lincoln's Finch. Fringilla lincolnii"
>
> In that instant the bird grows cooler

> and lighter in Audubon's hand.
>
> "There must be another. And a nest as well." (109)

Birds eventually prove to be moulds for a name *(Journals* II, 19). Audubon's main regret is not that they disappear, but that they disappear before he is able to present his readers with their complete history. Within a delicate narrative where violence is registered but overridden by classificatory excitement, Govier is recurrently able in her novel to capture the beauty and the gore that tinged Audubon's life. And this level of the narrative, which embodies the inherent paradox in the notion of *still life*, parallels an investigation of the effect of taxonomies, especially those of organic distinctions, which western civilization has used for clarification and knowledge as well as for empowerment.

Beyond particular nomenclatures, over which there was some disagreement, the real influence that the apparatus of natural history had on all cultural spheres was that it considered nature as a container of separate objects of different sizes and shapes. Its purpose was to parcel out the natural world and give each item a term, and this practice imposed a structure of knowledge difficult to depose because it was thought to be the handmaid to rationality. Some linguists, such as Benjamin Lee Whorf, have claimed that science perpetuates the underlying structures in language: language forces us to regard elusive aspects of nature's endless variety as distinct things because we cannot think without cutting up the universe and the flow of existence into units. However, European languages in particular, unlike American Indian languages, for example, effect a bipolar dissection of nature—nouns and verbs—the noun, or substantive, being the supreme part of speech because it names a substance: "as such it enjoys the superior prestige traditionally attaching to the subject or thing class" (244). According to Whorf, this necessity for substances has lead science to manipulate too readily certain phenomena as if they were nouns, detachable and ecstatic concepts (243).

In this particular meaning-making approach to reality, the act of knowledge was the singling out of an uncatalogued natural item (a "nondescript", *Journals* I, 88) for the purpose of naming, and this discovery was equated with the actual birth of the living *thing*. Furthermore, this apprehension of nature is also the result of a convenient observance of Biblical prescriptions, which Audubon often questions when discussing the topic with more confident surveyors: the Bible defined the raw material of this world, nature, in its submission to man's designs and linguistic branding (86-87, 244, 302).

The image that accompanies the caption in a naturalist's book further strengthens this human grip on the wilderness since individual specimens are taken to represent their species and are also rendered visually as discrete entities. The image perpetuates in another legible medium the lethal fixing power of the word because it robs birds of their movement and sound in order to achieve a reproducible proof of their existence. The painted image reenacts the moment of victory over the elusive, when a human code, an abstraction, substitutes reality and edits a bewildering multiplicity. The gigantic book of nature, a shared task of the civilized world, depended on the habit of believing that things are *as observed*. But Govier shows things *as arranged*—that is, she depicts Audubon impaling and staging his birds. He arranged his birds in a scene, in a composition that his readers took for omniscience. His techniques of illustration show the same urge toward segmentation as that implicit in verbal labelling: the world is broken down into units for the sake of identification. He first separated a bird, or a couple of birds, from their natural context: a tree, a mountain, or a flock. Then, he dissected their parts and reconstituted them, putting the birds in the foreground, as

actors under the spotlight. Then he created an artificial background using real plant species to enhance the beauty of the main performers. As usual in ornithological treatises, he completed his pictures by introducing drawings of some parts of the bodies of birds for better, more precise observation. For Audubon, to think of nature otherwise would have been impossible, given the generic load of conventional observation of the wilderness. Animals become what our techniques of observation make them.

However, this far-reaching realization of the pernicious aspect of human knowledge, which momentarily disturbs Audubon's representational impulse, is seen in the novel mainly as the product of Audubon's contact with a land that cannot even be thought of as "land." It is not only that Govier rescues an American figure from sanitization, but the novel has to confront the idea of Labrador imagined as the most representative untouched wilderness of the time, a space fiercely resistant to contour and definition. Captain Bayfield is seen as another example of the relentless human need to will things into fixity. His charting of the Labrador coast is also invalidated by tides, fog, countless islands, and shoals: "Irrational, useless and obstructing land, needing to be made sense of" (61). Govier finds the plot of her story in the clash of these two men, who represent the desire to register boundaries, and a Canadian space not amenable to geographical and wildlife segmentation.

A long tradition in Canadian literature equates geography with obstacle: a typical early example is Jacques Cartier's vengeful definition of the eastern tip of Canada. The idea of a Canadian psyche dependent on "these vistas of isolation" (Atwood *Journals* 1) has recurred in seminal literary works and in the declarations of important Canadian cultural figures. It is difficult to imagine the Canadian landscape—especially the Atlantic coast—outside this imaginative context, which also remains as a powerful critical context, since the canonization of certain obsessions in Canadian literature has revolved precisely around an alleged failure to verbalize nature, or even in a desire to "nurture namelessness" (Kroetsch 46).[3]

Govier, when taking up those three problem-ridden months otherwise cursorily mentioned in Audubon's biographies, creates a novel necessarily overcast by the mists of landscape tradition. But she does not deal with the relation between land and man merely with the help of the crystallized sight of an uninviting wilderness: she makes the dumbfounding experience of entering Canada confluent with the ethical entanglements of the nineteenth-century hunger for naming new species. She makes the environment unbury theoretical questions; the seascape is particularly effective in showing humans the futility of the taxonomic/taxidermal endeavour. The novel is full of the bewildering mixtures and "chaotic messes" (79) of water and rock, grass and earth, air and sea, day and night that characterize Labrador's landscape and seascape (8, 54, 65, 66, 79, 116). Amidst such chaos, Audubon loses command of his so far reliable vocabulary and cannot find appropriate words to describe weather conditions or landscape structures (see also *Journals* I 390, 393-4). The impossibility of drawing lines over water becomes patent, and the same difficult obscurity applies to the eclipse provoked by the Esquimaux curlews which sometimes flew over Labrador for several days (236-238). The lack of animation of Audubon's dead specimens is the consequence of making parts of a whole stand out in fictitious isolation (42, 52).

Govier describes the North, in a chapter entitled "Counting," as "the unpainted version," "created by taking away": she shows the same understanding of the impulse to "return to the condition preceding creation" that Kroetsch (56) identifies as a Canadian

meta-narrative—the merging with nature's undifferentiated elements, the will to unname (31-71). Govier anchors her narrative in the ideas and emotions implicated in the existence of the perfect "nondescript," Labrador, and discovers new nuances in her analysis of our fear of the collapse of distinctions. *Creation* presents us with a punishing surface, a dark, blurred, and shapeless Canadian landmass, and shows it as a realm existing in the limbo between the creation of the world and the marking out of human inscriptions—proof that the world can exist without the confirmation of language (either written or visual). Labrador landscape represents resistance against the foundations of modern knowledge, and it does so in the shape of the echoing refrain of a long poem which, in the novel, brings the reader back again and again to the latent life of a fluid nature difficult to discern.

NOTES

1 Audubon's journals were heavily edited by his granddaughter, who prepared the volume.

2 In the "Labrador Journal" (1833), Audubon repeatedly speaks of a rugged, dreary, inhospitable, and mournful country—barren, forbidding, and terrifying. He speaks of "stubborn, precipitous rocks" (*Journals* I 404), "terribly wild shores, fearfully high and rugged" (396), and of "the most extensive and dreariest wilderness I have ever beheld. It chilled the heart to gaze on these barren lands of Labrador" (403). Audubon becomes unable to draw birds: the loon, the Esquimaux curlew "are difficult to imitate or represent" (*Journals* I 393-4, 422), he says. He also complains that birds could not be observed or drawn because of the foul weather (363); his fatigue was unprecedented (426), and he wished to go back to the United States (422, 429).

3 The image of Canada as a God-forsaken piece of land that precludes verbalization has been expressed, among others, in well-known critical pieces by Northrop Frye, Margaret Atwood, and Dick Harrison. It also features in poems widely used in Canadian literature classes: such as Douglas LePan ("A Country without a Mythology"), Atwood ("Progressive Insanities of a Pioneer", *The Journals of Susanna Moodie*). Lecker (1991), Corse (1997), Moss (1999), Hulan (2002), or Blodgett (2003) have analyzed the prototypical patterns of Canadianness in literature created for the sake of a homogeneous sense of nation. However, the idea of the Canadian landscape as a thorny psychological challenge still proves enticing, especially for foreign teachers and students (see Stanzel). Definitions of national character revolving around the ideas of invisibility and elusiveness have served to add strength to these views: see, for example, Cook, Davies, or Callaghan. However, in spite of an alertness on our part for the dangers of generalization, there seems to be a lingering fixity in Canadian letters on the emotional implications of the clash between a land and a non-indigenous language, that is, on the moment(s) where language is exiled from reality. Such persistence is based partly on the influence of postcolonial theory but also in the primacy of the construction of Canada as *space*. Thus, in the face of the inadequacy of words to capture the environment, "the temptation of silence" as Kroetsch (*Contemporary* 16) calls it, surfaces as an important issue in many works (literary and critical) dealing directly or indirectly with the Canadian manner of inhabiting the world.

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Sight Lines

Kevin McNeilly

For the past few years, I've included at least one graphic novel in my undergraduate syllabuses, and inevitably students tell me near the end of a given course that *Watchmen* or *Persepolis* was one of the highlights of their term: they didn't expect to find this sort of idiomatic pop culture among the highfalutin and ancient material they associate with capital-E English capital-L Literature. And discovering that you could get credit for reading comics seems temptingly easy and vaguely (if safely) subversive. I admit I exploit graphic media as a selling-point for my classes—to make myself appear, well, cooler than I really am and maybe boost my teaching ratings: it's a ploy aimed at my late-teen, video-savvy target market, and I offer up visual culture as a kind of seductive eye candy, a gateway drug into the harder, more thoroughly textual stuff, like capital-P Poetry.

But when you actually read, let alone teach, graphica you discover these works are as complex and as demanding as any other well-made texts, with a genre-specific history and an aesthetic rigour that belies the pretension and disdain implicit in the claim I've just made, that the visual panders to the untutored tastes of a poorly informed or de-cultured—read, young—audience. Graphic novels, it turns out, are actually harder to read; there's more, not less, going on in any particular graphic text, and the experience of reading those pages is more like cognitive overload than spellbound escapism. There's little doubt that, inundated by electronic and visual media, we're all—young or not—undergoing a radical shift in what it means to read. But what this shift invites isn't so much a disavowal of our uncertain present tense as, instead, a more careful and attentive address to the work of reading itself, to re-think the pervasive watching, looking or scanning (for example) we find ourselves in the midst of, mediated, not as symptoms of cultural decline but as nascent aspects of a trained reading practice, an emergent literacy. Contemporary graphica offer crafted and sophisticated means to their audiences—whether we think of ourselves as browsers, spectators or even readers—of coming to terms with critically self-aware and engaged forms of seeing. They present their own highly developed poetics. They teach us, though hardly with mere sweetness and light, how better to look and look again.

Chester Brown's *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* appeared last year in paperback, and represents an exceptional artistic achievement. It's an outstanding example of what visual genius can produce with pen and ink and six frames per page. Less graphic novel than hand-drawn historiography, Brown's work aligns itself in large part with Dorothy Livesay's conception of poetic documentary, although Brown's lines aren't so much poetically scripted as, literally, scribed. Brown's technique involves sharp-edged depictions of characters and spaces, rendered directly in stark black ink. There are no garish colours or outlandish superhuman heroes, although his book

is a study of the irresolvable antagonisms between a transcendentally minded heroismand the inevitable worldliness of Métis life; Riel cannot accommodate his visionary, prophetic politics to the *Realpolitik* of John A. Macdonald's secular vision of Canada spanned by the CPR. But the overt simplicity of Brown's drawings, while pointing up the dualistic contrariety of his subject matter, doesn't lead to reductiveness. Instead, his formal choices emphasize the complexities of interpreting a past through the lens of the present, heightening the sense of the hand-made and the stylized, acknowledging visually and texturally the corporeal presence of someone physically doing the drawing and the writing: the lines, while careful, also bear persistent traces and pressures of inscription on the surface of the page, as opposed to the more disembodied or abstracted textures of typeset and screen. We sense an intervening human perspective in every frame. Text here is hand-lettered for a reason; Brown supplies copious footnotes and other scholarly apparatuses—"unusual," he begins his preface, "for a comic-book"—all copied by hand, as if to reproduce the feel of a notebook or manuscript. The paper is noticeable off-white, its yellowish cream-colour suggesting the incipient foxing of aging paper: the book looks and feels like an antique, or really like the contemporary imitation of the archaic. *Louis Riel* enacts, as we hold it in our hands, a form of recuperated history that its contents also attempt to address, the antithetical role of Louis Riel in the creation of Anglo-Canadian cultural nationalism, and in the production of a national history. How does Riel as inveterate outsider and rebel, the book asks, now belong to that history, his image and his afterlife institutionally assimilated and officially rendered? What of his antagonism persists? Why do we need to know about him now and here?

The "comic-strip" form acknowledged in the book's subtitle isn't so much a *Classics Illustrated* approach to history, making it accessible to a new generation largely reticent to crack a textbook, as it is a gesture at the material shifts in how history itself can be represented and delivered to readers. As opposed to the sepia-toned images of Brown's fellow Canadian writer "Seth," whose graphic novels (such as *Clyde Fans*) tend to focus on the failing nostalgia for a faded and uncertain past, Brown concentrates his gaze on re-framing moments of disruptive alterity; history, presented as fictionalized collective memory, doesn't abandon the task of recovery so much as admit and embrace its unfinished work, as disturbance and provocation. One of the key themes in Brown's book is the enmeshment of violence and representation; the murder of Norbert Parisien, and the desecration of Parisien's corpse by Thomas Scott—a precursor to the arrest and execution of Scott by the Métis—diverts any voyeuristic salaciousness for gore by showing the body from an elevated distance, displaced by perspective, or by cropping the picture to depict only Scott's methodical axe-swinging and keeping the body out of the frame itself, off camera so to speak. Brown isn't being delicate or euphemistic, but playing with the viewer-reader's supposed need to see everything, factually and completely—something that any self-aware historiography must acknowledge as impossible, subject to unredeemable temporal loss.

History reconstructs more than it recovers. The repetitious stokes of the axe, marked by the comic-book sound effect "THK THK THK," gesture at a rhythmatizing symmetry that informs Brown's visual style here; he attempts both to relocate and to reproduce forms of temporal and special recurrence, markers of pattern and of meaning within time's unruly, plural flow. At the same time, Brown repeatedly accedes to the impossibility of discovering coherence; the forces and figures who demand closure—such as Macdonald, who wants

his line completed—are also responsible for killing off, literally, any vitality of vision. When Scott is executed, and finished off with a brutal coup-de-grâce, Brown leaves the frame blank, hinting at the white and absolute emptiness of death, its finality and unknowability. Similarly, the last frame of the entire book (which has kept to a symmetrical, repeated six frames per page for 237 pages) is left out, the cycle fragmented and incomplete; Riel's execution suddenly and arbitrarily terminates the biography, but this last black also suggests something about the nature of looking at graphica here: we're invited, perhaps, to keep drawing for ourselves, to fill in the uneasy blank and to recognize our own implication, as second-hand image-makers, in the work. There is much more to comment on about Brown's rich and fascinating text—such as the fraught practice of translation, the tension between the visual and the visionary, caricature and comic style (in relation to Louis Riel's precursors such as Hergé's Tintin or Harold Gray's Little Orphan Annie, both namechecked in the preface)—but here I want to emphasize, briefly, the rhythmic involutions of Brown's fine lines, their address as spatial forms to the temporal and the historical.

In 1984, bpNichol issued *First Screening*, a set of a dozen "computer poems" composed in BASIC on an Apple IIe and disseminated on 5¼ inch floppy disc by his own imprint, Underwhich. Nichol was clearly learning the medium as he went along, and a number of the poems test the possibilities of manipulating text on the two dimensional surface of a monochromatic screen, making words and letters move and reshape themselves as we watch. Until recently, because of changes in media, this work was inaccessible to anyone who didn't own a hopeless out-of-date computer that would play the program, and who might have owned a copy of the limited edition disc, now a precious archival item. (It had been re-coded for Macintosh Hypercard in 1992-83 by J.P. Hohm, but that version too became obsolete.) In March 2007, kinetic poet Jim Anderson, with the cooperation of a number of others, mounted an emulated version of First Screening on his website, converted into Java as well as reproduced in a Quicktime movie, accessible for anyone to view: see [http://www.vispo.com/bp/index.htm]. Nichol's computer poems present self-delighting and delighted surfaces of deceptive simplicity: texts of two to (at most) seven words pass across the screen, reassembling and dismantling themselves. The first poem, "island," for example, sandwiches a vertical, single-spaced column of majuscule "ROCK" between two double-spaced lines of "WAVE WAVE WAVE," producing as the program plays (for a few seconds) an undulant surge of letters on either side of a solid monolith: an island of words, briefly fixed amid an unstable flux of parole. Like Brown, Nichol seeks out rhythmatizing symmetries, contrived repetitions that undergird and affirm the making of meaning, of intention. And like Brown, he also locates poetic vitality at the moments when those closed forms and visual echoes start to come apart. While Brown's graphic novel is explicitly historiographic, Nichol's work probes some of the particulate linguistic premises of historicized making; the antiquated quaintness of his work, that it so quickly dates (even from the moment of its inception) because of its inherently ephemeral and historically unstable medium, is in many ways what these poems seek formally to address. (Nichol's program includes a disclaimer to reader-viewers that the poems might not play on all computers, acknowledging the material and even historical specificity of the computer itself.) His light touch as a writer also reinforces the ephermerality of kinetic writing—that, although such poetry seeks out repetitive stabilities, it's inherently entropic and mutable. Another text in the

sequence, "LETTER," begins with an affirmation of artistic intention, "SAT DOWN TO WRITE YOU THIS POEM," but by shifting words from the end to the beginning of the line converts the text to a series of six variants, among them "THIS POEM SAT DOWN TO WRITE YOU," which affirms the opposite, that consciousness is an after-effect of text. Sure, this is just word-play, but the unpacking of contrariety within the linear drift of English syntax, subverting its push toward periodic closure and meaning, also draws out a contradiction built into the work of linguistic representation itself: that intention is as much construction as given. Moreover, this foundational alterity in language speaks to the spellbinding glamour of visual media; the archaism of Nichol's poems, converted to a mode accessible on high-speed internet, actually slows the tirade of light-saturated surfaces before us; we see into the program itself, since it doesn't quite mesh with the hygienic visual perfection of our screens. Anderson, in his note on the poems, points out a dehiscence between the original programming and the frame-capture rate of Quicktime, which disrupts the poems as they play out on an emulated Apple. My favourite piece, "OFF-SCREEN ROMANCE," is last in the sequence, and actually ends with a request for input from the viewer, to choose a specific GOSUB loop to continue. As with Brown's blank frames, the watcher is invited to become, lightly, an active reader. The piece is playful and slightly chaotic, as the words "FRED" and "GINGER" come together and apart across the screen, a sort of textual Astaire and Rogers. Getting words to dance on a screen is good fun, but it also puts the question of the temporality of language: you need to find your footing, so to speak, and to coordinate your time. What's "off-screen," as the potential source of that coordination, is both the source-code itself, which enables the words to dance even if we only glimpse its text, and the viewer, engrossed (perhaps) by looking. Two words don't present quite as inherently complex an image as a famous pair of dancers in some Hollywood musical, but Nichol's point, I think, is that, converted to image, words tend to expose their deceptive simplicities, their representational masks. Nichol doesn't so much unmask the verbal as play with the processes and rhythms of masking, of meaning's allure. We learn, by watching his lovely brief poems, not so much to regret our scopophilias and visual mesmerisms as to think, more carefully and deliberately, about how looking actually happens. We start to read with our eyes.

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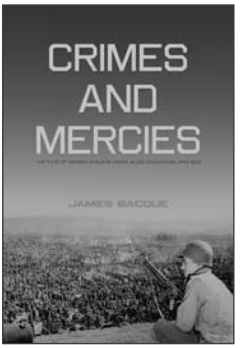

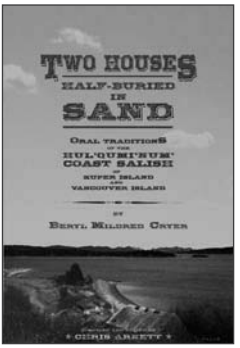

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