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Editorial

Disappearance and Mobility

A TransCanada Institute Issue

Smaro Kamboureli

Do books have nationality? Can they claim citizenship? What's their passport to global circulation? What happens when the locality a text represents does not coincide with that of the text's author? Do we read Rohinton Mistry's Mumbai the same way British readers read Frances Brooke's Quebec? Do *The Golden Dog* and *Life of Pi* share similar travel histories as texts? How do we engage with the ambivalences of the cultural and political mobilities Indigenous and diasporic texts perform? How do we negotiate as critics cultural distances across space and time, across the multiple inscriptions and displacements they undergo through representation? Can we engage with the challenges we are presented with at the present moment without reproducing the amnesia tactics that have been part of national pedagogies while, at the same time, not succumbing to the perils of historicism, "the idea that to understand anything it has to be seen both as a unity and in its historical development" (Chakrabarty 6)? Can we execute cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary transactions productively without "faking it," i.e., without either pretending to know more than we do (or we can know) or mollifying our anxieties by virtue of our use of terms that have gained cultural, critical, and political currency? Can we bring the kind of cosmopolitan knowledge[1] to bear on Canadian literature that would avoid casting our specialization area of CanLit studies in "provincial" terms?

These are some of the directions that the five essays and one interview collected in this TransCanada issue point toward, at least for this reader. They invite us to consider the risks and gains our critical act entails when we take into account not only how and what a text means but also how

it circulates in the world and within the particular milieus in which we encounter it, when we situate our readings in the context of the various shifts that Canadian literature has undergone as an institution. The debunking of the national myth of homogeneity in the face of both internal and external pressures such as transnational and global forces; how Canadian literature as an institution is inflected by Indigenous and diasporic literatures; and how the shifting terrain of such critical discourses as those of postcolonialism and multiculturalism affect the production and study of Canadian literature—this was the critical framework proposed as the focus of this issue. Though the contributions included here enter these critical terrains from different vantage points, they nevertheless converge in the recurring theme we encounter in them—that of mobility. From the mobility of early Canadian (and non-Canadian) authors to the kinetics of bodily affect, from the cultural movements made possible by diasporic counterpublics to the blurring of the boundary between authenticity and responsible representation in Indigenous writing, Canadian literature as an institution, these essays suggest, is no longer conceived, to appropriate Arjun Appadurai's words, as an "immobile aggregate of traits" (7). Rather, it is a product of continuous cross-cultural transactions.

For example, Carole Gerson's essay focuses on the conditions that account for the global dissemination of early Canadian literature, and shows that the global circulation of Canadian literary texts, far from being a phenomenon we typically associate with contemporary literature, has been "a continuous feature of our national cultural experience." Gerson's study not only brings into relief the specificities of a historical phenomenon, the global circulation of texts in the nineteenth century, it also draws attention to the frequently encountered blind spots in our reading acts, that is, the tendency to imbue things contemporary with a fabricated uniqueness that privileges the present. Globalization, of course, especially with regard to the circulation of texts, did not signify then in exactly the same fashion that it does in the twenty-first century. If the transnational conglomerates of publishing houses make it easier today to secure foreign rights for domestically published texts, the circulation of Canadian texts in the nineteenth century was certainly symptomatic of, and thus facilitated by, the "family" history that English-language markets shared with the Empire.

Moreover, as Gerson's article implies, the flow of texts from one national market to another does not necessarily speak of a fluid cosmopolitanism. Behind the phenomena of global circulation lie uneven economic

conditions. The global mobility of texts in this context is, in actuality, a circulation that takes place within decidedly circumscribed geopolitical and cultural borders. Thus it is not entirely different from the mobility ascribed to the kind of "world literature" David Damrosch talks about, "literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language" (4). But while world literature also "involves shifting relations both of literary history and of cultural power" (24), the reception and transmission politics that characterize it, according to Damrosch, appear to be quite different from the conditions that gave nineteenth-century Canadian authors or British authors with affinities to Canada access to the global (i.e., English language) market at the time. In this light, the elsewhereness (Hugh Kenner) Gerson identifies as the space literary texts aspire to inhabit is a product of disjunctive flows created as much by the contingencies that shape their circulation as by the development of the fields in which this literature is studied. These flows create what Appadurai calls "process geographies" that are always "shifting," for they are responsive to "the variable congeries of language, history, and material life" (7, 8). Such "areas" may appear to rely on conceptual and cultural coherences as they develop in tandem with a nation-state's narrative of progress, but the local imaginaries they produce are invariably disrupted from within and without.

The space produced by the tensions and attractions that constitute the binary between the domestic as mundane and the foreign as cosmopolitan is created, as Gerson argues, at least in part, by the presumed ability to know in advance the target readership's expectations elsewhere. Whether we define this travel of people and traffic of cultural imaginaries, of embellished and even invented histories, as cosmopolitan or transnational, this movement is marred, to echo John Urry, by the tourist's gaze. That such literary products, for example Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague*, whose status as the first Canadian novel went undisputed for a long time, have so easily been claimed as Canadian, or, conversely, that the commercial success of some nineteenth-century Canadian authors, not unlike that of Margaret Atwood today, meant a bracketing of their Canadianness, shows the elasticity of cultural identifications. Not always signs of hybridity, such displacements speak to the deterritorializing of content in ways that compel us to question as much what constitutes authenticity as the boundaries of our areas of study and those of our critical methods. In this context, deterritorialization may mean a loss of what is taken to be authentic but also forces us to confront the very circumstances that put discourses of

authenticity in circulation. Deterritorialization as an effect of transaction, then, may also yield gains and usher in new critical idioms.

Some of the nineteenth-century writers, such as Susanna Moodie, may have enjoyed, as Gerson writes, "a double audience," but the trajectories they pursued were not always informed by what many scholars today would call a cosmopolitan ethic. Thus, some books travelled while their authors stayed at home, and while the books enjoyed good sales elsewhere, their authors lived in poverty. The lack of a reciprocal relationship between the success of books as commodities and the livelihoods of authors certainly shows that mobility is not by default a coveted condition. Moreover, some texts may have to pay a price for their global mobility, in that their reception elsewhere may see their national "traits" evacuated. But is this necessarily a bad thing? If yes, why? And how does this marketing practice compare to the critical tendency to read Indigenous and diasporic literatures as anthropological or cultural case studies? If the travel history of the nineteenth-century texts Gerson chronicles speaks both of their authors' agency and of the complex conditions that granted them their elsewhereness, Tanis MacDonald's essay on the pedagogical challenges in teaching Thomas King's *Truth and Bright Water* within home territory unsettles the notion that the nation is a comfortable and homogeneously conceived home. Locality here may refer to the easily recognizable (by some) terrain of a particular town, but above all signifies the spaces we inhabit as teachers and critics, and the politics of (self-) location. MacDonald employs Derrida's notion of aporia to engage with the pedagogical and ethical issues raised when crossing from one culture to another. Cross-cultural transactions in the case of this Indigenous text, as she demonstrates, rely on what remains unspoken. Trying to read what is unspoken, yielding to the difficulties and challenges of this Indigenous novel as an aporetic text, prevents MacDonald from reducing it to a mere signifier of its culture. It is by focusing on its literariness that she is able to engage with the incommensurability of the text's networks of cultural and familial relations.

Along the same lines, Kit Dobson engages with the conditions and expectations (applied from different sectors) that shape the circulation and reception of texts by Indigenous writers and writers of colour in the cultural marketplace. Here the critical lens shifts from the politics of representation as experienced by a white teacher of King's novel to the mis/representation of an Indigenous author, Eden Robinson, who both identifies as Haisla and resists full disclosure of the particularities of her nation for cultural and ethical reasons. What Dobson calls the "de-specification" of First Nations

writers, in this particular instance Robinson's resistance to being seen as a spokesperson for her nation, frustrates the expectations of certain reading practices, but also shows the ability to talk from within a particular space without reifying, distorting, or betraying it. Robinson's resistance to being subsumed into the category of Indigenous writing as a Haisla, by withholding signs of authenticity and thus thwarting the white or non-white reader's search for signs of authentication, is not to be confused with the kind of resistance that writers like Neil Bissoondath and Evelyn Lau articulated in the early nineties in relation to discourses of multiculturalism and ethnicity. The removal of codes of cultural identification is not the same as adopting a universal position or, say, being a diasporic subject and calling oneself Canadian while leaving the category Canadian undisturbed. It gestures, instead, toward a discourse of the not-yet, and does so by calling attention to perspectival, cultural, political, and methodological shifts. This entails, in part, practising a criticism that is suspended between different epistemes, striving to understand the alterity of texts not by ferreting out the referentialities we might assume are lurking there, and which we tend to take as guarantors of authenticity—the critic as sleuth but also the critic posturing as a paragon of ethics—but by ceding to the irreconcilable relationship between fiction and reality, conceding that, as I argue elsewhere, a turn to ethics is not an ethical act by default.

These questions of reading and cultural intervention that are invariably inflected these days by the discourses of ethics and responsibility are also raised in Guy Beauregard's interview with Roy Miki, which focuses, among other things, on the making of Miki's book *Redress*. Resisting "the standard historical voice, the voice of the historian," Miki "creat[ed] a narrative" that "involv[ed]" him "in a kind of fictional interpretation based on . . . documents and facts." If Dobson situates his reading of Robinson in the larger context of the discourses of the vanishing Indian, Miki identifies the trajectory that led him to write *Redress* as a discourse that produces a similar kind of disappearance. When redress "is born as a discourse," he says, there is the risk of "no longer hav[ing] control over where that discourse is going to go or how we are going to be framed in it." Parallel to the shift he notes here, from being "unredressed" to being "redressed," another movement Miki observes, one away from the "immediate ties to the history of the nation and towards globalizing discourses or discourses around globalization," demonstrates the challenges we face as critics when dealing with questions of restitution and reconciliation. The overall relief expressed when such

movements take place often signals a desire to embrace a "global sphere, where we can reinvent new liberal values." Yet, while "redress in the form that Japanese Canadians initiated it disappeared into that sphere," Miki notes, it also "started to reappear in different forms," as is the case with the Korean comfort women redress movement. This is yet another instance of how deterritorialization may have enabling effects. It is also another moment in the issue that shows that, although these contributions come from different spaces, they revolve around issues that emerge from within the tensions that link the contemporary to the historical.

A recurring element in these essays that complicates productively the politics of cultural mobility lies, as Morton's and Corr's essays exemplify, in how we situate the literariness of diasporic texts in relation to the histories of marginalization they address. Stephen Morton's notion of diasporic counter-publics, which he develops through his attention to the "formal strategies" employed by Roy K. Kiyooka in his *StoneDGloves*, Roy Miki's *Random Access File*, and Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*, produces "a site of reading which questions and challenges the social and political grounds upon which diasporic subjects are marginalized in the global economy, as well as the Canadian public sphere." Thus, for example, the secret messages inscribed by the Sonias in Lai's novel on the soles of a special edition of cross-trainer shoes offers "a crucial counterpoint to the exchange of commodities in the global economy, and to the regulation and control of migrant labour power." And echoing the strategies of despecification and of what is left unspoken in the essays mentioned above, the withholding of the diasporic body in Kiyooka's text wittingly constructs a different space, a space of remains and therefore of disappearances, that resonates with, while cancelling out, "the dehistoricized representation of racialized subjects."

In this essay mobility is present in the Sonias' labour and the cultural and political work to be performed by the inscribed shoes that will walk places, as well as in the labour of the absent workers in Kiyooka's poem whose stoned gloves Kiyooka archives visually and verbally. The construction and production sites in these texts do not grant the diasporic body a recuperative agency, as Morton argues. Rather, their formal and political strategies posit the diasporic body as a figure that resists containment, that translates its disappearance that resulted from its marked visibility in the hands of the state into an act that grants it, instead, mobility in its own terms.

Mobility in John Corr's essay is also configured through a reading of diasporic bodies that are capable of producing spaces similar to those

Morton defines as counterpublics. Working with what he calls "affective coordination," a concept that evokes, among other things, the kinetics that help synchronize different bodily parts to "create an overall increase in ability," Corr demonstrates the ways in which Dionne Brand's novel, *In Another Place, Not Here*, produces "alternative, diasporic mapping[s]." Here, too, mobility calls to mind deterritorialization in the double sense that I employed the term above. The "grace" that characterizes the way the novel's protagonists, Elizete and Verlia, love each other is an eloquent response, an affective and bodily retort, to the displacement inflicted on them, a powerful and effective indictment of the constraints of, among other things, bourgeois love. What's more, the affect this grace produces, as Corr's reading of the various possibilities of the term "coordinate" demonstrates, does not merely reveal an oppositional strategy. As he writes, "the maps to belonging that the protagonists chart do not simply stake a claim according to dominant territorial logics. . . . these characters are blocked from settling into 'place.'"

Whether the transactions these essays engage with speak of the clash of different modernities or belatedness, of the restlessness that comes when modes of readings that promised renewal reach an impasse, or of flows of movement through fluid borders, they suggest interpretive courses that demand we move beyond our habitual grammar of reading practices. Remaining vigilant to the various ways in which the cultural texts we study and teach are always already processed may not promptly lead to radical alternatives but will certainly help us keep on our toes.

I would like to acknowledge my collaboration with Paul Danyluk at the beginning stages of this special issue. Paul, a doctoral student when we began to plan this project, withdrew from academe to pursue other interesting trajectories in life. Paul, we miss you at TransCanada Institute, and we wish you all the best.

NOTE

1 Cosmopolitanism is a loaded, and variously defined, term. My use of the term here is indebted to its nuanced readings offered in such studies as *Cosmopolitanism*, eds. Carol A. Breckenridge, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, and Dipesh Chakrabarty (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2002); *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1998); and Rey Chow's *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory, and Comparative Work* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2006).

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Ben Hart

How to get to Poland by way of Lavant

There's no easy way, nothing cardinal
about these directions. Only convolution,
concession. The Clarendon Snow Road
gets there the way the land does—
through creases in rock, along
long-limbed lakes. Everything turning
at Lavant. The road goes gravel,
the woods step back. The ditches
milkweedy and deep.

You know you're there
when you see the church
gone to ruin. No orthodoxy
able to sustain it in a town
of twenty-three, nineteen,
twelve, depending.

This is Ontario, after all.
Not Old Europe. The last curtain
to fall was in the rectory—
daisies heavy from hanging
too long in the sun. There's hopefulness

that unbends the road, makes the place
seem almost passable. And why not
a cabin, some shit shack,
out in a losing field. Why not
the company of cattle
and no fences to speak of.

Carole Gerson

Writers Without Borders
The Global Framework of Canada's Early Literary History[1]

In "Publishing Abroad," a significant contribution to volume 2 of *History of the Book in Canada*, Gwendolyn Davies offers a lively account of the international publishing experiences of several major and minor nineteenth-century Canadian writers from the Maritimes. Included are the story of New Brunswicker Douglas Huyghue, who contributed to *Bentley's Miscellany* in 1849-50 and published a three-volume novel in London before finding his way to Australia; details of May Agnes Fleming's legendary success in the 1860s and 1870s with the American market for popular romance; James de Mille's specific financial arrangements with Harper's, his New York publisher; the astuteness of Marshall Saunders' London publisher (Jarrold's) in issuing her 1894 novel, *Beautiful Joe*, as a companion piece to Anna Sewell's already classic *Black Beauty*; and a summary of Charles G.D. Roberts' complex transatlantic career as he marketed his work simultaneously in three English-speaking jurisdictions: Canada, Britain, and the US. Davies' examples support the larger argument of the present essay: that the interplay of two recent phenomena—the globalization of culture and the rise of book history as a scholarly field—inspires new perspectives on Canada's literary history and challenges previous assumptions about the careers of English-Canadian literary authors of the nineteenth century. As well, the recent international success of a number of Canadian novelists has resurrected the old question regarding what constitutes a "Canadian" book. Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* received the 2002 Man Booker Prize only because it was nominated by its small Scottish publisher (Cannongate), not by its original Canadian publisher (Knopf Canada) who had issued it a year earlier. Like Martel, several other authors who carry Canadian citizenship, such as

Rohinton Mistry, Michael Ondaatje, and Rawi Hage, have received international acclaim for books that are only incidentally Canadian in content, if Canada is mentioned at all.

Such events invite us to reassess the received narrative of Canadian literary history. Traditionally shaped as a saga of beleaguered survival on the margins of imperial centres, the story of our literary past can now be recast as the harbinger of a global print culture: Canadian writers, particularly those working in English, have always operated in an international context with regard to the content of their texts, the location of their publishers, their desire for audience, and their own travels and domiciles. Although Canada scarcely figures in Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters*, our literary history provides illuminating examples of the "international literary space" (xii) that has largely been ignored by the prevailing nationalistic structures of literary study that arose with "the appropriation of literatures and literary histories by political nations during the nineteenth century" (xi).[2]

When we look back on the second half of the twentieth century, it now seems that the notion of an autonomous, self-supporting Canadian literary culture was an anomaly of the 1960s and 70s. Those glorious decades were marked by a fresh phase of nationalism that coalesced around the exuberant celebration of Canada's centennial in 1967 and nurtured a new generation of writers. Crucial were the efforts of nationalist trade publishers led by Jack McClelland of McClelland and Stewart, in company with John Morgan Gray at Macmillan and William Toye at Oxford University Press, as well as the birth of scores of small literary presses and periodicals, most of which were sustained by the Canada Council for the Arts. Their markets were substantially enhanced by the consolidation of Canadian Literature and Canadian Studies as scholarly and pedagogical fields, which in turn led to a huge surge of literary anthologies (evidenced in Lecker's bibliography, 157-204), a genre that provides cultural infrastructure as well as significant income for writers and publishers. These developments supported the traditional project of Canadian literary criticism, inherited from the late nineteenth century, which was to highlight the specific aspects of authors' lives and works that could be interpreted as contributing to a progressive national narrative.

However, when we look beyond the national to consider the larger historical context, we find that Canadian writers, whatever their patriotic inclinations, have consistently operated in a trans-national framework: triangulated with Britain and the US in the case of anglophone writers, while francophones have negotiated their position in relation to France and, more

recently, *la francophonie*. Viewing our literary history through this historical perspective shows that Canadian participation in the international culture of best sellers and blockbusters is less an innovation of the late twentieth century[3] than a continuous feature of our national cultural experience.

The biographies of two of Canada's best-known early authors provide illuminating markers for this discussion: the immigration of Susanna Strickland Moodie from England to Upper Canada in 1832, and the emigration of Sara Jeannette Duncan from Ontario to India and England at the end of the century. These transitions in their domiciles characterize the instability of English-Canadian writers' lives in general, due in large part to the configuration of the literary marketplace. Whereas the travels of the great Victorian writers of England and the United States were mostly motivated by a desire for recreation and inspiration (with some exceptions, such as the emigration of Henry James), writers from Canada often relocated in order to pursue their careers—or, in the case of Moodie, pursued their careers despite relocation. At one level, demographics account for the internationalism of Canadian authors of both official languages. UNESCO has estimated that "there must be at least 10 million people to make national literatures viable and to guarantee the survival of an indigenous book market without government support" (Tremblay, n. pag.). Canada's total population didn't reach the requisite threshold until 1930, and our English-speaking population didn't pass the 10 million mark until the 1950s. (French Canada has yet to reach it.) While the distinction of a unique national language such as Danish or Dutch might protect the book culture of a smaller population, Canada's sharing of two world languages and our geographical proximity to the US has created a particularly complex scenario; during the second half of the twentieth century, inconsistent government support for authors, publishers, and booksellers created further major complications, as outlined in Roy MacSkimming's important account of English-Canadian literary publishing.

Critic Hugh Kenner devised the term "Elsewhere Community," the title of his Massey Lectures which aired on CBC radio in November 1997, to describe the historic internationalism of European writers. In pursuit of their art, Romantic and modernist authors travelled in quest of identity and kindred spirits because "Great writers have always needed an Elsewhere Community" (103) to distance themselves from their mundane origins. Kenner defined his notion loosely in order to indulge in anecdotes of literary writers' itineracy, showing how their affinities and collaborations ignored the conventional political and geographical boundaries of nation-states. Although he makes

no reference to Canadian writers, he coined a phrase that nicely suits the Canadian context, where the notion of an "elsewhere community" becomes particularly concrete. With few exceptions, serious English-Canadian writers have inevitably found themselves engaging with the elsewheres of the international English-language literary market, centred in London and New York.[4] The following discussion offers a critical account of both the magnitude and the consistency of the situation, a topic which the nationalist project of Canadian Literature has tended to elide.

The first English-language writings about Canada were necessarily "elsewhere" texts, composed by visitors to describe their adventures to readers back home. These accounts were shaped by European cultural ideologies about the New World and its inhabitants and by prevailing literary conventions, as in the Newfoundland verses in Robert Hayman's *Quodlibets* of 1628, which present one of the first literary idealizations of terrain that would eventually become Canada. Written in the style of their era, these poems' gentlemanly wit and recourse to pastoral convention prevail over reference to the hardship of surviving in a bleak environment. Ian MacLaren's research demonstrates that the great exploration narratives—once regarded as unvarnished historical documents—were tailored to entertain European readers. Sensational incidents in the published journals of Samuel Hearne (the massacre of the Inuit) and Captain James Cook (cannibalism at Nootka Sound) are more accurately understood as the result of editors seeking to meet readers' desire for the gothic shudder than as historical truth. Similarly, it is important to regard the first novel set in Canada, Frances Brooke's *The History of Emily Montague* (1769), as the product of a seasoned London author who cannily exploited the exotic setting she encountered when she accompanied her husband to British North America for part of his term as chaplain to the British troops in Quebec; considerable ingenuity was required to adapt the conventions of the epistolary sentimental novel to the realities of a trans-Atlantic postal system that was paralyzed for many months by the freezing of the St. Lawrence River. Seven decades later, similar travel due to a spousal colonial appointment led to another landmark book by a professional English writer, Anna Jameson's *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* (1838). Her three volumes address a sophisticated European audience presumed to be as interested in the author's reflections on Goethe and Schiller as in "scenes and regions hitherto undescribed by any traveller . . . and [in] relations with the Indian tribes such as few European women of refined and civilised habits have ever risked, and none

have recorded" (vi). All the titles I have just cited have been incorporated into "Canadian Literature" as it has long been constructed and taught, although none of their authors wrote as, or for, Canadians.

Writers born in the colonies that later became Canada found their efforts to establish local literary cultures steeped in trans-Atlantic tensions. One of the first to document this experience was New Brunswick-born Oliver Goldsmith, great-nephew and namesake of the Irish author, who responded to his uncle's *The Deserted Village* with his own narrative poem, *The Rising Village*, published in London in 1825. He claimed that his work, later canonized as "the first book-length poem published by a native English Canadian and the first book-length publication in England by a Canadian poet" (Lynch xi), was "torn to Shreds . . . Because I did not produce a poem like the great Oliver," a reception that caused him to "abandon the Muses"(43). Upper Canadian-born John Richardson proved more persistent. A career military officer who resided in Europe for about twenty years, Richardson produced five identified titles in London, including his best-known work, the novel *Wacousta; or, The Prophecy* (1832), its internationalism evident in its indebtedness to fictional models from both sides of the Atlantic—the Scottish romances of Sir Walter Scott and the American frontier adventures of James Fenimore Cooper. Unable to maintain himself as a professional author upon his return to Canada in 1838, Richardson angrily claimed that his books might as well have been published "in Kamtschatka"(587) for all the attention they received, and stormed off to New York, where he fared no better and soon died in poverty.

The middle decades of the nineteenth century present numerous configurations of Canadian authors' confrontations with elsewhereness. Kenner's lectures open with a discussion of the European Grand Tour as intrinsic to English literary sensibility in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This adventure was a luxury that few Canadians could afford. One writer who made the journey and fully exploited the experience was New Brunswick-born James De Mille; in 1850-51, at the age of seventeen, he and his elder brother visited England, Scotland, Wales, France, and Italy. When financial need later inspired him to apply his considerable erudition and wit to popular fiction, De Mille drew freely upon sites and anecdotes from his youthful European adventures. Published in New York and Boston during the 1860s and 1870s, his potboilers (as he called them) triangulate their European setting with the Canadian identity of their author and the American site of their production and consumption.

For the pre-Confederation era, the English publisher Richard Bentley, who was a substantial agent in the trans-Atlantic book trade, provides an important lens through which to examine the contrasting international careers of his two major Canadian authors: immigrant Susanna Strickland Moodie and emigrant Thomas Chandler Haliburton. Quick to exploit the international appeal of American writers, Bentley became the British publisher of Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, Herman Melville, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Francis Parkman, his list of American names totaling more than fifty by 1857 (Gettmann 25). Bentley's titles on North America showed a predilection for travel and exploration, settlers' narratives, and fiction. During each decade of the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, he published at least a dozen titles of sufficient relevance to Canada to be included in the microfiche set of early Canadiana issued by CIHM (Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproduction, now Canadiana.org).[5] Hence his involvement with two of Canada's best-known authors of the early Victorian era was hardly a coincidence.

Bentley's acquaintance with the Moodies began with his publication of John Moodie's *Ten Years in South Africa* (1835), and resumed in 1851 when he received Susanna's manuscript, which became *Roughing It in the Bush*. Although Susanna never met her English publisher in person, they developed a warm epistolary friendship as he issued seven of her books from 1852 through 1868, most of them novels with little reference to Canada. Moodie's relationship with Bentley was inflected by members of her family who remained in England, notably her elder sister Agnes Strickland, who developed a prominent profile as an author of royal biographies. Tension arose when Bentley also published the only book to appear under the name of Susanna's brother, Samuel Strickland's *Twenty-Seven Years in Canada West* (1853). Instigated and edited by Agnes in order to restore her family's dignity which she felt had been affronted by the coarseness of *Roughing It*, Sam's book was worse written and better paid (Gray, *Sisters* 214-17). The success of *Roughing It*, quickly followed by Susanna's *Life in the Clearings*, restored the Moodie-Bentley relationship; upon his death in 1871, Moodie sadly recorded that "a kind friend of mine has come to his reward, Richard Bentley, the great London Publisher" (*Letters* 299). [6]

The Bentley connection enabled Susanna Moodie to cultivate a double audience. In her new home of Upper Canada she wrote for Canadians in her extensive contributions to the local periodical press, while her books were all published in England and addressed a British audience. The scholarly edition of *Roughing It*, prepared by Carl Ballstadt for the Centre for Editing

Early Canadian Texts, documents many of the changes that were made when her sketches of local life were gentrified for European readers. Whether the modifications were made by Moodie herself or by an English editor, they dramatized her text by using dialect to reinforce class distinctions and by adding exotic details and exclamation marks. For example, a simple opening question to readers of the *Literary Garland*, premised on familiarity—"READER, have you ever heard of a place called Dummer?" ("Canadian Sketches" 101)—acquired gothic overtones when revamped to stress strangeness: "Reader! have you ever heard of a place situated in the forest-depths of this far western wilderness, called Dummer?" *(Roughing It* 463).

Without a British publisher, Susanna Moodie's book production would have vastly diminished. Americans were more interested in pirating her work than in paying for it, and throughout the nineteenth century Canadian book publication was, in George Parker's words, "almost an act of faith"(67). Subscription publishing was the norm and rarely yielded the envisioned profits, as learned by Catharine Parr Traill. Her first Canadian venture, *The Female Emigrant's Guide* (1855), was issued by subscription in Toronto and probably brought her no income at all (24-25). She achieved greater success when her *Studies of Plant Life in Canada* (1885), published in Ottawa, earned her "about $200" (289), but despite the declared success of many of her books, notably *Canadian Wildflowers*, published in Montreal in 1867, Traill owed the comfort of her final decades to gifts and inheritances (138).

Susanna Moodie's relationship with Bentley might not have been quite as sanguine if she had known of his financial arrangements with Thomas Chandler Haliburton, which rendered Haliburton "undoubtedly the best-paid author in nineteenth-century Canada" according to George Parker (65). Whereas Moodie's earnings for her seven Bentley books seem to have totalled somewhat above £350 (Gerson, *Canada's* 23), Haliburton received £300 for the single volume that comprised the second series of *The Clockmaker* (1838) (86) and he requested £500 for the third (1840) (109). Haliburton's reverse migration to London provides the ultimate example of a Canadian-born writer finding validation in England, an outcome initially prompted by Bentley's pirating of *The Clockmaker* shortly after its first publication in Halifax in 1836. Pleased by Bentley's interest and superior material production, Haliburton sailed to London and arranged for Bentley to issue the second series of Sam Slick's "Sayings and Doings." During this sojourn, Haliburton made significant literary and social contacts that led to English publication of all his subsequent books, a move that justifiably angered his

original Nova Scotian publisher, Joseph Howe. Haliburton's increasing anglophilia culminated in permanent relocation to London in 1856, marriage to a wealthy Englishwoman, and acquisition of a seat as Member of Parliament for the rotten borough of Launceston in North Cornwall in 1859.

As the nineteenth century unfolded, demographic patterns of Canadian authorship shifted, with fewer adult immigrant writers like the Stricklands, and many more literary emigrants. Most of the researchable English-Canadian authors of the post-Confederation era were either born in territories that would become part of Canada or were brought to the region as small children. But towards the end of the nineteenth century, writers realized that literary fortunes were to be made elsewhere—mostly in the burgeoning literary networks and publishing industries of the United States, centred in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Sara Jeannette Duncan's shrewd 1887 remark that "the market for Canadian literary wares of all sorts is self-evidently New York" ("American" 518) was earlier demonstrated by New Brunswick-born May Agnes Fleming, who moved to New York around 1870 and countered John Richardson's previous example of failure by reputedly earning $15,000 a year for her copious output of romantic fiction.[7]

While riches could be made by publishing in the US, the production saga endured by William Kirby's *The Golden Dog* has attained legendary status as a cautionary tale about the vulnerability of Canadian literary ventures before the international copyright regulations of 1901 brought the United States into the Berne Convention. Completed in 1873, Kirby's manuscript was rejected by several American and English houses before it was finally accepted by Montrealer John Lovell. In 1871, Lovell had cleverly circumvented the prevailing copyright complexities by setting up a printing plant across the border at Rouses Point in New York State. Producing books in the US enabled the New York firm of Lovell, Adam and Wesson to register American and British copyright simultaneously, if procedures were correctly followed. However, in 1877, the New York operation collapsed without proper registration of Kirby's title. As a result, the best-known Canadian novel of the nineteenth century circulated widely in American editions that brought virtually no payment to its author. In 1897, it fell under the control of Boston publisher L.C. Page, who forced Kirby to issue a drastically abridged text as the "Authorized Version," for which he received only $100 (Parker 190-92).[8] An economic failure for its author, *The Golden Dog* nonetheless earned him substantial cultural capital, including admiration by Queen Victoria (Pierce 266) and charter membership in the Royal Society of Canada.

Despite the example of *The Golden Dog*, late nineteenth-century writers attempting to live by their pens while domiciled in Canada, such as Isabella Valancy Crawford and L.M. Montgomery, sent most of their work to American publishers and periodicals in order to enter the dominant North American print market. As Agnes Maule Machar explained to an acquaintance from whom she sought assistance in placing her work with English publishers, "we Canadian authors have to choose between trying the United States or Britain, and the *first* is more accessible" (Davies 145). American production often required compromise, as in Beautiful Joe's change of citizenship because the publisher of Marshall Saunders' subsequently enduring novel believed that Americans would not care to read the heart-warming story of a Canadian dog. Sometimes changes were made to titles as well as contents in order to avoid copyright infringement (Davies 145-6).[9] Robert Barr summarized the amenability of Canadian authors in rather concrete terms: "an author must live if he is to write, and he must eat if he is to live, and he must have money if he is to eat"(4).

According to Eli MacLaren, Ralph Connor (Charles W. Gordon) was the exception that proves the rule that literary authorship was not viable for writers who stayed home in Canada. While Connor's success has usually been attributed to the appeal of his stories of western Christian adventure to the dominant social ethos of turn-of-the-century North America, MacLaren demonstrates that Connor's astounding sales figures were generated by the way "the physical form of his ideas intersected with the continental fault lines between North American copyright regimes" (510). His first book, *Black Rock*, secured his reputation because lack of proper copyright registration in the US enabled massive pirating which built the readership for his subsequent novels. Hence from 1898 to 1906 the worldwide sales of Connor's first five novels reputedly exceeded two million copies, "a figure reached by L.M. Montgomery's twelve most popular books only at the end of her life" (508).

While bibliographies of professional writers such as L.M. Montgomery reveal the extent of their reliance on American magazines and serials,[10] the full picture of Canadian contributions to American periodicals has yet to be assembled. For example, R.G. Moyles has identified over five-hundred pieces by Canadians that were published between 1870 and 1918 in the *Youth's Companion* (Boston), a major weekly magazine that paid good rates for stories and poems. About half of these appeared between 1891 and 1901 during the editorship of E.W. Thomson, who encouraged his fellow Canadians. Canadian poets who desired to see their verse appear in finer editions

likewise looked south. In the 1890s, the small Boston firm of Copeland and Day became "a haven for Canadian authors who were anxious to be published in the United States but found it difficult to gain acceptance by the established firms" (Kraus 35). It issued several volumes by the Ottawa poets, Archibald Lampman and Duncan Campbell Scott, as well as titles by Maritimers Bliss Carman and Francis Sherman. Mobile, unmarried young Canadian women were especially attracted to literary employment opportunities in the United States, where the percentage of women involved in journalism and publishing was twice that in Canada (Mount, *When* 37-39).[11] Thus the pull of the United States accounts for Canadian authors' third pattern of movement: in addition to traversing the Atlantic—in both directions—many flooded across the American border, the majority to remain in the US.

Angela Woollacott has recently shown that between 1870 and 1940, the vogue of attempting "to try her fortune in London" attracted "tens of thousands" of Australian women to the Imperial centre, many of whom had literary ambitions (3). This trend was followed by far fewer Canadians, due to the proximity and prosperity of the US. Emblematic of the contest between London and New York was young Ernest Thompson Seton's abortive attempt to study art in London. Born in England and raised in Ontario, he initially identified with the land of his ancestors. In 1881, at the age of twenty, he recorded his intention to "make a comfortable fortune by my pen and pencil" and crown his success with "a small estate in Devonshire and a house in London" (Keller 89). Instead, his tremendously successful career as a writer of animal stories enabled him to end his days as a wealthy American citizen, living on a 25,000 acre ranch in New Mexico.

The attraction of New York was wittily expressed in Charles G.D. Roberts' 1884 squib, "The Poet is Bidden to Manhattan Island," which advises:

> O hither haste, and here devise
> Divine *ballades* before unuttered.
> Your poet's eyes *must* recognize
> The side on which your bread is buttered!
> . . .
> You've piped at home where none could pay,
> Till now, I trust, your wits are riper.
> Make no delay, but come this way,
> And pipe for them that pay the piper! (81-2)

Documentation of this situation is now available in Nick Mount's exhaustive analysis, which shows that Sara Jeannette Duncan was not the only Canadian literary leaf to be "blown far," to cite the words on her tombstone. In the

dissertation research that led to his book, *When Canadian Literature Moved to New York*, Mount tracked 112 Canadian literary expatriates who were active in New York between 1880 and 1914. While many were publishers, illustrators, or journalists rather than literary authors, their formal congregation in the Canadian Club of New York, and informal meetings in bars and teashops, consolidated a critical mass that facilitated publication for Canadian prose writers and poets in the burgeoning American periodical and book market. Only nineteen of those on Mount's list are known to have returned to Canada, including eleven of the thirty-one women (diss. Appendix A).

Despite the massive appeal of the US, a cluster of literary Canadians did find their way to Britain around the turn of the nineteenth century. After a few years of journalism in Australia, Ontario-born Gilbert Parker followed Haliburton's example of incorporation into the British power structure, not only serving as an English MP, but also acquiring a knighthood for his writing and a rumoured annual income of £7,000 in royalties (Gerson, "Gilbert Parker" 265). England also attracted restless Canadians who had tired of the US, such as Charles G.D. Roberts. As well, London became the home of several less illustrious Canadian-raised career authors—notably Robert Barr and Grant Allen. Unlike Parker (and Haliburton before him), these two men wrote little about Canada. The prolific, polymathic Allen produced everything from lighter fiction to serious "socialist, nonconformist, naturalist philosophy" and scientific analysis (St. Pierre 9) as well as the notorious 1895 novel, *The Woman Who Did*. Barr was involved with *The Idler* and was an associate of Arthur Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling, and Jerome K. Jerome. Notwithstanding their extensive output, the two men are now viewed as minor authors by critics on both sides of the Atlantic and have received scant recognition in Canadian sites of consecration such as reference books and anthologies.

The Canadian literary women who went to England were less likely than the men to blend into the British cultural community. Indeed, in the misadventures of Sara Jeannette Duncan's *Daughter of Today* (1894) artist and writer Elfrida Bell can be read as a cautionary example to brash North American New Women who attempt to penetrate the frigidly hierarchical and class-conscious London literary network. Given her journalistic connections in Canada and the US, Duncan herself would likely have joined the Canadian expatriate community in New York or Boston had she not married an Anglo-Indian based in Calcutta. Her extended visits to England from 1892 until she retired to London in 1919 facilitated communication with her English publishers and her appearance in English periodicals. But the often

biting critiques of English society and literary culture that permeate her fiction (such as Deirdre Tring's parodic flirtation with playwriting in *Set in Authority*) suggest that she was not likely to replicate the integration enjoyed by Haliburton, Parker, Barr, and Allen. As she traversed the globe, Duncan took advantage of the opportunities for multiple international appearances (in periodicals as well as books) that were made increasingly accessible through the evolution of the new figure of the professional literary agent, as documented in Misao Dean's account of Duncan's relationship with the American firm of A.P. Watt. Duncan's extensive literary geography—involving Canada, the US, England, and India—identifies her as Canada's most prominent early participant in the global literary field.[12]

British family roots and the desire to enhance their profiles in Canada account for the English sojourns of two other Canadian women writers of Duncan's generation (born in the 1860s), E. Pauline Johnson and Joanna E. Wood. Johnson's claim that she needed to visit London in 1894 in order to publish her first book belies the pattern of her contemporaries (Carman, Lampman, Roberts, Scott) who issued most of their early volumes of poetry in the US. The homeland of Johnson's mother, England likely beckoned due to Johnson's Imperialist sentiments and to its hospitable reception of attractive mixed-race colonials like herself, in contrast to the discomfort she felt in the US.[13] The press-clipping plaudits that Johnson collected during this visit provided cultural capital that would enrich her publicity materials for the next decade. Joanna Wood, whose London visit in 1900-01 included acquaintance with Charles Swinburne and presentation at court, similarly exploited the cachet of her British experiences upon her return, issuing fulsome accounts in the *Canadian Magazine*.

From the elevated aura of London to the bread-and-butter reality of New York, what do we make of all the travelling, relocation, and foreign publication that comprised the global context of the writers of Victorian Canada? The nationalist ideology underpinning Canadian literary history has long regarded the enduring need to publish abroad as a sign of failure—of the local industry, of local audiences, of the national spirit, of government policy, of international copyright, etc. This view results in part from tension between the intensifying political nationalism of the late nineteenth century and the expanding internationalism of English-language print culture. Before she fully understood the workings of the international literary realm, Duncan bluntly denounced Canadians as "an eminently unliterary people" and the province of Ontario as "one great camp of the Philistines"

("Saunterings" 707-08). Robert Barr's 1899 rant that Canadians would rather spend their money "on whiskey than on books" (5) later muted to E.K. Brown's more thoughtful analysis of "The Problem of a Canadian Literature" (1943) in relation to the country's colonial mentality and frontier culture. But from the point of view of Canadian authors and their books, the international English-language marketplace has always been the most significant context of production and reception. The multiple piracies of popular novels like *The Golden Dog* and *Beautiful Joe* mark these titles as winners in terms of audience and authorial fame, even though their authors felt cheated financially. This pattern has recently recurred in the academic marketplace with the appearance of Norton Critical Editions of *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* in 2006 and *Roughing It in the Bush* and *Anne of Green Gables* in 2007, all edited by senior Canadian scholars. These American products now compete with existing Canadian critical editions intended for university classrooms, issued by smaller publishers such as Broadview Press and Tecumseh Press, who stand to lose financially if the Norton editions are widely adopted in Canada. Yet on another level, Canadian literary studies can only benefit from the broadened teaching of these canonical titles which will be enabled by Norton's international reach.

During the last decades of the twentieth century, interest in many Canadian writers was enhanced by the European and Asian excitement about Canada that was fostered by Canadian government support for international associations for Canadian Studies. Scores of conferences yielded collections of scholarly essays on Canadian literature published around the world, from India to Scandinavia. German interest proved particularly intense and led to an intriguing opportunity to return a foundational text when Hartmut Lutz, chair of American and Canadian Studies at the University of Greifswald, arranged for the publication of Canada's first Inuit autobiography. In 1880, Moravian missionaries took eight Inuit from Labrador to Hamburg as anthropological specimens; within four months, all had died of smallpox. Abraham Ulrikab's account of his journey, originally written in Inuktitut, was preserved in its German translation in a handwritten notebook retained in the Moravian archives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Translated into English by Lutz and his students, Ulrikab's words finally returned to Canada more than a century later in *The Diary of Abraham Ulrikab: Text and Context*, a richly annotated and illustrated volume issued by the University of Ottawa Press in 2005.

The global outlook of book history, which examines cycles of production and reception from the perspective of the book itself, tells a different story

from literary history written according to Canada's national imaginary. It also requires rethinking of canonicity. The answer to the old question of "Who reads a Canadian book," posed by Thomas D'Arcy McGee in 1867 (85), is—anyone, and perhaps almost everyone, if we consider the international readership enjoyed by William Kirby, Ralph Connor, and Marshall Saunders in the past, L.M. Montgomery over a full century,[14] and Michael Ondaatje, Alistair MacLeod, Margaret Atwood, and Yann Martel today. We might also mention the ubiquity of John McCrae's "In Flanders' Fields," whose Canadian authorship is seldom recognized by the people in many countries who recite the poem in annual commemoration ceremonies. From Robert Barr's perspective as an expatriate who trained in New York and eventually settled in London, Canada may have appeared to be "about the poorest book market in the world outside of Senegambia" (4). In fact, the opposite has been true. Canadians may not have rushed to buy Barr's books (in 1900-02 Canadian-authored books comprised ten per cent of the titles on Toronto's best seller lists [Moffett 102-03], a figure that has scarcely changed today[15]), but the system of international book distribution that evolved through the nineteenth century and has since more or less remained in place has meant that more titles have been available in Canada, in more editions, than anywhere else in the world. Moreover, the very factors of language and demographic distribution that Barr saw as handicaps to his career in Canada also enabled him to prosper in the international English-language context. For Canadians of his era, as for Canadians of the twenty-first century, "elsewhere" could also be anywhere, and sometimes even everywhere.

The problem of multiple allegiances has always accompanied Canada's writers. Sandra Djwa framed the dilemma facing the modernists of the 1920s as a succinct question: "could one be modern *and* Canadian?"(206). The twenty-first-century version of this query is something like: how can one be global and Canadian? The answer, at the beginning of the new millennium, seems to be equivocal. In addition to the names already mentioned in this discussion, a writer such as Alberto Manguel pursues international careers from a home base in Canada, exemplifying Martel's problematic characterization of Canada as "the greatest hotel on earth" because "it welcomes people from everywhere"(65). Can the transiency of an international hotel foster a national identity? Not in the eyes of Stephen Henighan, who mourns the apparent loss of the intense engagement with local communities that characterized fiction of the 1960s and 1970s, when the goal of the major Canadian novelists seemed to be to tell our stories to ourselves. Yet his complaint that

"A desire to give voice to a nation's humanity has declined to mere professionalism" (37) can be countered by many examples of writers for whom professionalism and national humanity have not been at odds. Alice Munro's career took off when she began to sell her stories of Ontario and BC to *The New Yorker*, and Mordecai Richler spent many creative years in the elsewhere of London seeking an international readership for fiction inspired by feeling "forever rooted in Montreal's St. Urbain Street. That was my time, my place, and I have elected myself to get it right" (19). Fiction rooted in Canada received international sanction when Carol Shields' American birth qualified her for the Pulitzer Prize for *The Stone Diaries* (1993) and Alistair MacLeod's *No Great Mischief* (1999) received the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

As Smaro Kamboureli points out, "Culture has never been autonomous and self-regulating"("National Pedagogy" 40). Those who normalize the fierce cultural nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s as their point of reference—a nationalism materially enabled by the Canada Council and various government support programs for writers and publishers[16]—tend to overlook the historical pattern of internationalism that I have just outlined. Alongside its shaping of enduring assumptions about cultural nationalism, the Centennial era implicitly proclaimed a break with Canada's literary past, creating a fissure that continues to inform developing critical frameworks about the globalization of culture. Frank Davey has recently called attention to the presentism of much current Canadian literary criticism, "whose most outspoken scholars are now specialists in the contemporary" (95) and therefore tend to overlook much work from before 1970. Globalization of Canadian writing began centuries ago, with the tailoring of the first explorers' and travellers' tales for European readers. Many issues that are now regarded as contemporary have significant historical antecedents, knowledge of which is essential to an understanding of how patterns of cultural production and circulation continue to evolve.

NOTES

1 This article began as a conference presentation at SHARP in Lyon in July, 2004 and a keynote address to the Victorian Studies Association of Western Canada at the University of Saskatchewan the following October. I'd like to thank my recent reviewers for their helpful suggestions that have contributed to its subsequent refinement.
2 See Christopher Prendergast's problematization of many of Casanova's terms and assumptions.
3 As presented, for example, in Danielle Fuller's introduction to her excellent study.
4 Smaro Kamboureli uses "elsewhereness" quite differently in her discussion of the need

to destabilize comfortable notions of "CanLit" in her preface to *Trans.Can.Lit* (x). The term also appealed to the organizers of a panel discussion titled "Elsewhere Literature: Canadian Fiction Goes International," that occurred in 2006 in Vancouver (Burns, n. pag.)

5 Bentley's "Canadian" novels included John Galt's *Lawrie Todd* (1830) and *Bogle Corbet* (1831) and Douglas Huyghue's *The Nomades of the West, or, Ellen Clayton* (1850); his editions of travel narratives ranged from accounts of Arctic explorations by Frederick Beechy (1831, 1843) and Thomas Simpson (1843, 1846) to Charles Lanman's more touristic *Adventures of an Angler in Canada, Nova Scotia, and the United States* (1848). Susanna Moodie's settlement sketches were preceded by A.W. Rose's *The Emigrant Churchman in Canada* (1849), reissued in 1850 as *Pictures of Canadian Life, or, The Emigrant Churchman*.

6 The Bentley firm maintained its relationship with the Moodie family with the 1880 publication of *A Trip to Manitoba, or Roughing It on the Line* by Susanna's granddaughter, Mary Agnes Fitzgibbon.

7 This figure comes from Lorraine McMullen (105); Parker cites $10,000 (234).

8 For a fuller discussion see Brady. L.C. Page later achieved notoriety as L.M. Montgomery's exploitive American publisher.

9 Royal Gettmann describes Bentley's issuing of revised American texts, beginning in the 1830s, to avoid copyright difficulties (47-49).

10 The important pioneering work of Russell, Russell, and Wilmshurst in identifying Montgomery's publications in serials is now being updated in several on-line projects.

11 See Gerson, "Canadian Women Writers and American Markets, 1880s-1940."

12 The only well-known Canadian woman writer to fully relocate in England, Montreal-born Lily Dougall, represents a very different stream of activity. An intellectual who disapproved of the "modern woman" (the subject of her 1896 novel, *The Madonna of a Day*), Dougall abandoned her native Montreal for health reasons. With an LLA (Lady Licentiate in Arts) degree from the universities of Edinburgh and St. Andrews (1887), she moved in circles devoted to religious and philosophical discussion, especially during her final years when she lived near Oxford (1912-23).

13 See Gerson and Veronica Strong-Boag. London also seems to have been the residence of the young lover of her Brantford canoeing excursions: see Gray, *Flint and Feather* 98-103.

14 *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) has been translated into Swedish (1909), Dutch (1910), Polish (1912), Danish (1918), Norwegian (1918), Finnish (1920), French (1925), Icelandic (1933), Spanish (1949), Hebrew (1951), Japanese (1952), Slovak (1959), Korean (1963), Portuguese (1972),Turkish (1979), Italian (1980), Czech (1982), German (1986), Chinese (1992), Hungarian (1993), Russian (1995), Serbian (1996), Bulgarian (1997), Croatian (1997), Latvian (1997), Arabic (1998), Slovenian (1998), Estonian (1999), Persian (1999), Romanian (2000), Greek (2001), and Lithuanian (2001).

15 Current best seller lists in the *Globe & Mail* show a rate that hovers between ten and fifteen per cent.

16 The effects of such programs have been vehemently contested in some quarters: see Lecker, "Would You Publish This Book?" and Metcalf.

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Brianna Brash-Nyberg

Crows to Burnaby

Nightly, thousands of crows
fly low over the landscape, pulled
by the push of commuters, polluted
sunset over strip malls, dark
window glass on the Skytrain,
golden domes of Sikh temples,
a bridge's bone-like arches
strung with lights against
green mountains, July
dusk that burgeons with rain.
Tug of the roost, its rooted
wreck, silent sonar, Still Creek's
riparian strip shrinking behind
the Trans-Canada, Costco,
the Keg. Birds on the power
lines, in rain gutters, on top of McDonald's,
roof-racks of parked cars, waxed
windows foul with shit. On the radio
and Internet, people worry
the crows won't stay. But birds
know better, turn their backs
to the city, sink their feet
deep into the creek's mud bank.

Tanis MacDonald

"Everybody knows that song" The Necessary Trouble of Teaching Thomas King's *Truth and Bright Water*

. . . beneath the bridge, trapped between the pale supports that rise out of the earth like dead trees and the tangle of rebar and wire that hangs from the girders like a web, the air is sharp, and the only thing that moves in the shadows is the wind.
—Thomas King, *Truth and Bright Water*, Prologue

What takes place with the aporia? What we are apprehending here concerning what takes place also touches upon the event as that which arrives at the river's shore, approaches the shore, or passes the edge—another way of happening and coming to pass by surpassing. . . . Perhaps nothing ever comes to pass except on the line of a transgression, the death of some "trespassing."
—Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*

Part 1: Making Trouble: Who Knows?

The last time I taught Thomas King's 1999 novel *Truth and Bright Water* in a second-year course in Canadian Fiction, two comments from students stood out for me as utterances that bracketed the discussion of the novel's position in the course, as well as reminding me of some of my own questions about being a non-Aboriginal scholar teaching a text by an Aboriginal author to students who do not identify as Aboriginal. Near the beginning of our discussions of the novel, these two students underlined the expectations that undergraduate students in that course—mostly white, mostly middle class, mostly arriving in the class with expectations that Canadian fiction will be "naturally" reflective of their experience as Canadian citizens—had about First Nations texts. Because I was new to the institution and the students, I identified myself as a non-First Nations person who was raised and trained as an academic in the Canadian west where First Nations culture is very prominent. I prefaced my introduction of the novel with the comment that I considered no course in Canadian fiction complete if it did not contain discussion of how a "Native narrative"—to use Thomas King's term—might

fit into, or resist, the dynamics of the Canadian canon. At this, one student waved her copy of the text in the air and said that she had grown up in Caledonia, Ontario, and that as far as she was concerned, *Truth and Bright Water* bore no resemblance to her life experience. Beyond that, she refused to elaborate. Another student suggested that *Truth and Bright Water* was worth reading precisely because of its dissimilarity to other works by First Nations writers. She did elaborate, naming particular features of Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* as examples of what she expected from a First Nations text: a narrative of poverty, violence, and substance abuse punctuated by governmental neglect and hatred for and by white characters. She liked *Truth and Bright Water* because she felt "included" as the text's audience rather than excluded or culpable because of the text's subject matter.

I recount the comments of these students not because their reactions to the text were out of step with the course's aims, but rather because the remarks turned out to be apposite to the tangle of tensions, pleasures, and questions that arose in the classroom around the discussion of *Truth and Bright Water*. In addition, these comments, along with others made by students who were encountering discussions of canonicity for the first time, shaped the way I began to think about King's novel as a text that does double-duty: principally, as a Native narrative that, in Jacques Derrida's terms, "passes the edge" of our expectations and "transgresses" the boundaries of genre literature by offering communal aporetics within the text; and also, as a pedagogical hook by which an instructor may emphasize the value of such aporetics within a reading community.

The dual purpose of teaching while suspending knowledge is certainly a paradox, and Smaro Kamboureli points out in *Scandalous Bodies* that such "negative pedagogy"—a practice that abandons "teaching as a teleological narrative" in favour of "negotiating our position in relation to both the knowledge we have and the knowledge we lack"—includes, among other things, the ability and willingness "to address history and historicity of our present moment responsibility—without, that is maintaining the illusion of innocence or non-complicity" (Kamboureli 25). Certainly the desire to be socially and culturally responsible to First Nations texts in the classroom does not automatically yield a politically supportive reading practice, and I am acutely aware of Aruna Srivastava's warning that the propensity for non-First Nations instructors to bring "deeply racist, colonialist, ahistorical and disrespectful ways" to reading and teaching texts by First Nations writers can make such study "infinitely more harmful in many ways to read these texts

than to not to" (Proulx and Srivastava 189). The search for socially responsible criticism in an undergraduate course in Canadian literature must mean more than adopting a pseudo-medical oath to "do no harm" to a text or with a text. It must engage with pedagogy of resistance that is rigorous enough to make demands of the students and forgiving enough to allow the students into the discussion about why abrogative or aporetic texts are a vital part of Canadian literature, that national literatures and concepts of national identity present "sites of necessary trouble," in Judith Butler's sense.

It is uncomfortable—pedagogically and practically—to assert that theory is a method rather than an answer and I note with some chagrin that turning to Derrida in order to practice textual humility may not be everyone's idea of a reading strategy. But in order to introduce to undergraduate students the idea that the unsaid represents a vital component of the text, Derrida's aporia, that term that gestures towards that which is metaphorically suspended as or caught between the necessary and the impossible, offers readers a way to relinquish passive consumption of the text. The difference between listening and consumption is a willingness to suspend knowledge. Keeping in mind Helen Hoy's caveat against the "urgent white-Canadian self-image of non-racist tolerance" that uses "First Nations as the critical Canadian test case" (9), the aporetic reader and critic is not invulnerable to a discourse of civility, but being suspended means that reliance upon what seems like ground beneath one's feet becomes less than practical.

By proposing to examine *Truth and Bright Water* through Derrida's conception of the aporia, that "tired word of philosophy and logic" that has "imposed itself" upon Derrida's thinking (*Aporias* 12), I do not intend to re-invoke a potentially recolonizing impulse by reading a text by a First Nations author through the "legitimating" discourse of European critical theory. Quite the opposite: I mean to point out that reading *Truth and Bright Water* is an exercise in negotiating impositions, and the willingness to delve into the "tangle of rebar and wire" that hangs from the bridge over the Shield River in *Truth and Bright Water* suggests a willingness to enter into both a tangle of discourse and a web of community, neither of which can be reduced to easily consumed symbols. Derrida's consideration of the "experience of the aporia" as a "transversal without line and without indivisible border" (*Aporias* 14-15) is a concept that acquires practical significance alongside King's refusal of "racial denominators" that uphold "a romantic, mystical, and, in many instances, a self-serving notion" of otherness in Western epistemology ("Introduction" xi). When discussing the difference between Christian and

Native creation stories in his 2003 book of Massey Lectures, *The Truth about Stories: A Native Narrative*, King himself invokes Derrida as a reminder that literary and ideological dichotomies are both attractive and destructive. Citing "cranky old Jacques Derrida" as the voice that opposes the easy split between "right/wrong, culture/nature, male/female, written/oral, civilized/barbaric" among other pairings, King reminds us that readers ought to be "suspicious of complexities, distrustful of complications, fearful of enigmas," particularly since dwelling in such complications necessitates an engagement with that which is not immediately understandable (*Truth About Stories* 25). Offering a "Native universe" through literature, King asserts, is one way for First Nations writers to demonstrate how "meaning is refracted by cosmology, the way understanding is shaped by cultural paradigms" (*Truth About Stories* 112). The consideration of how such cultural paradigms surface in the Canadian literature classroom and in the pedagogical space described by such an undertaking demands a reading of King's text in ways that may only be served by the "imposition" of a discourse as complex—and as capacious—as that offered by Derrida. Throughout *Truth and Bright Water*, King offers multiple examples of aporias of "impossible necessity," as Derrida calls them in *Mémoires for Paul de Man*: the necessity of performing a social imperative (such as mourning, gift-giving, or hospitality) and the inherent impossibility of completely realizing that imperative.

The task—and Derrida and King seem equally clear that the experience of the aporia is a particularly involving task—that must be undertaken in reading *Truth and Bright Water* relies upon reading impasse and trepass as they appear within King's fictional communities and within the reading community of the classroom. Robin Ridington points out in his article, "Happy Trails To You: Contexted Discourse and Indian Removals in *Truth and Bright Water*," that King's novel offers the twin impositions of a highly contexted discourse and buried historical reference in aid of exposing the ways that "white privilege" manifests upon narrative conventions. Readers who presume that *Truth and Bright Water* will offer a window onto fictional but realistic Canadian communities, in the tradition of Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* or Robertson Davies' Salterton trilogy, will find some satisfaction. *Truth and Bright Water* draws affective portraits of two communities divided by the Shield River, with the small American town of Truth and the Canadian reserve of Bright Water holding the narrative mirror up to each other, allowing for rich readings of border discourse (Davidson et. al. 141-48). However, unlike *Green Grass, Running Water*, King's

audacious challenge to the master narratives of Western literature and the bartered colonialism of canon-making, *Truth and Bright Water* focuses on community, knowledge, and a variety of narrative and conversational impasses that offer the suspension of story to characters in the novel and to readers of the novel. Calling attention to "the parochial and paradoxical considerations of identity and authenticity" (*Truth About Stories* 44), King refuses easy dichotomies between Native and non-Native readers, and reminds critics and readers alike that inclusion in a text or exclusion by a text is less a matter of race than it is a willingness to listen to a story that does not "participate fully in Western epistemologies" (*Truth About Stories* 119). By favouring communal knowledge over consumable knowledge, King suggests that the racial, national, and linguistic borders proposed in the novel must be negotiated by acknowledging the aporetic elements of the text, admitting the power of that which "concerns the impossible or the impracticable" (Derrida, *Aporias* 13).

For "community," King himself turns to Chippewa-German-American novelist Louise Erdrich's definition as "not simply a place or a group of people," but as a place where "the landscape becomes enlivened by a sense of group and family history" (King, "Introduction" xiv). King's creation of a Native landscape as community in *Truth and Bright Water* refuses simple inclusiveness to readers, both those without a First Nations identification, and those whose connections to First Nations status, heritage, culture, language, and education are viewed with varying standards of authenticity in what King calls the "racial-reality game that contemporary Native people are forced to play" (*Truth About Stories* 55). Although some First Nations writers concentrate upon insider discourses, King himself argues against the notion that "the matter of race imparts to the Native writer a tribal understanding of the universe, access to a distant culture, and a literary perspective that is unattainable by non-Natives" ("Introduction" x), and suggests that Native readers, too, will come from a wide variety of cultural contexts and may not be "included" in the text. "You're not the Indian I had in mind," an employer tells a youthful King in *The Truth About Stories*; King knows that many people who have First Nations backgrounds do not necessarily bring insider knowledge to their reading practices, and asks "What difference does it make if we write for a non-Native audience or a Native audience, when the fact of the matter is that we need to reach both?" (118).

But if—given King's warning against assuming that Native readers have "insider knowledge"—no reader may successfully be "the Indian [reader]"

that the author "had in mind," what then of the instructor who teaches the text? There is no shortage of scholarly and pedagogical warnings against a precipitous understanding of the novel that ignores the cultural or racial background of the author, and an equal number of warnings against assuming, for example, that First Nations texts will be instantly understood by First Nations people. In her essay "Socially Responsible Criticism: Aboriginal Literature, Ideology, and the Literary Canon," Jo-Ann Episkenew warns that "non-Aboriginal scholars need to be cognizant of the authority that society accords their voices" and must "examine the ideological baggage they bring to their readings and counter it by looking into the contexts in which they are written to glean some kind of understanding of the ideology of the people whose works they interpret" (57). Helen Hoy delineates a continuum of rhetorical positions available to non-Native scholars reading Native texts, moving between the extremities of feigned naivete, in which the instructor takes refuge behind the bulwark of her/his own ignorance, and feigned mastery, in which the instructor relies on fast semantic footwork to preserve the scholarly ego while diminishing the potential for learning. Hoy notes "the 'retreat response' is one alternative to stances either of unexamined authority or static self-recrimination," and she goes on to cite Linda Alcoff's view that the decision "not to attempt to speak beyond one's own experience . . . can be a self-indulgent evasion of political effort or a principled effort at non-imperialist engagement (although in the latter case, with seriously restricted scope)" (Hoy 17). If finding a space between these positions of "unexamined authority or static self-recrimination" can be a challenge for scholars, it may be even more so for students, and a responsible pedagogy should not only point out these positions but suggest to students that negotiating the dynamics of the text and the reading community is an ongoing exercise in which critical theory, and some examination of subject positions, can be useful.

Derrida suggests that taking up this impracticable reading position is awkward, but that awkwardness is precisely the point, noting that Aristotle's original term for aporia, *Diaporeō*, means "I'm stuck." In my English translation of *Aporias*, translator Thomas Dutoit includes the French expression for "I'm stuck" as "dans l'embarras"—that is, to be obstructed, but also situated "in embarrassment" by one's own obstruction (Derrida, *Aporias* 13). I appreciate Dutoit's inclusion of the original phrase, as it describes succinctly my experience of asking questions about the aporias in this text. In the interest of making explicit the type of anxieties that students discussed in class about

encountering a text like *Truth and Bright Water* (that is, a text that does not "give up" secrets or symbols, but asks students to assume a suspended and uncomfortable reading position) I have come up against a list of questions that highlight my own obstructions that reveal some of the constructions—literary, social, and theoretical—that plague the reading and the teaching of this text. What if the aporetic elements in the text are, in fact, easily identifiable, and I have merely assumed that the signs are unreadable? There is every possibility that in focusing on suspending knowledge that I am appeasing my own ego with one more act of self-congratulatory neo-colonialism, a way to shirk responsibility by assuming an impassable cultural divide. I am not the first scholar, nor will I be the last, to wonder about the difference between a student's lively curiosity and an instructor's desire for discursive mastery. And what of the nagging doubt that teaching the aporia will do little to assuage students' expectations that professors can, and should, boldly go where students cannot, into the treacherous territory of textual unknowns and come back loaded with certainty and willing to share that certainty with the students? My dual aims, to teach King's novel as a text and as a practical example for a capacious reading methodology, are defined by the "embarrassing" parameters of these questions. The vulnerability of this perspective reminds me, powerfully, of the size and scope of questions asked by students: why this novel? Who are we as readers? What does it mean to read both as an individual and as a group? Who decides meaning, and how?

Part 2: Song, Story, Ceremony: Everybody Knows

Communal knowledge in *Truth and Bright Water* and communal knowledge in the classroom are both characterized by forms of mutual understanding. To give the most obvious of examples, based on their reading of a series of texts, students in my Canadian Fiction course take in historical and cultural examples of ideas that they encounter in other texts, accruing a sense of the dynamism of the literary entity that we have called "Canadian fiction" throughout the duration of the course—and hopefully, beyond the course. The people of Bright Water have their communal texts as well; King's choice of popular song as cultural shorthand perform a kind of soundtrack throughout the novel, as characters choose songs from mainstream popular culture to either parody that culture or carve out a niche within it. Tecumseh watches his father (the nearly iconically named Elvin) sing "Love Me Tender" as part of his parody of Elvis as romantic masculine icon. But Elvin's performance of Elvis, as part of the carnivalesque atmosphere of the

"Indian Days" celebration (itself a festival that turns the colonial celebration of Canada Day on its head), also operates as a lesson about the cultural limits of this form of masculinity. Just as "Elvin" implies but does not deliver "Elvis," Elvin is not as "tender" a lover as the lyrics suggest: he neglects his son, and ignores Helen's repeated requests for practical and financial assistance in taking care of Tecumseh. Lucy Rabbit, with whom Elvin is tenuously romantically connected, is found weeping over his insensitivity at the Indian Days booth. Lucy Rabbit is, in turn, associated with the music of the Rolling Stones, a contrast to Helen's operas and Broadway musicals. Helen's record collection, inherited from her father, include soundtracks from *The Desert Song* (54), *Carmen*, *Show Boat*, and *South Pacific* (17), all musicals that exoticize racial otherness as a major plot point, suggesting that King is parodying how the white gaze is obsessed with "the Other" even (or especially) in popular entertainment. Monroe Swimmer likes musicals too, reinforcing his possible romantic link to Helen when he offers his version of "Oklahoma" at the improvised dedication ceremony for his buffalo installation (*Truth and Bright Water* 140). What people sing, how they sing it, and how others receive their performance of the songs becomes a way that people in Bright Water "read"—or engage with—each other, and one way that the reading community of the classroom can read the politics of community in Bright Water.

However, the happy allusiveness of popular songs is arrested in the text by the haunting presence of an unidentified song that brackets the narrative, suggesting an aporetic element that the text does not offer up for recognition. In parallel incidents involving the two young protagonists, the first-person narrator Tecumseh and Tecumseh's troubled cousin Lum, the Shield River becomes an aporetic space over which concepts of "truth" and the "brightness" of understanding are suspended. In dividing Truth from Bright Water, the States from Canada, whiteness from Aboriginality, the river captures Derrida's concept of the aporia as "a threshold, a border, a line, or simply the edge or the approach of the other as such" (*Aporias* 12). At the start of the novel, the boys watch from a distance as an unidentified woman drives up to the Horns, a rock outcropping shaped like bison horns at a bend in the river. When the woman turns on the truck's radio and begins to dance, the sound of the music drifts down to where the boys are standing, and the boys' gleeful and incredulous voyeurism changes to an uneasy invocation of the unexplained:

> I turn to see what Lum wants to do, but he's looking straight ahead. "You hear that?" he says.
> "The music?"

Lum doesn't take his eyes off the woman on the Horns. "It's my mother's favourite song."

I move back a bit just in case Lum is in one of his moods. The song is okay if you like sad stuff that sounds like rain and cloudy days. "Yeah," I say, "It's one of my mum's favourites, too." (*Truth and Bright Water* 11)

The loss of Lum's mother in an "accident" is never fully explained in the text, though the fact that Lum's father Franklin beats his son badly several times throughout the novel implies strongly that Lum's unnamed mother may have died as a result of Franklin's violent temper. But Bright Water, like every community, has its open secrets and disagreements about causality. Is Franklin violent because of the loss of his wife, or was his violence the cause of her death? The text does not confirm or deny either possibility. But Lum's investment in the beautiful dream of his mother's magical return is fostered by the lack of reference to her corporeal death, and suggests to readers a mystery where perhaps there is no mystery other than the usual difficult questions about why marital violence receives little or no public censure.

As Lum's association of the song with his mother is played out in the rest of the text, the results are more tragic than they are magic. The two boys hear the "rain and cloudy days" song after the unidentified woman has thrown the unknown contents of a suitcase into the Shield River, and Tecumseh initially assumes the items to be garbage (10). This conflation of the unknown and the unwanted gains poignancy later in the narrative, when Tecumseh "sees what [he] should have seen before" (263), that the "woman" is the trickster/artist figure Monroe Swimmer in a wig. The objects that Monroe throws into the river are the bones of First Nations children, removed from their communities and kept in museums across Canada. Monroe's project of "de-collecting" these bones, as Barbara S. Bruce uses the term, "represents a desire to undo the colonial process" by "initiat[ing] a counter-process" that reclaims the lost children through an improvised, perhaps imperfect, act of repatriation that Bruce likens to King's own artistic project offering "resistance through art" despite the limitations of form (198-202). In his introduction to *All My Relations*, King suggests that contemporary Native writers will continue to write stories set largely in the present until they no longer feel trapped by a colonial past; Monroe's project of "de-collection" may be read as one attempt "to make our history our own" (xii), as is *Truth and Bright Water* itself.

But as much as Tecumseh's identification of Monroe as the woman and of the items in the suitcase as the bones of lost children offer "solutions" to the mystery of the plot, as well as a political reading of Monroe's (and King's) art,

the boys' perception of the ceremony on the Horns leaves other questions unanswered. What is the power of the unidentified song that Monroe uses for the ceremony, the song that galvanizes Lum when he first hears it on the truck radio? Why does he associate it with his lost mother? Tecumseh sloughs off Lum's claim as either unimportant or incidental, likening the song to one of his own mother's favourites, but he notices that hearing the song changes Lum's mood, and no amount of casual dismissal dissuades Lum from his association. The mystery of the song's impact and origin suggests an aporetic entry into the text, or rather, a suspension of those very Western epistemologies that demand that such a literary clue offer itself up as allusion, the way that Ridington's "contexted discourse" does. Being nameless, the song does not possess the researchable historical allusions that hide in plain sight in King's references to historical personae such as Dog Soldiers, Rebecca Neugin, and Tecumseh. The song, in remaining unnamed much as Lum's mother is unnamed, stands in for what "everybody knows" but chooses not to name. Note, too, that the ambiguity around the name of Cassie's lost child gives us another example of that which goes unnamed despite its location in "knowable" communal discourse. Tecumseh is the only person in the novel who refers to the child as Mia, after hearing from Cassie that she gave herself her American Indian Movement (AIM) tattoo while looking in a mirror. While the child's name might be Mia, the MIA letters also stand for Missing in Action, likening the child's absence to that of a soldier lost to enemy forces and not yet recovered. Missing people in *Truth and Bright Water* go unnamed not because they are unimportant, but rather because the importance the text grants them relies on communal knowledge, not consumable knowledge.

In discussing Robert Alexie's novel *Porcupines and China Dolls*, King uses the metaphor of song to discuss the structural components that Alexie's novel takes from oral storytelling. These elements, I note, are equally present in the ways King constructs community in *Truth and Bright Water*:

> The continuing attempts of the community to right itself and the omnipresent choruses of sadness and humour, of tragedy and sarcasm, become, in the end, an honour song of sorts, a song many of us have heard before . . . there are more of us who know this song than there should be. (*Truth About Stories* 117-118)

This refrain, an "honour song of sorts" that is offered in repeated narrative "choruses of sadness and humour" returns us to the unnamed song's appearance towards the end of the novel, after Tecumseh's discovery that the "woman" on the Horns is actually Monroe in a wig. While Tecumseh is pleased both by the solution and by his own powers of deductive reasoning,

Lum's maternal fantasy is shattered by the revelation, to the point where Lum seems not to care about Monroe's repatriation of the children. It is only when Tecumseh suggests that they should re-enact Monroe's improvised ceremony with the skull that Lum refers to as his "baby" that Lum smiles (*Truth and Bright Water* 269). But instead of dancing and playing music as Monroe did, Lum berates his skull "baby" as "pathetic" and "one useless piece of shit," while whipping himself across the chest with a piece of rebar from the half-finished bridge (271). Lum, abandoned by his mother to the vicious beatings of his father, is moved to re-enact Monroe's ceremony by dropping the skull into the river only when he hears "his mother's favourite" song drifting down once again from the Horns, where Monroe is playing the piano on the back of his pickup truck (271). The song calms him, dangerously, as he says to Tecumseh, "All you have to do is let go" (272). In the novel's most painful moment, Lum runs off the unfinished bridge, followed by Tecumseh's dog, Soldier; Lum's body is later pulled from the river, along with the "junk" that Tecumseh has warned always ends up in the river, "tires, car parts, a lawn mower, a mattress" (274). While Ridington insists that Lum's jump is an allusion to the historical figure of Geronimo and a deliberate reference to earth diver creation stories (102), Bruce reads Lum's run off the bridge as a suicide that imitates de-collection because "neither repatriation nor decolonization can save all those impacted upon by the colonial process" (203). My own reading is haunted by the image of the child treated as garbage, and recalls the unknown fate of Cassie's missing child, the death on the Trail of Tears of the ghost child Rebecca Neguin, and all of those children who "died hard" in circumstances beyond their control. The difference between Monroe's invented ceremony and Lum's run off the bridge is the difference between design and desperation. For Monroe, the unnamed song represents ceremony; for Lum, it represents irreparable loss, a "letting go" that "junks" his corporeal existence.

The song appears once more in the text's final pages, and its reappearance—now removed from the physical environment of the Shield River—changes the song's relationship to the text. Monroe gives Tecumseh his piano in the give-away, and teaches him "a couple of songs" (278). When Helen and Lucy Rabbit insist on hearing Tecumseh play the piano, he resists but eventually obliges:

> I play a little bit of what Monroe showed me. It isn't much, but I don't make any big mistakes. When I finish, Lucy and my mother clap.
>
> "I know that song," says Lucy.
>
> "Everybody knows that song," says my mother. "Monroe showed him how to play it." (276)

King has played with the misidentification of song before, in *Green Grass, Running Water*, when Coyote misidentifies the song sung by the calling card handed to him by A.A. Gabriel: "I know that song" says Coyote, who begins singing a hymn, conflating "Hosanna" with "Canada" to come up with "Hosannada." When told that the song is actually the Canadian national anthem, with the lyrics "O Canada, our home on Natives' land," Coyote is disappointed by his inaccurate identification, and by the song's colonial message: "'Oh,' says Coyote, 'That song'" (*Green* 226). The ability to correctly identify a song is an act of self-inclusion, one that Coyote cannot perform, despite his best efforts. When Lucy Rabbit identifies the song that Tecumseh plays, Helen's rejoinder acknowledges that Lucy is part of the "everybody" of the community: someone who—even with her bleached hair, professed desire to be Marilyn Monroe, and fondness for Rolling Stones songs—shares communal knowledge without particular effort. Does Tecumseh play the same "rain and cloudy days" song that he and Lum heard twice by the river? While King does not confirm whether or not the song that Tecumseh plays is the same song, he leaves a few clues. It is Monroe who plays the song, initially on the radio, and then on his piano, even playing on after Lum runs off the bridge's end, leaving Tecumseh anxiously listening for any noise that would indicate that Lum and Soldier are still alive: "all I hear is the wind and the faint strains of the piano rising out of the land with the sun" (*Truth and Bright Water* 273). For Monroe to teach Tecumseh the song that was playing during the death of his cousin is not necessarily as cruel as it may seem. In the same way that Tecumseh sings an honour song in an improvised ceremony to commemorate the installation of Monroe's buffalo sculptures, Monroe uses the unnamed but lingering tune as an honour song to a dead warrior and also as a lesson for Tecumseh in how to be a "minstrel" who records and is responsive to events in his community (203, 261). Tecumseh's reluctance to play the song, then, is not only shyness about his ability as a beginning musician, but also about a new seriousness about his responsibilities as the keeper of the song and the keeper of Lum's memory. Lum's identification of the song as elegiac in the book's opening pages has come to fruition; now he, too, is honoured by the song's ceremony. The import of the moment is not lost on Lucy, who does not hum or spin in her chair as she does when she hears other songs, but instead begins to weep at Tecumseh's use of his and Lum's usual greeting for Lucy: "What's up, Doc?" (276). Lucy knows the song is commemorative, as "everybody" in Bright Water knows.

However, the "everybody" of King's community does not necessarily include the reader; not everything is offered up as knowable, or consumable,

within this text, and this conscious elision underscores the need to protect a culture that has suffered, both historically and in the present, by the consuming spirit and practices of colonialism. So despite the song's obvious significance in the text as a narrative framing device, as an elegiac artifact, and as an inherited performance bequeathed to Tecumseh from his possible father Monroe Swimmer, the song remains for the reader tuneless, lyricless, and nameless. In the Canadian literature classroom, the unnamed song functions as a pedagogical pivot from which to address readership and differing modes of understanding. As a radicalizing trope, the song can be read through King's refusal of the term "postcolonial" and his suggestion of four other terms that describe the functions of Aboriginal literatures: tribal, polemical, interfusional, and associational. The unnamed song is "tribal" in that it is meant to be heard and understood within a single community; it is "polemical" in the ways that it emphasizes differences between cultures; it is "interfusional" in how it honours the inclusion of the oral in a written text; and it is "associational" particularly as a piece of "fiction which eschews judgements and conclusions" ("Godzilla" 13-14). Ridington suggests that King's use of historical allusion points up the book's position as a "neo-premodern" text, rather than a postcolonial text (105). Like the historical allusions, the song is a sign that resists easy interpretation, but the song—to a great degree—refuses identification. Noting the song as a hinge between a "First Nations text" and a "Canadian text" suggests the aporetic suspension upon which King's novel relies: the movement of the "impossible and necessary," that moment that "comes to pass by surpassing" the simple rules of racial inclusion and exclusion (Derrida, *Aporias* 33). The inclusion of such a text in a Canadian literature course is vital for discussing the historical practice of colonialism in a settler-invader nation, for questioning the many meanings of postcolonialism in Canada, and, as John Willinsky has discussed, for shining a light on how readers "learn to divide the world" within and beyond the classroom.

Part 3: The Gift: Suspending the Nation

The unnamed song functions as a gift, and Derrida's aporia of giving (discussed in *The Gift of Death*) proceeds on the necessity of practising generosity coupled with the impossibility of giving without conscious thought, and without conscious gratitude, expressed or unexpressed, from the receiver. Monroe offers the unnamed song to the bones of the children and to the spirit of the ancestors in his de-collection ritual. When Monroe

asks Tecumseh to take up the task of composing songs about Monroe's "great deeds," both heroic and mock-heroic (203), Monroe engages the necessity for storytelling as a memorial device and cultural touchstone, while pointing up the impossible necessity of a gift that is given without the recognition of the gift's reception. The unnamed song that Monroe teaches Tecumseh becomes the gift of memory, ushered in by Monroe's giveaway of his collection of appropriated Aboriginal art—a giving back of that which was stolen. This ceremony approaches the impossible necessity of an aporia in that Monroe never calls the event a giveaway, but merely places the items in a field and waits for people to show up. This ritual of gift-giving almost escapes articulation, until Cassie names it "the giveaway" (258). Though Derrida would contend that this articulation would undo "true giving," it is worth noting that in *Truth and Bright Water*'s giveaway, recipients reclaim as much as they receive. The giveaway as a textual presence is a gift, a reclamation of the potlatch ritual that was outlawed by the Department of Indian Affairs in the early twentieth century. King's project of recovering the potlatch tradition in this part of the novel engages Derrida's aporia of giving even as it confounds it: this gift-giving is culturally conscious, yet goes personally unacknowledged. The giver is kept from admiring his/her own generosity by the ritual nature of the task, and for the same reason, the receiver does not thank the giver. Gratitude is not absent, but it is understood rather than spoken; the true gift can then remain uninvaded by the "third party" that language represents. Considering Tecumseh's first-person narration and his function as Monroe's "minstrel," we can read the novel itself as a kind of "song" that Tecumseh eventually writes, not just for Monroe, but for everyone in the community.

More mysterious functions of song can be found in the ominous and contemplative humming of Tecumseh's maternal family. When his mother stops singing in order to hum, she is inevitably thinking of "another life, another time" (219). Even though Helen and Cassie laugh their way through their personal version of "I Remember It Well," from *Gigi* to testify to the differences between male and female perspectives, that song's examination of the mutability of memory reinforces the novel's mystery about the paternity of Lum, Tecumseh, and the missing Mia. Tecumseh's grandmother has taught both her daughters the art of "humming to herself when she's thinking. Or when she's sad" (170). When she "reads" the skull that the boys have found, the elder's sensitivity to the life, death, and locality of the lost child is rooted in her humming as a sign of interpretative ability. The "impossible necessity"

of mourning surfaces in this feminine act of humming, as the grandmother notes that the skull belonged to a girl who "died hard . . . a long ways from home" (170). If the right to mourn is predicated by the right to inherit, the girl's blood relatives must mourn her loss: impossible when the skull is so far removed from her place of origin. On the other hand, mourning the death of a child is absolutely necessary, so the grandmother's observation is aporetic, occupying the space between the impossibility and necessity of mourning the unknown.

However, the grandmother in *Truth and Bright Water* is neither stuck in nor embarrassed by the aporia of mourning; she understands the negotiations between past and present, between languages, between cultures. When asked to offer hospitality to the novel's ghost figure, Rebecca Neguin, the grandmother does not hesitate to welcome Rebecca, and so engages in another Derridean aporia. The aporia of hospitality involves the necessity of welcoming guests without suspicion and the impossibility of controlling those guests. King parodies the aporia of hospitality in his invention of "Indian Days," a carnivalesque holiday that enacts a parodic reversal of colonization, during which white tourists are happily "swindled" by the Bright Water residents. During "Indian Days," acts of recolonization are ridiculed rather than regarded as threatening, and the "trespass" of the white people on reserve land is doubly ironized as a repetition of history, and as a potentially profitable event for the First Nations people. This parody of hospitality, which is primarily a parody of history, finds a contrast in the cultural hospitality that Tecumseh's grandmother offers the ghost-child Rebecca. The grandmother tells Rebecca that guests are welcomed into her lodge according to the traditional exchange of food for a tribal story. The impossibility of controlling a guest emerges when Rebecca begins to tell her story in Cherokee, a language that the grandmother does not speak. But the grandmother's contention that there's "more to a story than just the words" (232) suggests the ultimate relinquishment of control over language, and the grandmother's skill in listening reflects the grace of her hospitality.

Just as there is more to a story than just words, the ability to recognize a song without its lyrics is not only the stuff of game shows. If language is a disruptive third party, then music without words, a song without lyrics, skirts the spoken even as it takes up discursive space. Tecumseh plays the piano but does not sing. Still, what Lucy Rabbit acknowledges as knowledge refers to the unheard lyrics: the "song," not the melody. She acknowledges what cannot be articulated but is understood in the community of the book.

Tecumseh picks out the song, as Monroe has taught him, on the piano; this mourning song *needs* no language within the community of the text. As a gift, it *offers* no language to the reading community, who must, in turn, learn to listen, not because answers are in the offing, but because listening is the operative action of hospitality. In a reading community where the book is composed of a neopremodern text beneath a reader's sometimes marauding colonial eye, the impossible necessity of a rhetorical bridge built on something other than language must assert itself. A suspension of attitudes takes attentiveness, and an aporia's impassability is also its rhetorical usefulness; it invites discussion, it challenges language, and it resists easy dichotomies. A conscious reading community must become and remain alert to the possibilities of listening carefully to that which we cannot hear.

The unfinished bridge, as a central metaphor for speaking over the chasm between cultures, also appears in Lee Maracle's essay about conflict at the 1988 "Telling It: Women and Language Across Cultures" conference in Vancouver. King's unfinished bridge that cannot quite link Truth to Bright Water, Maracle's "ramparts hanging in the air," and Derrida's aporetic "experience of nonpassage" (*Aporias* 12) indicate three ways of thinking about learning that use, rather than ignore, the gap between cultures. King's unfinished bridge in *Truth and Bright Water* performs a suspension of the nation and of the future, suggesting, much as Derrida does, that impossibility and necessity are conjoined in very practical ways in lived experience, and particularly in the lived experience of colonized peoples. Intellectual suspension, as a reading practice and as a mode of discussion in the classroom, may appear to be simple in theory, but is difficult in practice; it requires an investment in balance as a literary symbol, as a rhetorical mode, and as a reading position. As Erin Mouré has written about her own poetics of suspension: "It's not easy. And it's anxious. And it takes attentiveness" (203).

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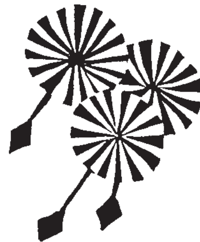

David Bateman

Saving Grace

(to a deflated blow-up doll outside a restaurant—
Vancouver, July 1st 2007)

Having kissed her hands in Choklit Park
He said, "I can no longer be of any help to you"

Thinking he was going blind
Stroking all those puffy fingers in the dark

Making sounds with any meaning meant he cared for her
And all the airless plastic folds

Comprising flattened tragedy and mayhem
Surrounding circumstances under which

They met and married minds so far apart from one another
Having found her in a lavish flower pot

Bludgeoned and befuddled by the ranks of boys and men
Enjoying sports on plasma screens and scribbled threats

Across her back and lower torso
Indelibly inscribed on fleshy blow-up parts

After dinner named her Grace
Wrapped her lifeless form in a sports jacket

Carried her home like some Madonna under wraps
Thinking this could be ample fodder for an installation

"I'll buy her clothes and patch her holes
And cradle Grace's trauma in my arms"

But when they kissed he lost all thought of hope
Drooling listlessly and wet with tears

His mouth and eyes belie the words he tries to speak;
"But Grace, I can no longer be of any help to you

I think that I am going blind
Stroking all those flattened fingers in the dark

I've come to know the aimless ways of men and boys
Scrawling hateful epithets across our backs

They will return you to the urn of your destruction
Where the sight of all this plastic horror first began

That earthen manger
Stained with seasoned ivy

Making sounds with any meaning means they care for you
And all those airless plastic folds

Comprising tragedy and mayhem
Surrounding circumstances under which

They meet to marry minds so far apart
Having found each other among pots and earthen urns

Bludgeoned and befuddled by the ranks of boys and men
Enjoying sports on plasma screens and scribbled threats

Across our backs and lower torsos
Indelibly inscribed on fleshy blow-up parts

After dinner without grace
They wrap our lifeless forms in overcoats

Carrying us home like some Madonna under wraps
Thinking 'this is ample fodder for a life

I'll buy you clothes and fill your holes
And cradle graceless trauma in my arms'"

But when they kiss us we begin to lose all shape & hope
Drooling listlessly and wet with tears

Having dipped their hands in Choklit Park
They pray, "I can no longer be of any help to you"

Kit Dobson

Indigeneity and Diversity in Eden Robinson's Work

Readers approaching Eden Robinson's work from within contemporary colonial Canada seem to desire a writer who will speak to a unique and authentic Native experience. But this is something that Robinson emphatically refuses to do. In an early interview about her 2000 novel *Monkey Beach*, Robinson's interviewer, Suzanne Methot, notes the novelist's rarity in stating that "she is the first Haisla novelist. Ever" (12). Thomas King, in discussing colonial receptions of indigeneity, suggests that "the real value of authenticity is in the rarity of a thing" (56). Robinson is framed as representing a rare position from which to address her readers, a framing that grants her a degree of literary and social value. Colonial audiences are looking for the familiar figure of the Native informant. "But to really understand the old stories," cautions protagonist Lisamarie Hill's grandmother, Ma-ma-oo, in *Monkey Beach*, "you had to speak Haisla" (211). The final unspeakability of Haisla life in English acts as a barrier to cross-cultural appropriation, an important limit on the novel's potential function as a sociological or ethnographic document. And with good reason: in the interview, Robinson states that she "can't write about certain things . . . or someone will go fatwa" on her (Methot 12). While writing a novel about Haisla characters, Robinson encounters limits placed on her by both the spiritual world and her elders. These keep her from discussing certain elements of Haisla life. So while Robinson has to negotiate a readership that generates unrealistic and problematic expectations about her work because of her role as a representative of her community, she also "has to worry about ticking off the denizens of the spiritual world, not to mention the entire Haisla Nation" (Methot 13).

While this essay will be limited to dealing with the work of Eden Robinson and its reception, it contends that the study of literature written in Canada by writers of colour and Indigenous authors is still in need of investigations that are concerned with the cultural industries' and readers' demands or expectations of writers. Colonial audiences continue to exert an immense pressure on work by these authors. As Laura Moss puts it, "stories are often interpreted as fractals of whole communities within a nation replicating with self-similarity" (21), which is a process that leads to erroneous and problematic expectations and readings. In his abstract for the first TransCanada conference, novelist and critic Ashok Mathur argues that after "Canadian writers of colour burst onto the literary scene," their "oppositional aesthetics was quickly co-opted by mainstream institutions." He boldly claims that

> the critical and political components of literary production [were] evacuated . . . in favour of "marketable" books. Mainstream Canadian literature so completely absorbed writers of colour through the maw of capital that we became indistinguishable from the corpus of Canadian literature. ("Abstract" n. pag.)

In the final version of the essay, Mathur suggests that writing by writers of colour has "become the body it once opposed"; that is, that this writing has been incorporated wholesale into the corpus of CanLit to the point that many writers of colour "have begun to *represent* CanLit" ("Transubracination" 141). The cultural industries, he suggests, have encouraged these writers to maintain "a desire to keep up" with the mainstream rather than to contest it, a desire that results in "a type of shape-shifting" designed to please a wide reading audience (144). In the process, increasingly conservative writers (or, to put it differently, less radical ones) have come to the forefront as this body of writing becomes a central component of CanLit.

Mathur's analysis might spur an examination of Eden Robinson's oeuvre, one that considers Indigenous writing's particular relationship to colonial Canada and the broad category of the writer of colour. Mathur suggests that critics and readers of literature in Canada have not caught up with the ways in which the publishing industry encourages writers of colour to maintain a muted politics that will address a wide audience while continuing to represent a particular cultural stance. His argument, moreover, suggests that some examples of literature by writers of colour are now received through a rhetoric that reinforces pre-existing idea(l)s of Canadian diversity. For Robinson, however, there is an ambivalence to becoming, through the publication process, part of the body that one is assumed to oppose. As she struggles with how her writing will be recognized both in her community and

mainstream Canadian letters, readers bear witness to a shifting politics in writing in Canada. This is a shifting politics that should caution against the wholesale absorption of Robinson's writing into the Canadian corpus precisely because her writing resists representing Haisla life—an argument that has been previously made by her critics. At the same time—and in this argument this essay departs from the existing scholarship—one result of this resistance to representation is a process of de-specification in Robinson's writing, a resistance to representing the intricacies of Haisla life that renders her work, perhaps paradoxically, less culturally specific. There is a persistent "damned if you do, damned if you don't" situation for a writer like Robinson: if she does act as a representative of her community, she can be damned for doing so—"someone will go fatwa" on her—but if she doesn't maintain her cultural specificity, her absorption into the colonial nation-state may take place through the process of voiding the resistant ethics and aesthetics that such specificity might be said to represent. This essay interrogates Robinson's writing in order to unpack this bind.

Eden Robinson's work—especially *Monkey Beach*—provides an excellent example of the ambivalent forms of recognition that face Indigenous writers. This novel displays anxiety about how it will be recognized as either a representative "Native" text or as a more universal/Western novel aimed at a mainstream audience. And it encodes literary elements that allow it to be read in either register, resisting categorization—and in the process generating a fair bit of academic head-scratching. *Monkey Beach* is set in the village of Kitamaat on the northern coast of British Columbia, near the settler town of Kitimat. Protagonist Lisamarie is growing into an adolescence characterized by violence and loss. Her brother Jimmy is missing at sea, along with the boat *The Queen of the North* and its captain, Josh. Both Jimmy and Josh are likely dead.[1] Lisa experiences the loss of other family members, rape, and pathologization for her encounters with the spirit world, which frequently take the form of a small, prophetic man who portends disaster. Her proximity with this spiritual realm connects her to what critics have seen as a more traditionally Native worldview, one in which Lisa might recover her sense of self and come to see her capacities for paraphysical perception as enabling rather than troubling, as a valuable asset to her community (Castricano 802).

Robinson's novel, however, should not be read as a straightforwardly "Native" one (as though there were such a thing in the first instance). I began to think more about *Monkey Beach* after Lee Maracle commented to Smaro Kamboureli and myself in an interview that she wasn't sure that, for

her, *Monkey Beach* qualified as a Haisla book because Robinson wrote like a mainstream writer. This comment forced my reconsideration and pushed me to look again at Robinson's other published work. On the one hand, of course Robinson is a Haisla writer (and Heiltsuk on her mother's side), and her work can also be seen as such. But, on the other hand, what if Maracle's comment were to be taken seriously? What would that mean for Robinson's writing? What would a Haisla novel look like? More generally, how does a work qualify as a "Native" text?

In her recent book *Taxidermic Signs: Reconstructing Aboriginality*, Pauline Wakeham convincingly argues for the proximity of the taxidermic practice of wildlife "preservation" to museological and anthropological visions for Indigenous people as a "vanishing race" within the colonial imaginary. Wakeham reads taxidermy as a semiological practice that inscribes death and life in a single gesture—through the re-animation of dead bodies through their lifelike stances in displays. In doing so, she incisively illustrates how indigeneity is associated in the colonial imagination with disappearance and death in its conflation with animality and nature. This association takes place, she notes, even—or especially—when the colonial imagination is engaged in ostensibly benevolent acts of "preserving" aboriginality in the face of Western encroachments. These associations between indigeneity, death, and disappearance strongly shape expectations of how Indigenous people will perform and how cultural work about Indigenous life will look to viewers. "Within museum spaces," Wakeham contends, "the microphysics of biopower work to shape the corporeal and affective responses of visitors while attempting to dissimulate the work of social discourses in the guise of supposedly 'natural' or 'biological' responses," responses that leave intact the association between indigeneity and taxidermy. Wakeham notes that, of course, "the affective and corporeal responses of visitors are never just 'innate' or 'pure' but always already mediated by power" (69). The spectator—colonial or otherwise—who views Indigenous "artifacts" and other displays within museological spaces, in other words, has already had her or his responses shaped by dominant discourses that frame indigeneity. It is important to recognize how these responses are shaped as natural even though they derive from very specific practices of colonial control.

Wakeham's analysis does not specifically read books as taxidermic spaces, but her work creates a space for this essay to extend analysis in that direction. As a technology for preserving historical details and narratives, the book plays an arguably similar role to the phonographs and films that

Wakeham discusses; indeed, many of the early recordings by anthropologists in the Pacific Northwest, for instance, formed the basis of subsequent books. Moreover, for much of its history in the West, the codex has been an explicitly taxidermic technology, constructed from the preserved skins of animals in the form of vellum and encased within leather covers designed to highlight the importance and liveliness (Wakeham uses the term "liveness") of the materials inside. And, similarly, the responses of readers are never innate but are always already shaped by power. In a textual context, Renée Hulan reminds us that "asserting cultural difference can be a way of containing it" for the dominant, as images of what she terms "pan-Native identity" remain "susceptible to . . . appropriation and misrepresentation" for readers (77, 78). Within the technological and taxidermic matrix of the book, self-representations by Indigenous peoples remain fraught, despite vigorous and sustained cultural production designed to implicate colonial readings' racisms. Readers of books have their responses governed by power that imagines, as Wakeham argues, Indigenous people as animals, as historical curiosities, and as, ultimately, vanishing.

While the colonial imaginary's mediation of images of Aboriginality is well-known in Canada, discussed also by critics such as Terry Goldie, the Indigenous imaginary has, in turn, created expectations of its own that are less often discussed; Lee Maracle's comment is precisely one such example. Thomas King, writing in *The Truth About Stories*, notes that not only was "the idea of 'the Indian' . . . fixed in time and space" by Romantic ideals within colonial communities (37), but that later, in turn, "being recognized as an Indian was critical" within Indigenous communities. "We dressed up in a manner to substantiate the cultural lie that had trapped us," King writes (45). This costuming is partly a political response to colonial power, a response that leads back to the referent against which it reacts, back to the colonial imaginary and its taxidermic vision. Recalling a series of questions that he was once asked by a Native-composed selection committee for a grant, King proposes the following questions as markers of Aboriginal authenticity that would fulfill the "crucial" need for recognition within Native communities: "were you born on a reserve? . . . Do you speak your Native language? . . . Do you participate in your tribe's ceremonies? . . . Are you a full-blood? . . . Are you a status Indian? . . . Are you enrolled?" (55-56). These largely external markers of indigeneity denote expectations that allow viewers—both Indigenous and non-Indigenous—to see the Native body as Native; in their absence, King posits, the authenticity of the Indigenous body falls into

question and is made, by extension, into a marker of Native disappearance into the contemporary, Western world. Looking at a statue of Will Rogers, King is asked the following by his brother: "I know he's an Indian . . . and you know he's an Indian, but how is anyone else going to be able to tell?" (42). Being able to tell is, clearly, an important criterion.

With Robinson, however, one can rarely tell much of anything too easily, and this ambivalence—or what Mathur calls "shape-shifting"—both stymies audiences and enables a reframing of what "Native" writing in Canada might look like. In her first book, the volume of short stories *Traplines*, Robinson uses extreme violence to characterize the lives of characters who are poor and working class, but are otherwise not often marked as Native, aside from in the book's final story, "Queen of the North," which was subsequently expanded into *Monkey Beach*. This practice of avoiding ethno-cultural demarcation leads critic Vikki Visvis to suggest that "the ambiguity and ambivalence that proliferate in her work allow for dynamic, constantly shifting configurations of the Native world" (53), and pushes critic Cynthia Sugars even further, to the claim that Robinson's practice is one that thoroughly "frustrates the readers' desire to interpret her characters on the basis of their ethno-cultural identity" (78). This ambiguity, and the frequent, apparently deliberate removal of such markings parallels Toni Morrison's discussion of her early story "Recitatif" in *Playing in the Dark*. "Recitatif" was, Morrison tells us, "an experiment in the removal of all racial codes from a narrative about . . . characters . . . for whom racial identity is crucial" (xi). The importance of such "racial codes" emerges, it seems, in critical writing that focuses upon them.

Robinson's most recent novel, *Blood Sports*, published in 2006, furthers this discussion. The novel is a gruesome one, set in Vancouver focusing on the life of a young character named Tom Bauer, his cousin Jeremy Rieger, and his girlfriend Paulina Mazenkowski. It is, like *Monkey Beach*, a longer version of one of the stories in *Traplines*, this time of a story first called "Contact Sports." The initial story, as read by Helen Hoy in her book *How Do I Read These?*, functions as an allegory for colonialism, in which the violence of Jeremy represents the colonial invader, and Tom's responses correspond to those of Native society. Hoy is explicit in stating that she reads the text allegorically because Robinson is an Indigenous woman. For Hoy, the word "contact" in the story's title indicates the suspended Native narrative that is couched beneath the racially unmarked surface of the text. Robinson has stated, however, that she does not wish to be limited by being termed a Native writer. She comments that "once you've been put in the box

of being a native writer then it's hard to get out" (qtd. in Hoy 153). In a move that seems almost to be a response to Hoy's reading of the story that became her recent novel, she shifts the title from "Contact Sports" to *Blood Sports*, thereby foreclosing some of the allegorical temptation, and she specifies in the course of the narrative that the characters with whom she is dealing are "Hispanic" and "Caucasian" (the latter term is repeated at least ten times). Although Toni Morrison does not suggest the same of her experiment with "Recitatif," the removal of "racial codes" in Robinson's original story left readers free to impose their assumptions about the sorts of characters that a Native woman would or could write about. The result is that readers like Hoy transposed Robinson's identity onto her characters, and the insistent use of the raciological term "Caucasian" in the later novel reads as a response to this transposition. *Blood Sports* could likely be allegorized anew, but Robinson resists being contained within the term "Native writer," expressing a need to maintain the ability to represent more than Native experiences. This desire is, of course, fair. The ghettoization of writers into essentialized ethno-cultural categories is of a piece with the history of the representation of Indigenous peoples as vanishing. It is also consistent with Canadian colonialism, in which Native writers are associated with a fixed point of origin—their indigeneity tied to taxidermic notions of tradition and history rather than to the present—a position that limits their participation in contemporary life and their ability to posit self-governance.

Monkey Beach is, however, packaged, marketed, discussed, and written as a Native text. Hoy describes the agent-prepared publicity packet that accompanied the initial release of *Traplines* as follows: it "included a map of the Haisla territories and nineteen Haisla reserves, decorated with ovoid West Coast Native designs (hummingbird, killer whale)." Additionally, "the same designs appear," she notes, "on the cover of the packet and the title page of excerpts" of the pre-release of *Monkey Beach* (174). The text includes lengthy passages that describe the community's practices, such as making oolichan grease and harvesting the oxasuli plant. But *Monkey Beach* similarly challenges its categorization in its embrace of popular culture, pushing it towards a more universal or generally North American register. Strategies that mirror those used in *Traplines* and *Blood Sports* are witnessed in *Monkey Beach*, as the novel shies away from embracing an uncritically or stereotypically "Native" perspective. It can be packaged as a Native book, but it cannot easily be read, as Jennifer Andrews and others have noted, as a conventionally Native text. There is a clash between the packaging and the content in this

respect. This resistance to what Robinson seems to see as Indigenous closure is a result, in part, of Lisamarie's own anxieties about her Haisla heritage, one from which she and her community have been alienated through colonialism. The paraphysical elements of her life push against a perspective that essentializes Native stories as historical and mythological, from the little man whom Lisa sees, to the prominent though absent figure of the Sasquatch or *b'gwus*, who moves from a variety of Native cultures to the colonial imaginary and back again. The little man, for instance, is described in ways that cross cultural borders: "sometimes he came dressed as a leprechaun," Lisa tells us, but the night before her uncle Mick's death he wore a "strange cedar tunic with little amulets dangling around his neck and waist. His hair was standing up like a troll doll's, a wild, electric red" (132). Critics suggest that, to quote Rob Appleford, "the central problem posed by the novel as a whole" is "how to reconcile the ambiguity of the text with what many critics assume to be the project of Aboriginal writers, namely the articulation of a cohesive and non-Othering subject position" (87). This is not Robinson's project, Appleford demonstrates, as Robinson fills her novel with popular references, with genre-blurring mythologies, and with elliptical moments that foreclose her role as a Native informant. Instead, she focuses on the discomfitures of Lisa's growing up in a non-cohesive Indigenous community that has lost much of its self-understanding and whose violence closely mirrors that of white communities nearby.

The text is therefore careful to avoid being reduced to what might be badly termed a Native novel, one that operates according to the ideals that King both discusses and challenges above. Andrews argues that "Robinson's text traces the return of the repressed in a distinctly Native context, insisting on the complex and lasting impacts of non-Native colonization and exploring the increasing presence of Western mass culture in tribal communities" (21). But it seems to be against such a statement that Jodey Castricano analyzes unspeakability in the novel, stating that here "the 'unspeakable' consists of the real and material effects of the forced relocation of Aboriginal people by the government of Canada pursuant to the *Indian Act*" as well as other injustices (802). Andrews seems to overemphasize colonization, which is surprisingly muted in the text. It is, rather, one of the key unspeakables with which Castricano is concerned, an ever-present but unspoken trauma. Such unspeakability is everywhere in *Monkey Beach*. In part, the novel's silences are the result of Lisa's youth, in which she remains largely ignorant of Haisla culture, but it is also a calculated tactic. Comments made to Lisa, or conversations between adults, are

fractured mid-sentence, suspended so as to protect her from harmful knowledge. But these ellipses also have the effect of removing the cultural specificity of the text and pushing it towards a more universal register.

Many of these ellipses, interestingly, hearken to Robinson's literary predecessors in Native Canadian literature. Lisa's uncle Mick, a former American Indian Movement (AIM) activist who could have stepped from the pages of Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash*, provides the clearest example. When he comes into the story, Lisa's mother says to him "I thought you were . . . I mean, we heard the standoff went, um, badly and we thought . . . " (22; ellipses in original). We don't find out which standoff Mick was at or what issues he has been contesting, although those aware of AIM will have a sense of his values.[2] His stories are fragmented, and his political arguments cut short, as in the following discussion, where Mick and Lisa's father, Mick's brother Albert, sit down to take care of his taxes:

> "I don't see why we have to file at all," Mick said. "The whole fucking country is on Indian land. We're not supposed to pay any taxes on or off reserves."
> "God, don't start again," Dad said.
> "This whole country was built on exploiting Indians for—"
> "Mick," Dad pleaded. (30-31)

These sorts of interventions into discussions of Indigenous politics are constant, leaving Lisa (and the novel's readers) with a diminished sense of the stakes of being Haisla in Canada. Lisa asks Mick a series of questions about his struggles and arrest—"Did you really get shot? . . . Who shot you? Did you shoot him back? How come you went to jail" (52)—only to be rebuffed by Mick with a request for a glass of water and the dismissive statement that "it's a long story, all grown-up and silly" (53). At Lisa's insistence, he tells her some of the story, but shies away from providing details. Later we learn that Mick participated in the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs office in Washington, DC, an event that is fully treated in Armstrong's novel. Uncle Mick, however, is routinely cut short, either through self-censorship or by being interrupted, and we learn little of his experience.

The ellipses in the text evoke other books studied under the rubric of Indigenous writing. Lisa's mother's brief mention of the history of epidemics to hit Native communities is hauntingly described in Lee Maracle's novel *Ravensong*. Lisa's mother tells her that the people "just died" (100), however, this is a blunt statement that is consistent with the rationalizing mindset that her mother displays throughout the novel. And later in the text, while in Terrace, Lisa faces off against a carload of white men who threaten to rape

her, an event that takes place in the most painful terms in Beatrice Culleton's novel *In Search of April Raintree*. Coming to *Monkey Beach* with a knowledge of Indigenous writing in which the ellipses of the text are evocative of literary engagements with colonial violences perpetrated against Native peoples, gives one a different experience of reading the novel than if one does not come to it with such knowledge. Readers are pushed into extending their reading on the basis of their contextual knowledge. In Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree*, the rape of April and her sister Cheryl's eventual suicide are couched in an awakening search for a self that understands and values itself as Métis, and the violence that is done against the two women acts as a tragic catalyst for April's eventual recovery of her selfhood. In *Monkey Beach*, on the other hand, Lisa is raped by her friend, nicknamed Cheese, shortly after she returns to the village after confronting her would-be white rapists. If one is attentive to the echoes of *April Raintree*, one is presented with a difficult transposition of violence against Native women from a white context into a Native one, one in which Canada's explicit colonial legacy is de-emphasized in favour of a focus upon violence within the community. Sugars suggests that Robinson's writing "highlights the violent history of Native-white relations, while resisting idealized versions of the Native" (82). While this is certainly the case here—white violence is evoked just as the Haisla village is far from idealized—the way in which the text defeats this idealization is complex. Robinson is both "appropriating and reformulating the discourse of savagery" as Sugars suggests (79), but in a way that might reduce all violence to the same level, in which colonial and communal violence exist on par.

These sorts of slippages between white and Haisla violence are structurally important to the novel, moreover, and lead to its conclusion, in which we learn that Lisa's brother Jimmy has died, but that before he died he killed fellow villager Josh. Josh was sexually abused while in residential school and has learned, himself, to be sexually aggressive and volatile. He had impregnated Jimmy's girlfriend Adelaine—nicknamed Karaoke—who went to Vancouver for an abortion, an act that spurs Jimmy to beat Josh to death with a paddle and to sink his fishing boat. The sexual, psychological, and physical trauma faced by the characters Josh, Mick, and Trudy in residential school—described in textual gaps that evoke the pain of Tomson Highway's novel *Kiss of the Fur Queen*—is glanced over in favour of the violence done within the community. Visvis writes of Robinson's earlier short story version of the narrative that Josh's "violation of Adelaine can be read . . . as a distinct dimension of his traumatic experience" of sexual abuse at residential school

(43). Violence predicated upon the history of colonization underwrites the novels' characters' lives, but, without a knowledge of this context, both literary and historical, the novel risks universalizing its violence, making it of a piece with the threats that are witnessed within colonial society. The colonial framework is palimpsestically overwritten through gaps and moments of unspeakability, the historical effects of colonization partially effaced, and what we are to do with those gaps becomes an ethical problem. Visvis writes that Robinson's work

> encourages the reader to approach the traumatic event in light of historical circumstances specific to Native culture, and [also] disallows a culturally specific understanding of traumatic symptoms and cures by promoting, to some degree, accepted Western perspectives. It is a conflicted cultural stance. . . . (47)

While Visvis is concerned with methods of treating trauma—those are the Western perspectives about which she writes—culturally specific understandings are further frustrated by the elliptical treatment of the text's Native context, moving this novel towards a broad potential audience.

Robinson is neither right nor wrong for adopting the strategy of simultaneously evoking and avoiding what might be deemed more "authentic" Native literary structures. This essay sees these as strategies to prevent the straightforward placement of her work within the category of Native literature (with the interpretive foreclosure that Robinson suggests follows from this placement) as well as the uncomplicated absorption of her writing into the broad category of "ethnic" literature—or mainstream writing by writers of colour—with which Mathur is concerned. The difficulty comes in when readers assume that Robinson is acting as a representative of her community, or Native communities in general. She runs the risk of being criticized for her work's not being Native or Haisla enough—as in Maracle's comment—or, alternatively, of packaging her ethnicity such that it becomes a market commodity. One critically astute statement about the novel could be reversed, seen as a threat to Indigenous ways of living in this context: Appleford suggests that "Robinson recognizes . . . that a hermetic, authentic Aboriginal selfhood is unattainable" (96). If this is the case—and Appleford cites Thomas King, Sherman Alexie, and Daniel David Moses as Robinson's antecedents—then this position is potentially threatening to Indigenous writers and people who are seeking to decolonize themselves. Appleford discusses the idea of this selfhood on the basis of Robinson's practice of mixing what are taken to be Native (which I read in this case as traditional, historical) aspects of life with what are taken to be mainstream or colonial ones. This

may be simply to recognize that no self is pure, at least not in a (post-) postmodern context, and to follow a deconstructive line of reasoning. Robinson suggests this argument with the quotation with which this paper began, in which Lisa's Ma-ma-oo suggests that speaking Haisla is a prerequisite to cultural knowledge. The past is unrecoverable, it seems, even the colonial past, and the present, as a result, needs to be reckoned with. But what is the source of the community's violence? Blame seems to be laid at the feet of Mick, Cheese, and the Haisla community in its failure to attain coherence—one that seems to be impossible. With the blame laid at the community's feet, it seems important to ask whether colonialism is effaced in the process such that Canada is let off the hook. Should the role of colonialism not be highlighted in creating the conditions for this violence? Put more broadly, does *Monkey Beach*, in its simultaneous adoption and disavowal of cultural specificity and informancy, become one of the everyday iterations of diversity in Canada that allows the nation to reproduce itself in the present and into the future? Or is it, instead, a critique of the ways in which the Native body is expected to perform itself in writing? Hoy pursues a similar, though more general question: "must all Native writing," she asks, "be reduced to a singular narrative of colonization and resistance?" (164).

The novel concludes with an ambiguity that prevents these questions from being given an easy answer. Lisa has been riding her father's speedboat across the inlets of northern BC in order to meet her parents in their search for Jimmy, and she stops at Monkey Beach, the beach upon which she once saw a Sasquatch. On this trip she has a vision of her grandmother and her uncle Mick, who have both died, as well as of Jimmy. The characters give her advice: Jimmy asks her to tell Adelaine that he loves her, Mick tells her to "go out there and give 'em hell," and her grandmother tells her to "go home and make [her] some grandkids" (373). But she pauses on the beach, and readers do not know whether she will return home, or in what manner. This open-ended conclusion prevents closure, much like the ambiguous ending of Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*, where readers do not know whether the narrator returns to the city to confront what she sees as the American menace. The text cannot, as a result, be placed into the category of Indigenous literature in a narrative of redemption in which she will return to her community, but neither can its role as Indigenous literature be discounted. Hoy concludes that in *Traplines* Robinson

> seriously damages the capacity of white culture to allocate to itself all that remains after the racial / cultural reserves have been allotted. In so doing she

> makes 'Native writer' a less constricting designation and helps move us towards a point where the asymmetrical deployment of such categories becomes less pervasive and problematic. (182)

This argument is both apt and insufficient for *Monkey Beach*. It is apt in that this "Native novel" radically widens the category—if it is read simplistically as such—because it self-consciously plays with "crucial" tests of Indigenous authenticity like those posited by King. Moss argues that readers have been compelled to understand Robinson's characters on a racial and/or cultural basis because of "a linking of critical expectation based on authorial identity and an expected socially transformative outcome" (26), and poses the challenge to readers of de-linking such expectations. At the same time, this novel's representation of Haisla community risks excusing the past through its focus on the present, and it moves towards a more general category of work that might be open to appropriation in the colonial imaginary. Kamboureli notes that "CanLit has been subject to a relentless process of institutionalization" (vii), one important part of which is generic. Castricano and Andrews talk about the book as, respectively, "Canadian gothic" and "Native Canadian Gothic," and the novel can also be read as a *Bildungsroman*. But the conjunction of the terms "Native" and "Canadian" here suggest the slippage towards the national mainstream with which Mathur is concerned. The term "Native" can neither be left out or assumed, and this essay is left reckoning with the ways in which *Monkey Beach* is being absorbed into the everyday processes that celebrate Canada's diversity and differences without recognizing the specificities of cultural heritage. This book walks a very difficult line, especially if it is taken to be representative of the community about which it speaks, let alone Indigenous literature more generally. It becomes necessary to recover the silences in Eden Robinson's writing, lest readers too easily assume any of her narrative turns.

NOTES

1 An uncanny coincidence: in *Monkey Beach*, two people, Jimmy and Josh, go missing when *The Queen of the North* vanishes. Six years *after* the book's publication, on the 22nd of March, 2006, a BC Ferries vessel of the same name sank along the northern coast of British Columbia, off Gil Island, within range of the missing boat in *Monkey Beach*. Two people, Shirley Rosette and Gerald Foisy, remain missing.

2 An attentive reading suggests, however, that he was involved with the 1973 standoff at the Pine Ridge Reservation and its aftermath, since he later reveals that he was involved in an argument with the Guardians of the Oglala Nation (Goons) around the time Lisa was born (53).

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Tom Wayman

Adjustment

Perhaps the moon wearied of
metal objects that landed on it
with charring flames

or, more likely, the satellite grew tired of being endlessly jostled
by the opposing pulls of gravity and centrifugal force

but one night an astronomer observed
aberrations in its orbit
Over six months, the evidence became conclusive
—the immense rocky sphere
was slowly descending toward Earth
like an enormous airship settling lower
like the deliberate closing of
the lid of a box

Once the moon began to loom larger by the week
panic flared among inhabitants of the globe
desperate to know where the errant sphere would hit
Calculations eventually yielded the point of impact
as the middle of the Gulf of Georgia
between Vancouver Island and the mainland

With the moon filling half the sky
the Gulf and San Juan Islands were evacuated
before the gigantic mass
could crush forests, mountains, villages
Entire coastal cities—Seattle, Tacoma, Bellingham, Vancouver, Victoria
—in addition to settlements along Puget Sound, the Olympic Peninsula
and Georgia Strait were also emptied

as a precaution against flooding
The sphere pushing into the lower atmosphere
began to glow red from air resistance
Dire predictions that ranged from deadly clouds of scalding steam
to the Earth breaking apart as a consequence of the impending collision
preoccupied the news media
while the highest tides ever recorded
poured over breakwaters and seawalls
to strand vessels high up on beaches
even on the far side of the Pacific

Yet the moon touched down so gently
its displacement of millions of tonnes of sea water
that surged west down the Strait of Juan de Fuca
and east toward the Fraser River delta
resulted in much reduced loss of life
and did remarkably little damage
compared to the authorities' forecasts

The moon's bulk, however
completely blocked the former shipping channels
serving Puget Sound and the B.C. mainland
Views westerly from these shores
that had offered pleasing vistas
of ocean, clouds, distant snow-tipped mountains
now were obscured by an stupendous cratered dome
of grayish-white rock

The economic consequences
of the moon's descent
were daunting: besides the cleanup on land
the stream of container vessels to and from the Orient
had to be rerouted around Vancouver Island's stormy north cape
to a new port constructed on a fjord
hundreds of kilometers northwest of Vancouver
to which expensive rail and highway links
had to be built

Some of these costs
were offset by an expansion in
tourism: everyone on the planet with the financial resources
wanted to visit the moon
Until the extraterrestrial arrival was declared
a World Heritage Site, entrepreneurs secured leases from
various federal, regional or local governments claiming jurisdiction
and dozens of waterfront holiday resorts were carved
out of the newcomer's dusty slopes
Meanwhile, the removal of the moon from orbit
resulted in the end of tidal ebb and flow
with disastrous consequences globally for
thousands of shellfish, crustacean and food fish
enterprises and their dependent communities
Scientists speculated whether the huge mass
now adhering to the Earth
would affect planetary spin and orbital progression
in unknown ways harmful to human life
or to the rest of the biosphere

Yet the world
despite its bulging appendage
continued to steadily rotate on its axis
—although, according to experts
one-twenty-fifth of a minute slower than previously
Many people found the night sky
more beautiful in the absence of the moon
since each day of the month all the seasonal constellations were visible
shining among the other stars
between which the freshly burdened Earth
continued to journey
as it did around its indifferent and self-consuming sun

Guy Beauregard

After Redress
A Conversation with Roy Miki

Through his work as a critic, poet, editor, teacher, community organizer, and activist, Roy Miki has made innumerable and lasting contributions to Asian Canadian studies and to critical thought in Canada. Following the publication of *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* (2004), Miki visited Taiwan to deliver a series of talks in the north and south of the island. The following interview took place in Taipei on 13 November 2004. Over the course of this conversation, Miki discusses a wide range of topics, including the challenges of writing a narrative history of the Japanese Canadian redress movement; the late 1980s as a remarkable turning point in the Canadian nation; redress as an unfinished project in Canada; the conflicted cultural politics of the 1990s; historical memory in Taiwan; the question of the nation and globalization; his work as a teacher and his relationship to academic institutions; the current state of CanLit; and, finally, his thoughts on what he calls the "struggles to create the terms of homing and belonging all over the world."

GB: I'm interested in the way your book *Redress* (2004) explicitly foregrounds a search for a *form* to represent the Japanese Canadian redress movement. In particular, I'm interested in how you think the notion of a "flexible procedure" (xiv) that you mention in the preface might distinguish this particular project from existing narrative representations of redress such as *Justice in Our Time* (1991), or *Bittersweet Passage* (1992), or *Itsuka* (1992; rev. 1993), all of which were published in the early 1990s.[1] What does *Redress* bring to the table?

RM: I had been working on this book for most of the 1990s and trying to find some means of writing a study of redress that would capture the inner turmoil of the movement. I really wanted to revisit its chaos and uncertainty.

Over a period of years, I had accumulated—amassed might be a better word—piles of documents. I'd gone through the files of the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC), numerous government files, and I'd received important material from individuals who had participated in the movement—so I had boxes and boxes of stuff. But for some reason I couldn't find a voice to lift this research material into a language that matched the intensity of the movement. The standard historical voice, the voice of the historian rigorously tying down the sources for virtually every statement that was made and trying to plod through the factual history of redress—that voice wasn't attractive to me. I initially tried writing parts of the book in that form, but it didn't allow me to be reflexive enough as a writer. I soon became very conscious—and here my literary background was coming through—that in writing a history of redress, I was also creating a narrative and therefore involving myself in a kind of a fictional interpretation based on these documents or facts. But the two sides—the creative and the documentary—didn't come together for me.

I decided to step back from the material. In a way, I abandoned the writing project because I felt at the time—this was the mid-1990s—that whatever I came up with would not be satisfying. Instead, I got more directly involved in a lot of critical race theory. The essays that became *Broken Entries* (1998) were all written when the redress book was set aside. There's one essay on Japanese Canadian identity near the end of that collection—"Unclassified Subjects: Question Marking Japanese Canadian Identity"—in which I began to get a sense of the broader narrative that I later track in the book. It makes use of the opening passage of *Redress* where I situate myself in the House of Commons at the moment that Prime Minister Brian Mulroney recites the acknowledgement. I thought, if I start the book that way, where am I going to take it?

In dwelling on that moment, I became fascinated by the obvious—but for me not so simple—idea that before the acknowledgement Japanese Canadians were unredressed; after the acknowledgement, we were then redressed. So we were no longer the same people. When we sat down to listen to the acknowledgement, we were still in the unredressed state; when we stood up and clapped for the prime minister's statement, we became different subjects. In a way, that essay opened up for me—and I didn't really probe it at the time—an intriguing question: what did it mean to go from this sitting state to this standing state? When we sat down, the members of Parliament and the prime minister looked up at us, and when we stood up we looked down on them. This process of looking up and looking down, this exchange of glances,

suggested to me the passage of a particular identity formation and that I needed to understand what was going on in that moment.

GB: Do you mind if I jump in and ask about the question of "exchange" and the way it is represented in the powerful scene in the House of Commons you return to at the end of the book? In that scene, you note that, "In this brief moment, they [the NAJC delegates] entered into an unprecedented exchange with the Canadian nation and simultaneously underwent a historical transformation with far-reaching implications. . . . In receiving the gift of redress from a nation that had stripped them of their rights in the 1940s, they also gave the gift of redress to a nation that had acknowledged the injustices they had suffered as a consequence of that action" (325). How do you feel this notion of *exchange* or the *gift* can help to understand this remarkable moment?

RM: It's both a loss and a gain. When you're dealing with this notion of a wounded identity, as long as you're in the state of the wound, you're always moving toward a future where you imagine the pain to be resolved. The paradox is that, if you ever get to that future, you can no longer occupy that condition of consciousness. Japanese Canadians throughout the twentieth century lived with this future before them. In a way, their entire history (I'm talking in broad narrative terms) was constituted on this future moment. They built their lives and negotiated not only within the community but with the state on various levels—economic, social, cultural—always on the hope that this future would come to pass. If it wasn't the full rights of citizenship, it was being able to live where they wanted to live, becoming members of the Canadian nation, taking their place in the whole drama of citizenship, and so on.

Redress was a thing in the future. When it was done, there was a loss because that history then got absorbed into the official history of Canada. And that official history, of course, to a certain extent is mediated and managed by the state. So here we were in the House of Commons, a group of individuals who had been wronged by the state, in a sense offering up our history to that state so that the state could "redeem" itself. The state—and, at that moment, the nation—strengthened itself by taking ownership of redress. And that's where the loss occurs, because now Japanese Canadians were a manifestation of the official narrative and were no longer in a condition of lack. The history that got absorbed into the nation and got to be retold through the official history is both ours and no longer ours.

GB: The notion of "surrender" that appears later on that same page tries to name that process in some way.

RM: Yes, I was playing around with a self-reflexive moment.

GB: To refer back to the title of your collection of poetry?

RM: Yes, mainly for fun. But it's also this idea or question: after the redress movement, then what? What happens as a consequence of the settlement? Of course, there are many repercussions in terms of the history of human rights and the way that the discourse of redress will be disseminated. So redress, from that moment, is born as a discourse. We may no longer have control over where that discourse is going to go or how we are going to be framed in it. And we will no longer be able to complain that we are unredressed. We won't be able to say, "We've been shafted! We need to do something! It was unfair what happened to us! Something ought to be done about this!"—which is what so much of Japanese Canadian history has been about. I'm referring to that future where you imagine something to be resolved. That's why I've said that once we—that is, the Japanese Canadians who were interned—gave up our history, we were placed at the heart of the nation, but then we also disappeared in our unredressed state.

I don't think I'm just being romantic about it. The community that was interned was disappearing—in poetic terms and in real terms as well because physically they had aged and were dying in large numbers. The community that was redressed on September 22, 1988, was for the most part made up of older people in their sixties, seventies, eighties, and nineties. It was for them a moment of incredible intensity. For my mom, who was in her mid-seventies, it was a moment of historical resolution, something she never dreamt would ever happen in her lifetime. Many people in her generation couldn't believe it. For them, the history had been resolved. Redress brought their life to a meaningful closure.

GB: At the same time that this personal or community closure was happening, there was also a convergence of other events happening almost simultaneously, a convergence that your book identifies and discusses with great clarity. In 1988, we could witness the passing of Bill C-93 (commonly known as the Multiculturalism Act), the negotiated redress settlement that your book represents directly, and the heated debates over the signing of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States. What do you feel is at stake in looking back to this remarkable convergence of events?

RM: The way I started to understand it, and why this book started to take on a narrative—i.e., redress as a gift—is that the Canadian nation that had incorporated redress into its official history was already unravelling. That postwar nation, in many ways, had already become obsolete. The government was using redress at a moment in which Canadian unity seemed to be coming

apart in order to reify a notion of citizenship that was already passing. So Japanese Canadians functioned, perhaps, as a means of shoring up a citizenship that seemed to have lost its internal substance.

GB: Or was at a moment of particular crisis.

RM: Yes, I thought there was a crisis in the nation and that Japanese Canadian redress was a way to somehow reaffirm momentarily—and, maybe, the government thought for a long time, because they made a big deal of the human rights aspect of it—the value of citizenship rights at that time. That's the same time when free trade was being debated. The Free Trade Agreement would cut across the state's ability to maintain a particular notion of nation. From this angle, Japanese Canadian redress was used by the state, but it was also a moment in which the nation was already shifting to another place.

So there's another loss, which strikes me as strange and humorous at the same time. It's that thought: "By the time the Japanese Canadian subject gets into the nation, the nation has gone elsewhere!"

GB: You can have the nation, because the nation has become something else!

RM: I'm not being pessimistic about this shift. I'm simply trying to clarify the complexity of the historical turn that was going on. As a result, the discourse of redress began to move, from its immediate ties to the history of the nation, towards globalizing discourses or discourses around globalization. In the early 1990s, these discourses began to undo much of the cultural politics that dominated the 1980s, especially evident in the antiracism, the anticolonial, the decolonizing movements, and so on. But in the early 1990s, people who never supported these movements were saying, talking about "Thank God, identity politics is dead. We're now moving into a new era beyond racism, beyond narrow nationalisms. We're moving into a cosmopolitan, global sphere, where we can reinvent new liberal values." I didn't believe in this rhetoric at the time, but that was the talk that started to emerge.

In a way, redress in the form that Japanese Canadians initiated it disappeared in that sphere. But it started to reappear in different forms. For instance, in the Korean comfort women redress movement in the 1990s, a direct link was often made with Japanese Canadian and Japanese American redress. And in other redress movements in the 1990s, even in a time of rapid globalization, different kinds of concerns over redress sprang up.

GB: Some of those concerns are directly related to the public sites of memory representing the 228 Incident we saw earlier today as we walked around in Taipei.[2] We visited the 228 Monument put up in 1995; we saw an English translation of then President Lee Teng-hui's public apology given at that

time, as well as a translation of then Mayor of Taipei Chen Shui-bian's inscription commemorating the renaming of New Park as "228 Peace Park" in 1996, as well as visual and textual displays in the 228 Memorial Museum. Is there anything interesting for you in these different sites?

RM: What's interesting is that the time schemes in Taiwan and in Canada correspond in an uncanny way. We're looking at a major shift in Canada in 1988. And then in the late 1980s in Taiwan—

GB: The late 1980s—the end of martial law in Taiwan in 1987 is what you're referring to, right?

RM: Yes, and in the early 1990s, there was a redress movement in Taiwan—a movement for reparations and redress for the 228 Incident.[3] There was an attempt to right a wrong, and it involved a whole pile of people coming together to try to resolve that wounded condition. They themselves looked to the future, to this resolved state when they could "transform historical sadness" or transcend that woundedness.[4] And they did it, but it hasn't solved the problem. So now they are dealing with the postmemorialization period. It's similar to Japanese Canadians, but in our case of course our community is so small, and we don't occupy a geographical site, and we are not a nation and have no potential of becoming one. But I think that the processes and the routes that we went through in resolving what we considered an injustice in the past bear similarities to what we saw in these sites of public memory in Taipei.

GB: In other respects, in Canada, you also acknowledge that redress remains an unfinished project. I'm thinking specifically of your assertion in the preface that "[s]ocial justice for individuals and groups whose rights have been abrogated by government actions and policies remains an unresolved issue" (xi). The preface goes on to mention the abuses in residential schools set up for Aboriginal children, the head tax levied on prospective Chinese immigrants to Canada, and the internment of Ukrainian Canadians during World War I.[5] What's at stake in attempting to "resolve" these issues?

RM: The language of redress proposes a philosophical way of understanding the relationship between the present and the past and the kind of accountability that always remains when an injustice is inflicted on a group. It's the assumption that, if an injustice is inflicted today, then the future is going to bear the effects of it. In the neoliberal language that we are used to in North America, there is always this assumption that the world is reinvented every day and that the present generation is not accountable for things that occurred in the past. That attitude consistently leads to a covering over of wounded conditions or of groups who have suffered from injustices.

But history has shown us that people who have had to endure injustices don't forget easily. The persistence of those who were directly affected, and their kids, and their grandkids, and whole societies—we see this in Indigenous communities and in other communities as well—by past events, even a hundred or more years ago, is evident in the strength of memory and the discourses through which it can question and shape history. Injustices don't go away. Yet, at the same time, a lot of liberal governments feel that they don't want to be accountable to them. Redress is both a philosophical and political way of addressing the issue of accountability through transformative processes. The danger, of course, is that in some cases redress movements could be reduced to simplistic and sometimes quite violent binaries—a we/they relationship—that don't go anywhere.

What's relevant here is that Japanese Canadians, in mounting a redress movement, had to remake themselves as "proper" citizens of the nation, citizens whose voices could not be denied because they were "of" that nation. Some people might be very critical of this, describing this remaking in words like "compromise" and "complicity" and so on. But I don't think that any resolution can be made unless there is a meeting of the discourses through which redress is sought and the discourses that inform the nation. That's where the gain and the loss are always simultaneous.

Of course, there are so many different ways that the state can devise to both promise something and then withhold it. That is why I point out in my book that the only settlement that we would accept was a negotiated settlement—one that was negotiated directly and not mediated by legal discourse.

GB: At this point, I wonder if we can return to a point you made earlier concerning the 1990s as a time of rapid globalization. What circumstances led to your critical turn to this topic?

RM: For me, it's probably the Writing Thru Race conference in 1994.

GB: I was also going to ask about that! Here, though, I was thinking specially about your work from the publication of "Altered States" (2000) onward.

RM: The process began a lot earlier.

GB: How did it begin?

RM: The year 1994 is an important marker for me. If you look at the Writing Thru Race conference in terms of the internal cultural politics of Canada—of the huge amount of antiracism work initiated from the early 1980s to the early 1990s—you can see it as the end result, perhaps even the culmination, of that politics. So much had happened that led to the critique of mainstream institutions such as the Canada Council.

GB: And critiques of the Writers' Union of Canada too?

RM: Yes, a very good example. It was because of pressure from First Nations writers and "minority writers" (so called at the time) that the Writers' Union set up its Racial Minority Writers Committee. I joined the Writers' Union to attend The Appropriate Voice conference, which was sponsored by the Writers' Union in 1992 but organized by the Racial Minority Writers Committee. It was the first gathering of writers of colour and First Nations writers in a retreat, a sign of a momentum developing. As I recall, some sixty or so writers attended the three-day retreat, in Geneva Park, near Orillia, Ontario. Fred Wah dragged me into the event. I wasn't a member of the Writers' Union, but Fred insisted, "You have to come to this conference." I think he guilted me into it! So I went, and I was really moved by the stories of internalized racism told by writers in their dealings with publishers and various writing communities. By the end of the retreat, I was hooked on the issues raised and decided to do something. I think it was then and there that Fred and I pledged to co-edit a special issue of *West Coast Line*, which became *Colour. An Issue* (1994).

I also joined the Writers' Union. The following year, in 1993, at the AGM of the Writers' Union, the Racial Minority Writers Committee called a meeting to talk about follow-up plans from The Appropriate Voice conference. I was sitting at the back of the room. Fred was on the Racial Minority Writers Committee. People were talking about various issues, and I said something like, "Well, I think that a big national conference could probably push this whole effort further."

GB: So this led to Writing Thru Race.

RM: I had opened my mouth! And then Fred and a number of people said to me, "Roy, you should join the Racial Minority Writers Committee. We'll all work together." I reluctantly agreed, joined the committee, and within about an hour I found myself chairing the committee! It all happened so fast. Not only that, but we even passed a motion that we would have a national conference the following year.

GB: It was that quick?

RM: It was that quick. We then placed the motion on the floor of the Writers' Union. And you have to remember that racial issues were creating considerable tension in the Union at the time.

GB: And they continued to raise a lot of tension when the conference actually went forward.

RM: But even before the conference, The Appropriate Voice created a lot of

ruffles in the union. So the next day of the AGM I introduced myself as the new chair of the Racial Minority Writers Committee and presented two motions. One, for the Writers' Union to endorse a national conference in Vancouver—where I lived—for writers of colour and First Nations writers; we didn't have the guidelines worked out yet, except to say that the conference would address internalized forms of racism and that it would encourage strong elements of sharing. Two—this was controversial—I asked the union to provide immediately five thousand dollars seed money to raise more funds. Of course, that generated a lot of debate! But the motions passed. So by May or June of 1993, we had a motion that there would be a national conference for writers of colour and First Nations writers in Vancouver in 1994. Then we decided, "Let's run this conference so it lands on Canada Day." Again, we wanted to play with the notion of the nation that so many writers had felt alienated from. From that point on, we had to work like crazy to raise the necessary funds.

The one thing that the Writers' Union agreed to—which we made a stipulation—was the establishment of a working conference committee made up of both union and nonunion writers. We set up a committee in Vancouver and began holding open meetings once a month, brainstorming for this conference. These meetings were fascinating. They would attract about twenty to twenty-five people. We'd sit around the room and hash out what kind of conference we wanted. A core group soon emerged out of those meetings. Larissa Lai was in it, Scott McFarlane was in it, and a number of other people. They became the conference committee.

GB: The early to mid-1990s was a remarkably volatile time in terms of putting issues on the table and witnessing huge backlashes. Larissa Lai has written about this topic and spoke about it in her visit to National Tsing Hua University, where she noted that a "[m]assive conservative backlash against the activities and organizing of earlier in the 1990s has, in many locations, forced a deradicalization of the language we use to talk about race." What happened?

RM: I should try to place your question in a perspective that relates to the Writing Thru Race conference. When we established our policy that the workshops would be limited to writers of colour and First Nations writers, we got attacked viciously in the media and by politicians. There's a whole documentary record about that public hysteria, and I've written about it in *Broken Entries*. As a result, shortly before the conference, the federal government withdrew its funding of $22,500. But also our agenda was derailed. All

along we didn't want the conference to be yet another replay of the white/nonwhite allegory about Canadian culture. We wanted to create a provisional and safe space where writers could really speak and share stories about their writing practices. But because of all the public hype, the conference agenda was, in a sense, taken over by the narrative of the "racial divide" in Canada.

The cost of the backlash became evident on the last day of the conference. Our Sunday morning meeting was set up as a session to talk about strategies for future work and for building coalitions. That meeting turned out to be a really strange affair—with people mostly complaining about all kinds of personal concerns. Dissatisfaction emerged, and many present there, I felt, were pulling back into their own enclosed identity formations. It seemed that they were not willing to risk giving up their hard-won identity formations to risk any kind of broad coalition to mount a larger front for antiracist work. Some of us became very frustrated at that point, and of course we were all exhausted by the pressure of putting the conference together in the face of so much public opposition. Immediately after the event, I went into a retreat mode. I realized that the whole struggle—the antiracist struggle in the arts that had been so powerful for the previous ten years—in a sense had exhausted itself. For me, this marks the transition from the heated politics of identity and representation in a Canadian nation context to the emergence of globalization discourse. And in turn, this discourse also brought with it an attack on identity politics and the deradicalization that Larissa talks about.

GB: Alongside that process of struggle, when we go back to your critical writings from this period, we can see that you were developing the notion of *asiancy*, from your paper at the Association for Asian American Studies conference at Cornell University in 1993, to your paper in *Privileging Positions* in 1995, to *Broken Entries* in 1998. How did that particular critical term evolve for you during that volatile period?

RM: At that same time that we were moving through various cultural crises, I still thought that the times, despite the controversies—or even because of them—were really exciting. I felt that many writers and artists were moving radically beyond strictly oppositional tactics and were incorporating new kinds of deterritorializing strategies that were allowing us to reinvent ourselves through formal innovation. So even while the public side was disappointing, in the sense that it was harder and harder to mobilize coalitions and to expect people to think collectively, different forms of writing were emerging.

GB: Can you give examples?

RM: Fred Wah's *Diamond Grill* (1996) works out of that time period. Writers like Ashok Mathur, Rita Wong, Larissa Lai, Peter Hudson, Scott McFarlane, Wayde Compton, and Hiromi Goto were getting into some serious writing at the time. For instance, Hiromi Goto's *Chorus of Mushrooms* (1994) deals with antiracism in a formally innovative way. The Writing Thru Race conference, then, was a catalyst that pushed a lot of people forward.

GB: How about for Aboriginal writers? Did it work in quite the same way?

RM: I haven't been able to quantify it. Marilyn Dumont was there. Jeannette Armstrong was there. I don't have a specific figure, but First Nations writers made up quite a large percentage of the writers who attended the conference. The good thing was that, for all the writers who came, the event was a moment of arrival and departure. So many writers of colour and First Nations writers came together for one intense weekend, generating ideas like crazy. But when the conference ended, they spun off as individuals and not as a collective. You could see that they were moving in different directions, and as I look back now I think it was because of the disseminating effects of globalization. After 1995, if you look at the Canadian cultural scene, I can't think of any major collective actions by writers of colour on a national scale. Even the term "of colour" lost its urgency. From 1995 to 2000, as the activist work waned, people started getting more concerned with globalization and commodification. From this point on, economic values began to take on much larger importance in cultural work.

GB: As you look back, what do you think made this critical turn to globalization possible?

RM: The nationalist politics that I had been involved in, I thought, had shifted too much at that point. We had to begin to understand ourselves in relation to other nations and to try to figure out what was going on outside of Canada. We needed to rethink all the ethnic and racialized boundaries that have governed our thinking in the previous two decades. At the same time, I was also beginning to rethink Canadian literature from a critical perspective. I got more preoccupied with critiques of the nation, how it was formed, and the conditions through which difference—or the making of difference—functioned within the nation throughout its history. In other words, I wanted to get inside that history, so we could see both where we're coming from and maybe help open up a more socially just future.

GB: To what extent, then, could an event like the TransCanada conference in Vancouver in June 2005 contribute to these evolving concerns about the nation and globalization?

RM: The TransCanada conference attempts, in a critical way, to resituate a cultural history.[6] This is from my perspective of course. Other people will see the conference from their own perspectives. My sense is that much of the cultural history that has been produced over the last thirty years or more still needs to find a critical base, and it is those teaching and studying Canadian literature in university contexts at this time who are in the ideal position to deal with it critically and ethically. It's not up to me to say where their work is going to go, but it seems to be an opportune time to try to locate that history within institutional frameworks.

I also think that the study of Canadian literature, as a vital intellectual project, has entered into a dormant state. Some or many people would disagree because of all the graduate work happening, but the larger and more fundamental questions are not being addressed in any kind of collective way. For instance, why study CanLit? Are there substantial ethical, cultural, and social reasons why we should devote so much energy to this body of literature? The answer is, for a lot of us, yes, there are, but we have to find new terms. The TransCanada conference has the long-term objective of attempting to create a national collective for the study of Canadian literature. And it may be that a new kind of collective is possible at this moment that is quite different from the collectives that were formed in the 1980s.

GB: Out of the many hats you wear, I'd like to ask you about your role as an educator. You work as an editor, as a critic, as a poet, as a public intellectual—but you're also a teacher. I'm wondering how your work as an educator has informed or intersected with the many other projects you are involved in?

RM: In a life sense, everything is a mode of education—but, in the more specific terms of my relationship to the university, it has never been simple. I've always been very suspicious of academic frameworks, because academics and the institutional contexts they work in are constantly driven by the effort to contain or otherwise assume control over the disorder of human experience. Some people would reply that they're simply making sense of the disorder, but knowledge production remains troublesome because of its lack of accountability in most institutions. This is why I've never felt "comfortable" being an academic. When I was younger, I would have preferred a more open-ended life as a public intellectual, but in Canada, of course, this isn't all that possible if you want some kind of job security, so most intellectuals gravitate towards universities.

On the other hand, I've tried to work in social contexts outside the university so that my non-academic preoccupations have not always been in

sync with my work as an academic. Often I've had to "steal" time from work I should have been doing in more strictly academic forms to be involved in social and cultural conflicts and struggles. At times, I would spend countless hours organizing a community-based conference, raising funds, and writing up reports, instead of writing an academic article. But I've always thought that the non-academic work was worthwhile, because for me it had to do with the public act of educating. So you might say that I'm not a good academic.

GB: You're not an *obedient* academic!

RM: It could be related to class issues too. I grew up on the streets of central Winnipeg, where only a handful completed high school. University education seemed out of reach, and a PhD, and becoming a professor were pretty well unthinkable. As I made my way through various universities, I remained wary of academic life. In rough social times, in the face of social injustices, I noticed that the university as an institution and most of the academics employed in them didn't take the lead in helping the people who were affected. Being in university always seemed so removed from the quotidian sphere of everyday life and especially removed from the kind of social violence I witnessed as a kid growing up in central Winnipeg. The distance between academic knowledge and social injustices has had a deep effect on me. It doesn't mean that I'm an avid social reformer, but it has made me conscious that knowledge production is not innocent and can be used against people. You have to always be cautious about the consequences of the knowledge you produce and the limits of the institutionalization of knowledge.

During the last ten years or so, I've tried to pay more attention to a critique of institutions and have tried to develop modes of critical performance that can help students—and me too—work our way towards knowledge production that can generate ethical forms of interacting with each other. I enjoy seeing students become performing scholars—in other words, scholars who can take control of but also be accountable for their research and their work, right down to the sentences they write. For me, now, working with small groups of students has become a major way of acting in the world!

GB: In the past few years, you've spent more time travelling outside of Canada, whether it's been to Australia or to Japan or now to Taiwan. What has this left you with?

RM: I've gained enormously from meeting people working in scholarship or cultural activity in other social and historical contexts. Such contact feeds my own work. But I also enjoy sharing what we're doing in Canada with

other people. There's always the potential for new forms to emerge out of interaction. I'm always curious about the ways in which people in different regions or nations of the world, who occupy quite radically different spaces from myself, deal with issues that concern me, such as history, memory, and language. You see struggles to create the terms of homing and belonging all over the world.

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NOTES

1 See Kogawa; Miki and Kobayashi; and Omatsu.
2 The 228 Incident (also known as the February 28 Incident) refers back to state-directed violence by incoming Nationalist forces against the people of Taiwan in the period immediately following an altercation in Taipei on 27 February 1947. The 228 Monument Inscription in Taipei, as one public record of this event, states that, "[w]ithin a couple of months, the people who died, were wounded, or were missing numbered in the ten thousands" ("228 Monument"). Among many thoughtful analyses of the complex cultural politics of remembering the incident, see A-chin Hsiau's assertion that "[t]here are no historical or political issues more sensitive and controversial in postwar Taiwan than the 2-28 Incident" (168), particularly in the context of the increasing freedom of speech following the lifting of martial law in 1987.
3 See Hsiau 168–69 for a discussion of the "2-28 Peace Day Campaign Association," a group of opposition activists that organized in February 1987 and subsequently "staged a series of mass rallies and demonstrations in major cities across the island in early 1987, demanding that the KMT [i.e., Chinese Nationalist] government confess the truth of the Incident and rehabilitate the victims of the massacre committed by KMT troops" (168). Following increasing pressure, the Nationalist government of Taiwan provided redress and compensation through the 228 Incident Compensation and Rehabilitation Act, which was announced on 7 April 1995 with an expressed purpose "to deal with compensation for the 228 Incident, to let people understand the truth of the incident, to heal the sadness, and to enhance integration." The act authorized the Executive Yuan to set up the February 28 Memorial Foundation, which was authorized to provide compensation to victims or relatives of victims of the 228 Incident; to hold memorial activities; to introduce facts of the incident to people; to subsidize educational texts or publications about the incident; to subsidize investigations of or research about the incident; to help recover victims' reputations; and to enhance social peace in Taiwan ("228 Incident").

4 Miki is referring to the phrasing of a public inscription dated 28 February 1996 written by Chen Shui-bian, then the mayor of Taipei, located near the west entrance to 228 Peace Park in Taipei. On this public inscription, Chen asserted that "Taipei Park [also known as New Park] is renamed 228 Peace Park to transform historical sadness." On a similar register, then President Lee Teng-hui announced in a speech one year earlier on 28 February 1995 that the newly completed 228 Monument in Taipei "symbolizes our firm determination to bid farewell to historical sadness."

5 There have been various attempts to "resolve" these issues since the publication of Miki's *Redress* in 2004. The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, signed in May 2006, acknowledged that its signatories "desire[d] a fair, comprehensive and lasting resolution of the legacy of Indian Residential Schools" (6) and set out specific terms for redress, healing, and commemoration. The Settlement Agreement was followed by the formal establishment of the Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission on 1 June 2008 and an apology delivered by Prime Minister Stephen Harper on 11 June 2008. For further discussion of these developments, see Episkenew, who acknowledges that the Harper apology was "positive and, as many Indigenous political leaders mentioned, long overdue" (188) but also sharply observes that "[b]y only apologizing for one element of its genocidal policies—the residential schools—Canada implicitly refuses to take responsibility for the trauma that the remainder of its policies continue to cause" (189-90). Likewise, Prime Minister Harper apologized on 22 June 2006 for the Chinese head tax and provided, through a non-negotiated settlement, redress for living head tax payers and the living spouses of head tax payers. As I have noted elsewhere, "Harper's announcement subsequently generated a complex mix of euphoria (that the federal government of Canada had finally acknowledged its wrongdoing) and critique (that the "symbolic payments" were to provide compensation to living head tax payers and to the living spouses of head tax payers only—and thereby redress only a fraction of the Chinese immigrants and their Chinese Canadian descendants affected by the head tax)" (Beauregard 19). Finally, the federal government of Canada announced on 9 May 2008 that it would dedicate ten million dollars from its Community Historical Recognition Program to "the Ukrainian Canadian Foundation of Teras Shevchenko to establish an endowment fund to support initiatives related to the First World War internment experience that predominantly affected the Ukrainian and other East European ethnic communities in Canada"; see "Government."

6 Our discussion here addresses the anticipated impact of "TransCanada One: Literature, Institutions, Citizenship" held in Vancouver in June 2005. Subsequent TransCanada conferences have been held at the University of Guelph in October 2007 and at Mount Allison University in July 2009; for further details about these conferences, see "TransCanada Institute." See also Kamboureli for a succinct overview of the broader objectives of the TransCanada project, which she describes as "a provisional site, one enabling a collaborative endeavor through which we could begin to rethink the 'disciplinary and institutional frameworks within which Canadian literature is produced, disseminated, studied and taught'" (xiv).

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Alev Ersan

In Circles

I re-write this inside lampposts
under side-walks.
Under reference points of two languages
both so closely hung from my tongue,
I want to shut up
like a telescope.

My legs migrate
toward a familial chronology,
a stir begun before me;
in black and white, in
repeated footwork,
blurred, but
                                        focus now;
a train crossing sand,
slipping to own someone
else's memory as my own.

Flying at the necessary speed
for a woman to count reflections
backwards

mirror in one hand, tweezers in the other
pluck pluck pluck
history one hair at a time.

How much further should I leave
behind miles to return
in time to hear
how to hollow the vowels
                                        when saying my own name?

My skin, a tight robe stretches
sticks in the spokes when I cycle along
these tree-lined streets here,
                                        there?

No grids no cross,
streets don't cross
at right angles
but spiral
their way under the weight
of thirteen million pairs of legs.

You are my city, cut
in half then sewn back
together with
                                        a stitch of water,
ever moving, pushing
its deep, salt fish breath
a stink, a land for smoking
in reverie at all times.
An overspill
from a dog's dream
to be observed only.

Yet you stir, reach
over, with a list slipped
inside a basket lowered
                                        from a window
rising up again
with bread, milk, news
papers hardly ever recycled.

When it's time for your arrival
into my sleep, wind up
the clock.

It all happens
when I'm not looking.

This piece is the second part of a two-part poem
entitled "Walking in Circles."

Stephen Morton

Multiculturalism and the Formation of a Diasporic Counterpublic in Roy K. Kiyooka's *StoneDGloves*

Canadian multiculturalism, as the Canadian critic Smaro Kamboureli observes in the preface to her 1996 anthology *Making a Difference*, is not a recent phenomenon, since early colonial settlements included Black Loyalists—former slaves from the American colonies who came to Nova Scotia in 1783—and Chinese immigrants who were hired to work on the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880s. Yet even though the African, Caribbean, and Asian presence in Canada has a relatively long history, it was not until the late twentieth-century that writers of the African, Asian, and Caribbean diaspora were given a significant public voice in Canadian print culture, as Mark Shackleton has argued.[1] Significantly, the emergence of diasporic writing in English Canada is coextensive with the emergence of official multiculturalism in Canada, a policy that promised to recognize the cultural rights of different diasporic groups. And yet, the discourse of official multiculturalism has in effect worked to silence the histories and experiences of Canada's diasporic citizens. In response to this silencing, this essay considers how recent diasporic writing has questioned the liberal democratic claims of Canada's multicultural policies to recognize the history and culture of its diasporic citizens. At the core of the essay is a detailed reading of Roy Kiyooka's catalogue of poems and photographs, *StoneDGloves* (1970), which considers how Kiyooka traces a history of race-labour in the foundations of the Canadian nation-state, and attempts to redress state policies of racial exclusion and discrimination in Canada's national narrative. But the essay also supplements this reading with a discussion of the ways in which the history of race-labour migrancy and the discourse of racial

exclusion is figured in Larissa Lai's dystopian novel *Salt Fish Girl* (2002) and Roy Miki's poetry collection *Random Access File* (1995). In so doing, I suggest that these texts contribute to the formation of a diasporic counterpublic, or a rhetorical site for articulating histories of migration and racialization.

Counterpublics, as Michael Warner and Nancy Fraser have argued, refer to a subordinate social group who do not have the "privilege" of "public agency" afforded to the enfranchised, white European/North American citizens of the dominant, bourgeois public sphere. For this reason, Fraser's description of "counterpublics" as "subaltern" seems appropriate if subaltern is understood as a discursive subject position from which a sovereign speech act is not recognized as a form of agency within the dominant public sphere of a particular nation-state (123-5). This is not to suggest, however, that counterpublics are without agency because they are excluded from dominant structures of representation. As Fraser argues, "subaltern counterpublics have a dual character. On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities toward wider publics" (124). Moreover, by engaging with the rhetorics of a counterpublic, one can begin to trace the articulation of histories, experiences, and forms of agency, which are not recognized by dominant structures of political representation.

To situate the emergence of diasporic counterpublics in Canadian writing, a brief examination of the important role that literature and culture have played in the dominant public sphere is in order. The Canadian federal government's financial support for culture was intended to produce a coherent national public sphere in the context of Cold War geopolitics. Richard Cavell has argued that the 1951 Massey Report, the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, posited an explicit connection between culture and national defence: a connection that "in effect recommended that culture in Canada should be a bulwark of national security" (6). In a similar vein, Jody Berland has argued in "Writing on the Border" that the Canadian border with America has become an important symbolic site for distinguishing the cultural and political values of Canada from the hegemony of the free market associated with America. For Imre Szeman, the state's funding of the arts and culture in Canada from the 1960s led to a situation in which it sought to produce a "sense of national-cultural difference that can potentially be read as political difference" (196). As Szeman goes on to explain, this "active role of the state in using culture for its own 'war of position'" runs the risk of co-opting literature and the visual

arts for a broader geopolitical agenda (161). What is more worrying, however, is the risk that the production of a national culture could also homogenize the nation, and erase social and cultural differences between and among the different social groups who are deemed to constitute it. Yet, as Lynette Hunter has suggested in a study of print culture and the ideology of the nation-state in late twentieth-century Canada, the funding of alternative publishing venues for socially marginalized groups in Canada led to a situation in which the social, political, and cultural difference of that imagined community was foregrounded; and in which culture provided a rhetorical site for contesting the dominant ideology of the nation-state (31-54).

During the 1980s and 1990s, many critical and theoretical discussions in Canadian literary criticism focused on the question of Canada's postcoloniality: on the political and cultural legacy of British colonialism shaping Canada's national and political culture; and the increasing anxiety about losing economic sovereignty to the United States, particularly since the signature of the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement in 1994. Such discussions seem to echo the earlier state-funded initiatives of cultural nationalism,[2] which struggled to distinguish Canada internationally, and to establish a coherent national identity as Canada moved out of the colonial shadows (Derksen). Frank Davey has suggested that this coherent representation of a postcolonial nation disavows the global political and economic restructuring of Canada, as well as the cultural and political antagonisms "inside" the nation-state, which can enable social change. For Davey, such discourses of cultural nationalism place "Canada beyond political disputation" and risk "depriving Canadians of the only means they have of defending themselves against multinational capitalism: participating in the arguments of a nation that is being continuously discursively produced and reproduced from political contestation" (23-4).

In a critique that expands and complicates the terms of Davey's *Post-National Arguments*, Roy Miki emphasizes the Eurocentric history of postcolonial criticism in Canada. For Miki, the accommodation of postcolonial theory in Canadian English departments continues the Eurocentric cultural nation-building project established by Royal Commissions in the early twentieth-century, culminating in the Massey Report (1949-51), and the formation of the Canada Council in the late 1950s:

> The institutionalization of CanLit with its twin CanCrit—since the nationalist zealotry of the 1960s—rather than articulating, has left unexamined the cultural conditions conducive to race elision. The "normally" benign rhetoric of "national

> identity" has worked to cover over the nation-building role of an exclusionary "identity" in the neocolonial shadows of cultural sovereignty. (*Broken* 130)

By delinking culture from its historical and political determinants, Miki argues that postcolonial theories of Canadian literature appear to reflect the "vertical mosaic" of liberal multiculturalism: a policy that protects "white neocolonialist cultural representations" (*Broken* 150), while effacing the exploitation of racialized bodies in the political discourses which have stabilized the coherent representation of Canada.

While the policies of cultural nationalism have variously attempted to accommodate writing that is deemed to represent social and cultural difference either indirectly through processes of canon formation or more directly via the multicultural rhetoric of difference and diversity, this essay examines how the formal and linguistic strategies which writers such as Roy Kiyooka, Larissa Lai, and Roy Miki have employed can be seen to question and challenge the terms in which diasporic subjects are represented in the dominant national public sphere. If the study of diasporic literatures in Canada is to circumvent the biopolitical control of difference, which is aided and abetted by legislative multiculturalism, then the need for a critical approach that can articulate the singular position of diasporic Canadian subjects in the global economy is imperative. Sudesh Mitra has suggested that diasporic subjects or "transmigrants" are characterized as "being constitutionally different from subjects rooted in the national territory" and "constitute one in a number of vital symptoms that epitomise the transnational moment" (134). While this characterization certainly helps to elucidate the way in which diasporic subjects are viewed as foreign bodies in the terms of a conservative national imaginary, it does not explicitly emphasize the agonistic relationship of diasporic subjects to the exclusionary and often racist discourse of the national polity. It is partly in the context of this conflation of a discourse of transnational migration and the global circulation of capital described by Mitra that Diana Brydon has suggested that a trans-Canadian literary studies needs to address the ways in which the Canadian social and political imaginary has been historically complicit with globalization before it can identify spaces of resistance within the contemporary neoliberal global economic order (13). Invoking Gayatri Spivak's appeal in *Death of a Discipline* to "make the traditional linguistic sophistication of Comparative Literature supplement Area Studies (and history, anthropology, political theory, and sociology)" by approaching "the languages of the Southern Hemisphere as active cultural media rather than as objects of cultural study" (9), Brydon

stresses the need to read Canadian literature "in global contexts and in dialogue with Indigenous concerns" (16). This essay expands on some of Brydon's insights by suggesting that Roy Kiyooka's *StoneDGloves*, Larissa Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*, and Roy Miki's *Random Access File* contain formal strategies that encourage readers to engage with and learn from the subaltern histories and languages embedded in diasporic literary texts. In so doing, I argue that Kiyooka, Lai, and Miki contribute to the invention of a counterpublic, or a site of reading which questions and challenges the social and political grounds upon which diasporic subjects are marginalized in the global economy, as well as the Canadian public sphere.

I

In modern liberal states such as Canada, the management of the population according to racial and ethnic criteria is an example of what the French philosopher Michel Foucault calls biopolitics, or the state's control over the life of the human population. If, as Foucault suggests, racism is "primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and what must die" (254), official multiculturalism would appear to provide a liberal political solution to this biopolitical imperative to kill and wage war against races deemed to be inferior by legislating for the recognition, tolerance, and protection of people who are deemed to be different or foreign. Yet, as the political theorist Wendy Brown has argued, this use of tolerance as part of a liberal political practice of governmentality ignores the historical conditions of tolerance's emergence as a discourse, and the powers that produce and define it (15). Tolerance, in Brown's analysis, denotes "a mode of incorporating and regulating the presence of the threatening Other within" (27), a mode which also "sustains a status of outsiderness for those it manages by incorporating"(28). As Brown proceeds to explain, "Designated objects of tolerance are invariably marked as undesirable and marginal, as liminal civil subjects or even liminal humans; and those called upon to exercise tolerance are asked to repress or override their hostility or repugnance in the name of civility, peace, or progress" (28).

Brown's critique of the liberal political discourse of tolerance is helpful for clarifying the limitations of multiculturalism, but it does not fully account for the ways in which a multicultural discourse of tolerance can also serve the interests of the neoliberal global economy by defining subjects who are not only tolerable to the cultural norms of a particular nation-state, but also valuable for the economy. As Aihwa Ong argues in *Neoliberalism*

as Exception, neoliberalism is "merely the most recent development of . . . techniques that govern human life, that is, a governmentality that relies on market knowledge and calculations for a politics of subjection and subject-making that continually places in question the political existence of modern human beings" (13). In this context, multiculturalism can be seen as part of a broader system of biopolitical control, a system that defines the social and political rights of migrants in terms of their economic value in the neoliberal marketplace (Sharma 31-52).

It is precisely the structural inequalities of neoliberal globalization that Larissa Lai fictionalizes in her dystopian novel *Salt Fish Girl* (2002). Set in a futuristic Pacific Northwest in 2044, the novel depicts the way in which the social and political rights of migrant workers are determined exclusively by their employment in multinational corporations. When the protagonist assaults one of the Receivers General who protects the economic interests of the Saturna corporation, her father loses his job and is forced to move to the Unregulated Zone, a rundown part of downtown Vancouver with its "rows of the jobless poor sitting in dilapidated doorways or standing on street corners fighting over drugs or empty Coke cans" (111). In the Unregulated Zone, the first-person narrator asserts, many former corporate workers "could not work out ways to make a living," and "people died in droves beneath the bridges and in the open-air rooms of half-collapsed buildings" (85). Such spaces of abject poverty are causally connected to the unregulated market forces of neoliberal global capitalism. Yet in the face of a stock-market crisis and the further devaluation of the dollar, the Unregulated Zone shifts toward an informal economic system in which people prefer to barter ancient televisions and bicycle parts. As the protagonist and first-person narrator Miranda explains:

> My brother developed a side business in bicycle parts and continued to thrive. He worked quickly and cheaply and when his clients couldn't pay cash, he accepted other things—fresh meat, clothes, radios, eggs. He even accepted a few ancient and battered televisions, which were enjoying a sort of renaissance here in the Unregulated Zone. Several pirate TV stations had started up on a low-intensity broadcast that could be picked up for several blocks around each station. (84)

If Miranda's family demonstrates a capacity to survive in the Unregulated Zone without the economic benefits afforded by the Saturna Corporation, it is the cyborg collective known as the Sonias that actively plans to bring about the downfall of the corporate world. In a passage that recalls Joy Kogawa's representation of the Canadian government's policy of suspending

citizenship for Japanese Canadians during the Second World War, and the internment of Japanese Canadians in internment camps in the interior of British Columbia in her 1981 novel *Obasan*, the narrator describes how the "Sonias were in detention or had disappeared. Without a legal existence to begin with, they could not be reported missing" (249-50). While the Sonias exemplify the "bodies that capitalism does not want the dominant social narrative to see" (Lee 94), the corporeality of the Sonias is nevertheless highlighted by the smell of durian associated with their bodies. Lai uses this olfactory trope to evoke a double history of racialization and discrimination. As she explains in an essay published in *West Coast Line*, "'Foreign' foods are supposed to stink. So are women's sexual parts. So what appears contradictory in *Salt Fish Girl* is actually the working of two ways of relating to smell. A hegemonic, oppressive one that wants to deny and obliterate and a progressive, liberatory one that wants to acknowledge and reclaim" (172). Moreover, in spite of their exclusion from the legal category of citizenship, the Sonias are nonetheless able to organize a political struggle against the corporations by inscribing secret messages in the "moulds for the soles of a special edition cross-trainer they dubbed 'sabots.'" These messages include "the stories of individual Sonia's lives, some were inscribed with factory worker's poems, some with polemics, some with drawings" (249).

By inscribing narratives of labour and migration on the soles of commodities, the Sonias' subversive act of writing offers a crucial counterpoint to the exchange of commodities in the global economy, and to the regulation and control of migrant labour power. What is more, the Sonias' "desire to know their own origins, their history, to acknowledge the violence of their conception is analogous to the necessity of addressing the violent history of multiculturalism in Canada" (Mansbridge 130). By articulating the shared history of their experience of racial discrimination, the Sonias foreground the way in which the neoliberal Canadian state both racializes and commodifies their bodies. Such a subversive act of writing also comments on the political significance of contemporary diasporic Canadian writing. For if state policies of multiculturalism have tried to legislate for the tolerance of racial difference, writers such as Roy Kiyooka, Larissa Lai, and Roy Miki have developed linguistic and rhetorical strategies in their writing that not only challenge the democratic claims of multicultural policies and discourses to tolerate difference, but which also invent a public language to articulate histories of migration and to redress state policies of racial exclusion and discrimination. This is not to suggest that the language of literary texts such as

Lai's *Salt Fish Girl*, Kiyooka's *StoneDGloves*, or Miki's *Random Access File* can directly perform redress in the terms of the dominant public sphere; but it is to say that the challenge to representation and linguistic subject constitution instantiated in each of these texts contributes to broader efforts by writers and intellectuals to challenge and question the historical erasure of state policies of racial exclusion and discrimination under the presentist banner of multiculturalism.

II

In *Scandalous Bodies*, Smaro Kamboureli emphasizes the historical amnesia of many media representations of multiculturalism. Referring to an article published in the *Globe and Mail*, Kamboureli notes a frequent tendency in media discourses about diversity where multiculturalism is dehistoricized and presented only as "a manifestation of the contemporary moment" (84). As a consequence, "the formidable historical legacy of racialization and discrimination" is disregarded (84). Such a tendency within the dominant public sphere to represent the liberal democratic nation state as a synchronic, homogeneous space also represses the historical experiences and cultural memories of those diverse groups it claims to represent. If the histories of racial exclusion and discrimination are repressed in the dominant public sphere, contemporary diasporic writing has sought to challenge and contest this historical amnesia by constructing counterpublic spaces for reclaiming these histories, as we will see.

In the contested geopolitical field assembled under the sign of "Canada," there has been a proliferation of state policies calculated to administer diverse populations of migrants since the end of the Second World War. In the earlier half of the twentieth century, demographic patterns reflected the political dominance of the British, whose presence in Canada for three centuries had led to the British North America Act of 1867, establishing Canada as a dominion. This political hegemony had been brought to a crisis by the influx of many migrant and immigrant populations as well as Quebec's demands for cultural sovereignty. Audrey Kobayashi describes how the struggle for articulation by groups such as the Canadian Jewish Congress and Ukrainian Canadians within the cultural and legislative institutions of the (Anglo-Eurocentric) Canadian state functioned as a dangerous supplement in the rational calculus of state administration. Such a struggle can be understood in part as an attempt to redefine the political grounds of inclusion in the dominant public sphere. For the originary disavowal of

non-British citizens—inscribed in the political foundations of the state—now threatened to undermine the terms of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which had been established in 1963 by the Lester Pearson government (Kobayashi 214). Yet this struggle for political articulation was seemingly absorbed by the White Paper on multiculturalism in 1971, encouraging "immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society" (cited in Kobayashi 215). This compulsory bilingualism would appear to constrain the possibility of participation in the national public sphere for immigrants who do not speak Canada's official languages. It is partly for this reason that diasporic writers have developed alternative modes of public address, which encourage readers to question the discursive and historical foundations of the Canadian nation-state. It is this dialogic space between diasporic texts and their readers that I call diasporic counterpublics.

Kobayashi offers an illuminating account of the limitations of multiculturalism as a policy, but she does not address the specific problems with multiculturalism as a system of representation, which have prompted diasporic writers to develop alternative forms of public address. Such problems include the assumption that political representation can be achieved by speaking the languages of the dominant charter group, which is based on a transparent model of linguistic communication, where the (ethnic) individual is predicated as a grammatical subject. Yet, this linguistic constitution of the subject as a national citizen erases the culture and history of the immigrant body. The synchronic constitution of the immigrant as a linguistic pronoun in the official languages of Canada thus worked to stabilize the institution of state authority. Collapsing political representation in a participatory democracy and mimetic representation within a transparent, linguistic paradigm, the legislative history of multiculturalism folds the histories and cultures of different ethnic and racialized groups into the abstract concepts of citizenship and cultural heritage. This conflation of political and mimetic representation perpetuates the illusion that the histories and cultures of ethnic and racialized subjects are represented in the dominant national public sphere.

Scott Toguri McFarlane, in a related discussion of the representational crisis in the legislative discourses of multiculturalism, argues that the "pedagogical spirit" of the Multiculturalism Act is continually haunted by its performative status as a speech act or event. For McFarlane, the state's attempt to "transcend the racially and ethnically signified otherness of the performative within multicultural policy" is haunted by the ghost of a body it attempts to

forget. In the attempt to incorporate or assimilate the racialized body into an abstract model of Canadian citizenship (that has historically represented the white, anglophone subject), the loss of that body returns to haunt the state's structures of representation. This ghostly body links the visualization of a racialized, productive body during Canada's earlier phase of nation-building to the contemporary political representation of subjects who are deemed to be minorities or objects of tolerance by multicultural policies. Such a ghostly body is an example of how a multicultural nation such as Canada is haunted by its colonial past, a past in which thousands of migrant labourers from China, for instance, were employed in precarious manual work to build the Canadian Pacific Railroad. For many racialized groups, to be visualized as subjects within the systematic terms of the state does not guarantee that their cultural and historical experiences will be recognized. Rather, it accentuates the disparity between the relatively empowered subject of democratic representation and the historical exclusion of racialized groups in Canada. In this way, the Multiculturalism Act was stabilized by conflating the historically produced discontinuity between cultural representation and political representation, and by erasing this discontinuity through a constitutive amnesia, in which the racialized subject is re-inscribed as a Canadian citizen, anterior to the discursive act that produces them. Against this amnesia, the following section considers how Roy Kiyooka's catalogue of poems and photographs, *StoneDGloves,* pushes against the asymmetry of a diasporic bodily knowledge and the racialized constitution of that body, by withholding the body from representation. In my reading, this tactic of withholding a diasporic body from representation encourages readers to reflect upon the limitations of bilingual representation associated with multiculturalism, and in so doing, constructs a counterpublic space for articulating Canada's history of race-labour and its policies of racial exclusion.

III

Roy Kiyooka's catalogue of poems and photographs, *StoneDGloves,* articulates the lack of fit between the historically excluded bodies and voices of racialized immigrants in the nation-building process at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the dehistoricized representation of racialized subjects as citizens. Based on an installation that Kiyooka was invited to produce for the Canada pavilion at Expo 70 in Osaka, Japan, this catalogue documents the multitude of decomposing workers' gloves discarded on the grounds of the pavilion construction sites.[3]

If the gloves are read in relation to their site on the grounds of Expo 70, then it could be argued that *StoneDGloves* offers an institutional critique of the exhibition because it foregrounds the productive labour necessary to build the pavilion. Indeed, for McFarlane in an essay on *StoneDGloves*, the workers' gloves that Kiyooka photographed contain a "silent *insistence* that Japanese labour resides within the foundations of the Canada pavilion." This insistence, McFarlane adds, "evokes the archaic anxiety and historic violence fundamental to the founding of the nation" ("Un-Ravelling" 135). As I go on to suggest, *StoneDGloves* also traces a history of race-labour in the foundations of the Canadian nation-state, which attempts to redress state policies of racial exclusion and discrimination in Canada's national narrative. What is more, Kiyooka's traumatic childhood memories of racial exclusion as a "Japanese Canadian" by the federal government seem particularly important for understanding the complexity of Kiyooka's position as a representative Canadian artist at the first world exposition to take place outside the West. Under the policy of "Japanese Canadian internment" during the 1940s, Canadians who were identified as Japanese were incarcerated, dispossessed, and stripped of their citizenship rights (Miki, "Unravelling" 72). Roy Miki further discusses the impact of this federal policy on Kiyooka's early life: "Kiyooka's formal education ended in grade nine, 1942, when he and his family, identified by federal policy as 'of the Japanese race,' were forced out of Calgary. They moved to Opal, Alberta, a small Ukrainian farming town" ("Unravelling" 73). Yet when Kiyooka was selected as a representative Canadian artist for Expo 70 in Osaka, his racialization as a Japanese Canadian would appear to be reconfigured as a positive sign of Canada's progressive values, and its emerging multicultural discourse.

StoneDGloves is thus situated between Canada's history of racial exclusion and the emergent discourse of multiculturalism in the early 1970s. Rejecting the administration of racialized bodies within political legislation, Kiyooka's photographic images and poems shift away from the mimetic representation of visualized bodies as a positive sign equivalent to political representation. The glove, signifying the absent productive body of a labourer, instead foreshadows the retroactive articulation of labour in the cultural memory of the nation.[4] Supplementing the absent bodies embedded within the fabric of the labourers' gloves, Kiyooka's poems do not simply recuperate the body and voice of a particular subject as a positive presence in representation; rather they stage the lack of fit between the glove and the hand it points towards.

> if out of the ground suddenly—
> a pair of gloves suddenly appear on your hands
> use them to bury these words
>
> then ask your breath "where" words come from
> where StoneDGloves go. (Kiyooka 62)

The disappearance of the body in *StoneDGloves* constitutes an active withdrawal from representation and a movement toward the vulnerable process of articulating the history of race-labour and racial discrimination in the formation of the nation, or, the place "'where' words come from / where StoneDGloves go" (62). The reader is thus invited to participate in the retroactive articulation of the absent productive body, and to interrogate his/her own complicity in its erasure, or burial. As the verb "appear" suggests, Kiyooka's lines promise to visualize the body behind the glove. Rather than directly representing a body in the blank spaces on the page, however, the speaker encourages readers to trace the absence of a body in the composition of lines and line breaks. As the line, "ask your breath 'where' words come from" indicates, the rhetorical injunction to "use" the gloves "to bury these words" reminds readers of their own bodily location in the act of reading. This injunction also emphasizes that the body haunting the gloves cannot be forgotten or buried, even though the gloves are detached from a fixed corporeal referent.

By withholding the body from representation, Kiyooka foregrounds the repression of the productive body in the calculation of abstract labour as a dispensable resource for capitalism. This complex scene of writing recalls the double meaning of the labour contract in classic Marxian terms, where "[t]he worker exchanges [his] labour power, thinking it is existential private labour [while] the capitalist uses it as spectral abstract labour" (Spivak, "Ghostwriting" 77). Although the gloves are transformed into apparitions, they continue to signify a history of labour. By asking "where StoneDGloves go," the speaker points towards an alternative rhetorical place for the productive body that is embedded in the fabric of the gloves.

The spectral inscription of a body is continued in "this is a poem," where the speaker transforms a "cotton glove" into a site of corporeal articulation:

> . . . if you put your ear
> to its cupt hand you'll hear
> his echo re-echo through the poem
> like a naked hand—reaching
> out for its own shadow. (Kiyooka 64)

The ghostly appearance of the deictic shifter "his" in the third line traces the productive body who "re-echo[es] through the poem / like a naked hand—reaching / out for its own shadow." In a rhetorical address to the reader, denoted by the repetition of the second-person pronoun, the speaker emphasizes how reading the poem can animate the lifeless body of the discarded glove. The resonating echo of the hollow glove almost materializes a body, or a "naked hand," even though this body is withheld from representation. The abyssal structure of the poem does not simply fold back into its textual fabric, but re-echoes "how / the gloves fell / from the hands of work-men" (Kiyooka 91). This re-echo of the absent productive body may recall the exploitation of (racialized) productive bodies in nation-building regimes such as the Canadian Pacific Railroad. Yet, the ghostly reminder of a productive body also emphasizes how this body cannot be articulated within the state-defined terms of representation. By withholding the productive body from representation, Kiyooka's text negotiates a rhetorical space for publicly articulating Canada's history of race-labour and its policies of racial exclusion.

Such a strategy of withholding the singular identity of the productive body embedded in the glove encourages readers to carefully decipher the historical knowledge which is encrypted in Kiyooka's poems. This tactic of encryption is further staged in "the poem reveals":

> the poem reveals
>
> the thumb pointing
> towards the shadow the glove
> throws across the dirt
> the dirt under your fingernails
> hard-bitten evidence
>
> parti-
> culars:
>
> one part
> cloth
>
> one part
> air
>
> one part
> dirt (Kiyooka 65)

The size and font of the letters in the first line visually distinguish it from the main body of the poem. The line stands outside the poem as a title, yet can also be read as part of the main work, even though it doesn't quite fit.

Reading the line as a title, as a clue to the meaning of the poem, suggests that the text will "reveal" the historical significance of the gloves from a contemporary perspective outside of history. Yet this search for "hard-bitten evidence" is not disclosed in "the thumb pointing" or the poem itself. Rather the "evidence" of an unrepresented body is contained in the "dirt under your fingernails." The second-person pronoun in this line denotes the reader, and emphasizes her complicity in revealing the meaning of the poem and the identity of the spectral body haunting the gloves. By accentuating the lack of fit between the sign of the gloves and the productive body they denote, the speaker goes on to demonstrate how this "evidence" does not add up. For the hyphenated line breaking "parti- / culars" emphasizes how the particles or parts of the glove cannot be integrated into syntactic representation or historical "evidence" of a particular body. The material elements of "dirt," "cloth," and "air" may connote the singularity of the labouring body, but they do not visualize the identity of that worker.

The withheld identity of the body is also emphasized later on in the text, where the speaker lists an inventory of found objects:

> 1 pair of cotton gloves
> 1 acre of grass
> 1 pair of broken glasses
> 1 dead blackbird
> 1 wheelbarrow
> 1 pair of ghostly boots &
> 1 small poem
>
> . . . hiding all the clues (Kiyooka 72)

Like the historical "evidence" of human labour described in "the poem reveals," this inventory signifies the forgotten history of a productive body. Yet, the "small poem" refuses to identify the "ghostly" body haunting the "cotton gloves" and the "boots." This ghostly body reappears in "4 Variations for Victor Coleman," where the speaker dreams of "a long Sky Corridor / with numbered doors" (Kiyooka 66). In the dream, the speaker repeats the reader's attempt to fix or nail down the identity of an absent productive body in representation:

> in the Dream: a long Sky Corridor
> with numbered doors each door has a "glove"
> nailed over its number. (the number
> i'm seeking will reveal itself if i be diligent)
> the dream sd.—I'm running down that
> long Sky Corridor—lifting each glove to read

its plangent "number" beyond the very
last door the number that withheld its secret
a Neon Finger pointed to the EXIT sign . . . (Kiyooka 66)

The numbers underneath each glove on the doors have no specific denotation, although they may connote the memory of the six hundred Chinese workers who were killed during the building of the Canadian Pacific Railroad. Yet to reveal the identity of the body as the true meaning of the text is to "EXIT" from the singular location of the poem and to enter the state-defined terms of representation. Just as the gloves withhold the "secret" of the text and the identity of their owners, so the speaker points to the limits of truth in the false exit of representation.

By pointing to the limits of representation, Kiyooka's poems formally articulate the bodily experience of labour through the materiality of the gloves, without naming or identifying that productive body. For Kiyooka, the memory of the (racialized) productive body lives on in the fabric of the gloves. His poems, like the gloves themselves, do not disclose or visualize a representative identity but rather encourage readers to listen for the echo of the worker's ghostly body. The "secret" which Kiyooka's gloves withhold generates an ethical dialogue between the reader and the text, where the singularity of the body's location can be apprehended. It is from this singular point of ethical dialogue that the body embedded in the glove can be articulated and valued.[5]

StoneDGloves can thus be seen to articulate the body of the racialized labourer which the Canadian state has attempted to bury in its historical foundations. Whereas subsequent state policies of multiculturalism in the 1980s attempted to transcend the histories of migrant labour and racial exclusion, Kiyooka articulates a different, embodied memory through the temporality of the *decaying* gloves. Such a tactic creates a historical rupture within the liberal rhetoric of Canada's national culture, and anticipates the limitations of multiculturalism. The closed teleological structure of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (specifically Clause 3[1][c]) represents the liberal democratic concept of participation as the inevitable goal of all Canadians: an abstract, universal *telos* which guarantees the rights and freedoms of all its subjects through the rhetorical structure of a promise:

> It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to . . .
> *(c)* promote the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and assist them in the elimination of any barrier to such participation. (Act 3.1.c)

Against this teleological movement, the temporality of the decaying gloves in *StoneDGloves* marks the impossible place of the absent labouring body in the foundations of the modern state: an absent body that is both embedded in and discontinuous with the democratic promises of legislative multiculturalism.

By tracing the evidence of race-labour in the historical construction of the Canadian nation-state, *StoneDGloves* could be seen to prefigure the role of multiculturalism in the administration and control of the migrant population for transnational capital. The state's historically shifting management of transnational labour migrancy (or "diversity") provided an economic resource that both anticipates and underwrites the contemporary multicultural logic of late capitalism. Kiyooka's refusal to visualize or name the productive body of the labourer does not simply render this body absent or invisible; rather it works towards the public articulation of a colonial history of race-labour in Canada's multicultural present.

IV

Another way in which legislative multiculturalism has worked to stabilize the coherence of Canada's state ideology is through the linguistic constitution of new immigrants as Canadian citizens. In his introduction of the multiculturalism policy in the House of Commons, October 1971, Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau announced that the government would "continue to assist immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society" (Multiculturalism). In this respect, the conditions of citizenship are predetermined by the bilingual terms of Canada's political discourses. Despite its claims to recognize the heritage of different cultures, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988) continues the bilingual precedent established by Trudeau's government by linguistically constituting the diasporic body of the immigrant as a citizen without history, culture, or language. Such a contradiction is implicit in the sub-section on language: "It is hereby declared to be the policy of the government of Canada . . . to preserve and enhance the use of languages other than English and French, while strengthening the status and use of the official languages of Canada" (Act 3[1].i).

This narration of subject formation is governed by a circular logic, in which the migrant's body is always already constituted as a citizen in the official languages of the state. Such circular logic is analogous to the rhetorical circularity that Judith Butler identifies in a critique of Louis

Althusser's theory of interpellation. For Butler there is an aporetic circularity in Althusser's account of how subjects are constituted in the grammatical structures of language: "[t]he grammar that governs the narration of subject formation presumes that the grammatical place for the subject has already been established. In an important sense then, the grammar that the narrative requires results from the narrative itself" (124). Butler's account of the "grammatical place" for the subject underpinning Althusser's account of subject formation is apposite for understanding the process through which immigrants are constituted as citizens because it highlights the way in which the subject's history and memory are erased in the formation of citizenship. Just as Butler's account of the "grammatical place" for the subject is an effect of the state ideology's narrative of subject formation, so the constitution of migrants as linguistic subjects of the English and French languages is an effect of Canada's official languages policy.

If the grammar of subject formation in Canada's political discourses is tied to the bilingual narrative of a nation, many recent language-focused writers have used poetics as a means to articulate and disentangle cultural genealogies of the diasporic body from its linguistic subjection. In a survey of recent writing by racialized writers, Fred Wah notes a critical tendency in racialized writing that resists the pull of the lyric voice and the identification of an ethnic or racialized body: "[F]or my generation, racing the lyric entailed racing against it; erasing it in order to subvert the restrictions of a dominating and centralizing aesthetic" (72). This resistance to the lyric voice signals a refusal to identify the voice of an ethnic or racialized writer in terms that are easily recognizable to an audience familiar with European literary conventions. In Roy Miki's "era sure," for example, the speaker reflects on the brutal treatment of a pregnant mother who is forcibly removed from her home. By splitting the word "erasure" into the morphemes "era" and "sure," Miki calls into question the historical erasure of Japanese Canadians, the suspension of their citizenship, and their internment by the Canadian government during the 1940s. Significantly, Miki proceeds to articulate the historical trauma of this state-sanctioned racist policy in terms of bilingualism:

> a race to erase so long
> we said so long so long
>
> in the bye bye lingual of
> falling from the pear tree (7)

Miki's transformation of the morpheme "bi" in "bilingual" into the homophone "bye" in this poem articulates the impact of the state's racist policies

as a form of separation and loss, which is signified by the repetition of the parting forms of address, "so long" and "bye bye." Similarly, the metonymic phrase "falling from a pear tree" evokes an image of loss and separation, which suggests that bilingualism aids and abets the erasure of Japanese Canadians rather than giving voice to their collective historical trauma. By using such tactics, Miki articulates the pain of Canada's racist policies and discourses in a poetic language that refuses to identify the racialized subject in the terms of Canada's national narrative.[6]

The promise of the Canadian government's Multiculturalism Act to recognize the cultural rights of different immigrant groups may seem to reinforce the democratic myth of Canada as a safe haven for refugees and immigrants. Yet, as I suggest, such a myth tends to efface histories of racial discrimination under the guise of a liberal discourse of tolerance that preserves intact the hegemony of English Canada. And with the emergence of neoliberalism as a ruling ideology that redefines the role of the state as an institution that enables the flow of capital and controls the mobility of people, the rhetoric of official multiculturalism in Canada can also appear to efface the systematic inequalities of contemporary globalization. In the face of such a myth, the language and idiom of diasporic writing offers a crucial counterpoint to the multicultural rhetoric of the neoliberal Canadian state. For in its public address to a national and transnational audience, diasporic writing encourages readers to engage with the repressed histories of racial exclusion in contemporary Canada, and to participate in the formation of counterpublics that challenge the language, history, and ethos of the dominant public sphere. Such a formation does not simply involve representing the unrepresented; rather, it involves articulating the singular histories, bodies, and languages of diasporic subjects in such a way that questions and complicates the very structures of representation that make things public.

NOTES

1 See Mark Shackleton "Canada" in *The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. John McLeod (London: Routledge, 2007), 83-94.

2 In 1949, for example, Vincent Massey headed an inquiry into the state of Canada's cultural activities: from university syllabuses to musical composition; from scientific expertise to Aboriginal craft; from writing to contemporary art. The proceedings from the report of the Massey Commission reveal much about the context in which it was written: about (1) the need for a unified culture that would reproduce a coherent nation that is able to compete with the threat of American economic and cultural dominance, and (2) the concern

to imagine a coherent community that is divided not only in terms of its physical geography, but also in terms of its social geography.

3 These photographs were originally displayed at the 'Expo 70' exhibition in Osaka, Japan, an exhibition/institution which was also contested by Japanese conceptualists mobilizing against ANPO (the political coalition between the US and Japan).

4 In a catalogue essay on Sharyn Yuen's *Sojourner*, Monika Kin Gagnon identifies the hypocrisy and perhaps the racist motivation behind Chinese immigration policies in Canada during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She writes:

> [I]t was with the contracting of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1878, that the British Columbia legislature voted that no Chinese were to be employed on any provincial public works (following the presentation of a petition signed by fifteen thousand B.C. residents). Despite this ruling, over fifteen thousand Chinese managed to immigrate to Canada to work on the railroad, undertaking the most physically hazardous labour. This large influx of new railway workers resided in temporary tent camps set up in areas close to worksites; one such temporary camp was at Savona, near Kamloops. By the completion of the railway in 1884, more than six hundred Chinese workers had died (a conservative estimate by Andrew Onderdunk, the American CPR contractor who 'imported' the Chinese workers between 1881 and 1884), equalling approximately four Asian lives for each mile of track. (5)

Guy Beauregard similarly notes "a crucial contradiction between exclusionary state policies [in early twentieth-century British Columbia] and the needs of capital" (60). Citing the historical work of Peter Li, he writes that

> "The Chinese were considered useful to the development of western Canada, but were not desirable citizens"; this structural contradiction, Li writes, lies between the need to rely on "a racialized labour force for capital accumulation, at a time when the shortage of white workers rendered industrial expansion difficult," and the "subsequent public outcry against oriental labour and the response of the state through policies of racism and exclusion. . . ." (60).

5 Gayatri Spivak discusses the secret as a point of ethical encounter in more detail in her reading of Mahasweta Devi (xxv).

6 For a further discussion of transnational subjectivity in Miki's poetry and its resistance to global formations of power, see Kit Dobson "Transnational Subjectivities: Roy Miki's *Surrender* and Global Displacements."

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Kirstie McCallum

Living is Faith (in Good Digestion and Numbers)

Prick a pin in a good book and find
the words that will give you comfort,

when your need grows beyond
the bounds of reason.

I've two halves to my brain,
like the dolphin who sleeps

but can't give up breathing
terrestrial air, so one side at a time

goes dormant, dreaming with the left
side and swimming with the right

to surface, trading off, like the ventricles of the
human heart do, circulating between one fact

of life and another, oxygenated, de-
oxygenated, life-blood in streams,

like a gulf stream. I live in the outflow
of the St. Lawrence Basin, the giant

heart-wash of a tectonic plate, subterranean
pumping, and aortal rivering, if

I could lay out my body's blood path
along the soil, (like jet exhaust, a linear contrail

evaporating and merging again with the silver
body) if my blood would trace itself—

snail itself along—the map of its circulation
would reach from sea to shining sea,

but I'm compact, symphonies miniaturized
in the Organ of Corti, the voyage

of the cellist's bow, the horse's tail,
the heartwood's rooted suffering, sustained

in a pattern of notes and rests that knock
about the cochlea and tremble in the hairs.

My nobility in opposable thumbs, so mark
this estuarine habitat, make note and number.

Birth date, census, records of employment,
the rolled scroll that shows I learned to read

and placed my faith in books. The doctor's records:
gained weight and lost it, lengthened bones

and lost their mass. Receipts for gifts
and prophylactics, learned to love in fits

like a epileptic, seeing the light on the back
of my eyes and knowing that these amoebic

forms, and the burning smell that precedes
the visitation must mean the existence of—

Hell, who's counting anyway?
The moments of yearning, the feelings

of insecurity, like a dog turning circles
before she sleeps, like the tailbone,

appendix, tonsils, sometimes even
the uterus and its bloody backaches:

fertility is built-in obsolescence, only one-
percent of marine turtles born live

to procreate, the others flail
their tiny fins in monster waves,

a matter of carbon, nitrogen, phosphate,
mandible, membrane, soft tissue

and cartilage, drowned or eaten back
into the womb of a restless world.

John Corr

Affective Coordination and Avenging Grace

Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*

Everything make sense from then
the way flesh make sense settling into blood.
—Dionne Brand

Dionne Brand's first novel *In Another Place, Not Here* represents the Black diaspora through a queer, chaotic narrative that knots together—and rips apart—the relationship of a grounded Grenadian sugar-cane worker, Elizete, and an idealistic Trinidadian-Canadian revolutionary, Verlia. The women's lives are also at times mediated through a third character, Abena, who is a friend to Elizete and lover to Verlia. This character arrangement disrupts the heteronormative convention of love as being exclusive to binary pairings of people and firmly contextualizes Elizete and Verlia's relationship within a broader network of Black diasporic women. Because the text is primarily organized around Elizete's and Verlia's lives, however, this essay concentrates on their relationship. The brief time that the two protagonists are together coincides with their entry into a socialist revolution. These intertwined developments (romantic and revolutionary) develop the text's central interest, an interest suggested by the above epigraph. *In Another Place, Not Here* explores new possibilities for a continuum between the "sense" that is produced in language, discourse, and culture and the body's ability to "sense," its affective capacity to experience and influence the world. Attention to bodies-in-contact emphasizes that discussions about affect can be, as in discussions about discourse, analyses of how power is organized and exercised in shifting, historically specific ways across different moments and geographies. Brand explores the continuum between these different kinds of "sense" to show how the potential for massive social change can be catalyzed at the

minutest levels of the flesh. Her writing insists that the body is not merely a passive site upon which history is inscribed or across which signifying acts play out, but is a living source of hope for an anti-racist, anti-capitalist politics.

Written in 1996 but set between the late 1960s and early 1980s, the tone of the novel alternates between bright optimism and devastating lament as the characters' personal lives channel the anti-colonial political struggles of that era. Brand turns to this time because, as she explains in an interview with Christian Olbey, it offered a brief moment of "collective victory" for Black political activism during which "Black people in general, in the Americas, breached [the] walls of racism and were able to re-think themselves in quite different ways" (92). Brand synthesizes social awareness and embodied sensation in her writing because the period was "gone too soon, or too quickly, or unrecorded as taking place in the body [before] the [capitalist] master narrative had taken over its description" (92). Set during a socialist revolution on an unnamed Caribbean island, moreover—an island that despite being unnamed is identifiable as Grenada—Elizete and Verlia's queer relationship literally embodies revolution against militarized globalization. Their relationship makes possible reinvigorated resistance and their mutual caring issues a powerful refusal of racialized and sexualized oppressions in the Black diaspora.

I describe Elizete and Verlia's shared experience of diasporic reorientation as "affective coordination," a term that invokes a doubled meaning of "coordinate." As a verb, "coordinate" evokes the kinetic, sensual synchronization of different bodily parts that creates an overall increase in ability (such as when an athlete relies on coordination instead of muscle to generate power). Brand's writing enables readers to visualize the surprising operations that are made possible when we coordinate with each other in unorthodox ways, creating unexpected encounters that unbalance established arrangements of power. While theorists generally agree that affective experience is constituted by non-conscious sensation, a stream of impressions that floods and vanishes beneath the surface of awareness, they are also adamant that we can study its effects to elaborate on discussions of power in culture. Brand, for her part, makes this possible by depicting characters' series of encounters as unrepresentable in the conventional terms of love, but which have the discernable effect of allowing them to combat their shared disorientation. Elizete, Verlia, and others come together to generate a collective political agency that is well out of proportion to their minoritized socio-economic positions in Canada and Grenada. Their revised relations, their unlikely sexual and social coordinations, enable them to participate in grand acts of

armed resistance as well as in small, daily acts that give life purpose, elevating it above the struggle for biological survival in diaspora into the pursuit of enriched collective well-being.

Just as the racialization and economic exploitation of their bodies effects their dislocation, the raw pleasure that Elizete and Verlia generate through the coordination of their affective experience is the means by which they begin to create new orientations in the world. To advance this argument, I also deploy the word "coordinate" as a noun to invoke the vocabulary of longitudes and latitudes, the unit that safely guides travelers and demarcates the territories of established nation-states. My use of "coordinate" in "affective coordination" draws attention to the alternative, diasporic mapping that the characters' relationships produce. The maps to belonging that the protagonists chart do not simply stake a claim according to dominant territorial logics. As in much of Brand's writing, these characters are blocked from settling into "place." The new kinds of relationality that they discover, however, point to processes of reorientation that depend on the capacity produced by their mobile, displaced bodies.

As mine is a project of literary analysis, I face an obstacle by grappling with the potential generated on a pre-linguistic plane of embodied sensation. The problem of approaching affect through language is exemplified in the difficulty that theorists and critics have faced in simply distinguishing affect, feeling, and emotion. My thinking follows Brian Massumi's *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* in its primary distinction between affect and emotion. "Feeling" is briefly aligned with "emotion" in at least one sentence of *Parables for the Virtual* (61), but the scarcity of "feeling" in his text is signaled by the fact that it does not even appear in the index.[1] Massumi understands "affect" as a prepersonal flow of intensities, while "emotion" is "subjective content, the sociolinguistic fixing of the quality of an experience which is from that point onward defined as personal" (27). In a minor contrast with Massumi's work, my writing occasionally allows for a slippage between affect and feeling.[2] Whereas "emotion" connotes a discrete recognizable experience that can be recognized and owned by the individual, "affect" and "feeling" describe nebulous events of sensation rather than identifiable moods or mental states. This problem, one of attempting to evade containment by dominant discourses of feeling, persists throughout *In Another Place, Not Here* as Brand's characters refuse the conventional vocabularies of love and lust in describing the impulses, sensations, and affective exchange that constitute the basis of their relationships. At one point, Verlia explicitly

disavows the language of seduction and bourgeois concepts of love (75-78). Instead, the personal-political rejuvenation and empowerment that Elizete and Verlia experience in their encounters with one another is repeatedly described with a highly corporeal, pliable notion of "grace." Is the experience of being in and desiring grace a feeling? An emotion? An affective trace? These ambiguities resist definition, and much of this essay is dedicated to teasing out the politicized nuances of corporeal-incorporeal experience that Brand makes possible for readers to imagine as a resistant, and at times avenging, aspect of being.

Affect in Brand's writing is highly corporeal. In *In Another Place, Not Here* "grace" cannot be separated from the joy and beautiful ease that Elizete and Verlia find in one another's bodies. This erotic pleasure is not compartmentalized from the rest of their lives, however. It exerts an irresistible influence on their fundamental, and equally embodied, sense of displacement in the world as diasporans. In this sense, once the women connect with one another it becomes clear that affect in this novel is also incorporeal in important ways. It becomes the catalyst for hope by briefly converting the unenviable fact of their diasporic disorientation into new possibilities for living. Prior to Elizete and Verlia's meeting and after Verlia's death, the characters' respective experiences of displacement are characterized by desperation and confusion, a need to reduce pain in their lives. When Elizete and Verlia are together, however, their revised experience of mobility leaves them open to wonder, pleasure, and possibility.

My understanding of the displaced body's ability to generate hope builds on Massumi's meditations on affect in *Parables for the Virtual* as well as on the writings of Gilles Deleuze upon which Massumi builds. In his study of Baruch Spinoza's *Ethics* in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, Deleuze explains that affect is not just the world of moods and passions, nor just the inconsequential matter inhabited by a being more properly defined by transcendental intellect. Reading Spinoza's *Ethics*, Deleuze senses opportunities for a deeply enriched life, a more ethical life, in the recognition of the unity of mind-body and the individual's ability to be radically, actively affected by other mind-bodies. He asserts that we are defined not by the passive reception of passions, but by that embodied capacity which allows us to relate to others in a way that increases or decreases our agency, our "*power of acting*" (27). In a line of thought that fits surprisingly well with diaspora theory, Massumi reiterates Deleuze's thesis with an intensified attention to the ever-replenished incorporeal dimension of the physical body, a dimension that is produced by its

incessant mobility. He elaborates on Deleuze's radical commitment to hope in *Spinoza* as well as Deleuze's fascination with processural becomings in *The Logic of Sense* and Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* by emphasizing the indeterminacy that characterizes every body even at "rest." Even "[w]hen a body is in motion," Massumi writes, "it does not coincide with itself. It coincides with its own transition: its own variation" (4). Ever in transition from one position to the next, he theorizes, bodies constantly produce infinite possibilities for the future. It is at this plane, constituted by what Massumi, following from Deleuze, describes as intensities, that one encounters raw potential. This dimension of the body's incorporeality is incessantly renewed by that which the body senses as possible because the flesh can never catch up to, or finally *embody*, the infinite potential created through what it feels to be possible (30-32). If the minute mobilities of the body produce enhanced opportunities for relationality and even the experience of possibility itself, the global mobilities of the diasporic body can be thought of as revealing irregularities in and producing new possibilities against the institutions, practices, and norms that regulate citizenship within any given nation-states and the international networks of capital.

The possibility of diasporic sensory bodies producing the basic matter of social change has been anticipated by other scholars who seek to move beyond post-structural, performative strategies of subversion. Smaro Kamboureli's work of diasporic literary criticism *Scandalous Bodies*, for instance, analyzes the symbiosis between a group of dislocated bodies and the crisis of an unhealthy body politic. Particularly in analyzing Joy Kogawa's novel *Obasan*, Kamboureli describes the body's tendency to register and its ability to resist the established state's ills. She theorizes the diasporic body as a powerful medium of knowledge and agency, a site of experience that contests racist Canadian discourses of nation, gender, and sexuality. Clearing the way for my notion of "affective coordination," Kamboureli tracks the pleasures and pains of diaspora as the transmission of embodied knowledge between *Obasan*'s protagonist Naomi, her mother, and her grandmother, a diasporic network of feeling that she terms "dialogic corporeality" (180). The notion of dialogic corporeality, a theory of relation-in-displacement, argues against figuring the body as a *tabula rasa* upon which conflicting discourses write and instead figures it as a locus of empowered, politicized subjectivity. I am extending this notion here by drawing attention to the affective incorporeality that is produced by the corporeal body, a ever-present becoming that is a function of the body's mobility.

Before elaborating on the philosophical connection between mobility and affect, I would like to note how the sense of possibility as a function of mobility operates in Brand's writing at the level of literary form. By infusing her prose with a sense of constant movement, Brand sweeps the reader through *In Another Place, Not Here*: sentences flow for paragraphs without final punctuation, and dialogue and interior monologues sometimes appear as transcriptions of oral speech. The flow of any given section shifts, often without warning, between past and present; first, second, and third person narrative voice; Caribbean and Canadian dialects; and Trinidadian, Canadian, and Grenadian settings. As readers, we cannot observe these shifts with disinterest as playful variations in linguistic code, but are disoriented by Brand at the level of our own sensory bodies. Our eyes are compelled to over-ride our habit of taking periodic pauses, our breathing adjusts to the flow of sensory experience across pages, and our minds must loosen to absorb content that is determined, in part, by unconventional styles of textual meaning-making.

Verlia fascinates Elizete when she suddenly appears in Grenada where the pace of life is slow and steady. She alone, in Elizete's words, is "all the time moving faster than the last thing she say" and even when standing still is "moving, moving, moving all the time without moving" (7). Verlia's tendency to frenetic motion, however, is not idealized in the way that Massumi fantasizes about the incorporeal potential of perpetual bodily transition. As a Black queer woman in the socialist revolution of the 1970s and 1980s, her commitment to an agitative politics ultimately leads to her death. In a gesture that is equal parts defeat and defiance, Verlia leaps off a cliff while defending the island's socialist government from heavily armed American invaders and power-hungry, pseudo-Marxist internal usurpers. The details of Verlia's death are not narrated until the novel's closing pages, but the event is gradually made tangible in the text long before it is actualized in plot. With a rhythmic consistency, Elizete indexes her own unspeakable grief and foreshadows this yet-to-be-narrated spectacular event with dreamlike images of a "cliff" and veiled references to Verlia "flying," "leaping," "jumping," and "leaving" (22, 23, 47, 53, 75, 84). In "Sexual Citizenship and Caribbean-Canadian Fiction: Dionne Brand's 'In Another Place, Not Here' and Shani Mootoo's 'Cereus Blooms at Night,'" Heather Smyth notes that the language of this painfully specific mobility emerges even in the women's erotic relationship. She recalls a passage (Brand 75) where the women have sex, noting "Elizete says that Verlia writes her words 'in an arc in the sky' while

her own words 'come to grounds'" (Smyth 156). This series of lyrical eruptions both anticipates and embodies Verlia's death in a style that exceeds the forcibly grounded orientation that had dominated Elizete's life before she met Verlia.

Before elaborating on the relationship between orientation, affect, and history, I would like to acknowledge that which Brand establishes as the antithesis of diasporic hope. In her novel *In Another Place, Not Here*, as well as in several other of Brand's texts including the short story collection *Sans Souci*, the poetry text *No Language is Neutral,* the novel *At the Full and Change of the Moon*, and the non-fiction text *A Map to the Door of No Return*, the political potential of diasporic feeling is always at risk of being extinguished by nostalgia for origins. Nostalgia, in Brand's work, is a symptom of resignation to the hierarchized, racialized social order that characterizes Canadian culture. And if embodied affect is indeed a precious source of political hope, Brand could not portray "nostalgia" in more loathsome terms than by depicting it as a narcotic that numbs the displaced body. Rinaldo Walcott, analyzing Brand's work in *Black Like Who?*, states bluntly "Nostalgia is dead" (45). He implicitly identifies *In Another Place, Not Here* as the text that killed it. I suggest that his report of nostalgia's death is slightly exaggerated, but he is right that it can be toxic. In Brand's novel, the term surfaces at a deeply frustrating point in Verlia's nascent political development when she first becomes aware of a paralyzing apathy of migrants. "She hates nostalgia," the narrator states, "she hates this humid lifeless light that falls on the past" (182). The narrator elaborates:

> She smells their seduction, it's the kind of seduction that soothes the body going home on the train, insulates it from the place of now and what to do about it. It's seduction that keeps them here for thirty years saying they're going home some day, seduction that makes them take the bit in their mouths, expect to be treated like dirt, brush past her hand outstretched . . . (182-83)

Verlia senses that doctrines of multiculturalism encourage people in minority cultures to offset their objection to racialized hierarchies with the belief that "somewhere else [they] are other people," thus enabling a system of white privilege to thrive (182). While transnational mobility can be a catalyst for hope, Brand warns, migrants must beware of indulging in nostalgia, an easily co-opted experience that produces political and personal paralysis.

It is against this Canadian culture of apathy that Brand sets Verlia's need for revitalized attention to diasporic orientations. Living in Toronto, Verlia finds herself unexpectedly overwhelmed with sense memories of her

Trinidadian home. The unexpected smells and tastes terrify her because it suddenly appears that, against her will, her body is producing paralyzing nostalgia. She panics and heads for Grenada, where she plans to immerse herself in the thriving socialist revolution. She leaves because of her terror that her body can be held hostage by a hostile Canadian place. On meeting Elizete, however, she learns that the inverse of her fear can also be true, that a reoriented relationship to place can result from affective coordination with other displaced peoples. In meeting Verlia, Elizete is likewise reoriented by the event of their affective encounter. She describes her epiphany at the advent of their sexual relationship: "Everything make sense from then the way flesh make sense settling into blood" (6). The power of this simile in part depends on the simplicity of the imagery that Brand invokes, imagery with which we are all intimately, bodily familiar. At the same time, the metaphor bears complex ontological and epistemological implications for the queer, diasporic lives of the characters. The image of flesh settling into blood evokes the erotic sensuality of the women's sexual relationship, and also naturalizes their relationship in the most basic matter of human life. Because the image describes a queer relationship, it defies heterosexist conventions that privilege heteronormative arrangements as singularly creating the conditions for life-giving sex. In light of these considerations, the deceptively simple statement encapsulates the novel's core idea: by taking control of the way they inhabit their own and each other's bodies—in work, in sex, in migration, in war, and in language—Elizete and Verlia provide each other with affective coordinates, a sense of embodied orientation that defies sexualized violence and the haunted conditions of diasporic exile.

In *Parables for the Virtual,* Massumi enlarges on his basic ideas of movement to theorize the human capacity for orientation. He disputes the common understanding that orientation is a function of vision, and instead describes it as a function of proprioception, the human "sixth sense" that can be "defined as the sensibility proper to the muscles and ligaments as opposed to tactile sensibility . . . and visceral sensibility" (179, 59). Our muscles and ligaments, Massumi suggests, "register as conditions of movement what the skin internalizes as qualities," so that "the hardness of the floor underfoot as one looks into a mirror becomes a resistance enabling station and movement; the softness of a cat's fur becomes a lubricant for the motion of the hand" (59). From this capacity we develop "lived diagrams based on already lived experience, revived to orient further experience" that are cross-referenced with visual cues, but that are much more powerful than visual maps

(186-87). He reflects: "Lived and relived: *biograms* might be a better word for them than 'diagrams'" (187). What Massumi conceptualizes by raiding clinical science, Brand conceptualizes in *A Map to the Door of No Return* by raiding bird watching manuals. She writes:

> The rufous hummingbird travels five thousand miles from summer home to winter home and back. This hummingbird can fit into the palm of a hand. Its body defies the known physics of energy and flight. It knew its way before all known map-makers. It is a bird whose origin and paths are the blood of its small body. It is a bird whose desire to find its way depends on drops of nectar from flowers. (6)

Brand's description of the miraculous rufous hummingbird signifies in much the same way as Massumi's proprioception, except that the scale of her depiction—the success of the small creature against overwhelming distances and odds—also carries a diasporic charge. This is especially true of her statement that the hummingbird's "origins and pathways are the blood of its small body" (6). In my initial readings of the text, my mind supplied the preposition "in" where it did not exist in the middle of the statement. When I finally noticed that the bird's routes are not *in* the blood but *are* the blood, the passage revealed a more profound message not only about abstract hope, but about the real abilities generated by the incorporeal dimension of the diasporic body.

While cursory readings of Brand's hummingbird and Massumi's biograms might seem to reduce the experience of affect to the individual organism, *In Another Place, Not Here* asserts the necessity of reconceptualizing how humans inhabit shared histories shaped by public discourses and economies. The biological fact of affect is not negligible; Brand's fiction forces us to confront how the discursive and the corporeal are implicated in one another with an intimacy that belies that anxious post-structural distaste for "essentialisms" and "biology." In the specific context of often unrecorded, disorienting histories of slavery, for instance, the innate capacity for orientation must contend with the dizzying, nauseating force of an eviscerated past, a force that continues to racialize everyday experiences in education, employment, and other routine practices of daily life. Brand represents this most distinctly when describing Elizete as utterly, completely lost in Toronto—affectively, geographically, and socially—following Verlia's death (46-54).

In depicting the coming together that enables the characters to overcome their own disorientations, Brand chooses, paradoxically, the brute conditions of the cane field—described in Verlia's journal as "one step short of slavery"—as the setting for the women's entry into graceful eroticism and

mutual reorientation (220). Elizete is enchanted by Verlia's sheer intellectual determination and her bodily shortcomings. She remembers the new arrival rushing into field labour, "sweating as if she come out of a river. . . . *she head running ahead of we, she eyes done cut all the cane*" (15 ital. mine). In this moment, Brand gestures to the fallacy of separating mind and body, the futility of disembedding the body from a political ideology by representing Verlia's intellectual zeal as a deep naivety. Verlia's prioritizing her mental/visual capacity over the actual bodily work of cutting cane signifies the inadequacies of grand theoretical strategies for social change that are out of touch with lived affective experience. The text does not condemn Verlia or the intellectual passion that she represents, however. Elizete senses Verlia's over-ambitious ignorance, but instead of dismissing the foreign intellectual, finds it as a source of raw attraction, translating the site of potentially dehumanizing field work into a medium of passion. Elizete recalls, "That is the first time I feel like licking she neck" (15). Verlia comes to think of her outsider's vigour as foolishness, but her efforts to translate intellectual energy into physical labour exerts a force of attraction on Elizete and other diasporans that becomes crucial for their later armed rebellion. The text is, clearly, not anti-intellectual, but it insists on recognizing the inseparability of abstract political thought and daily personal lives and the insufficiency of any model that does perform such a separation.

Verlia's attraction for Elizete is likewise narrated in such a way that it emphasizes her lover's affective tendencies and stresses the fundamental singularity of the personal and the political. Focalizing through Verlia, the narrator explains: "When they'd first met she thought that she was the one who knew everything, and how she was going to change this country woman into a revolutionary like her, but then something made her notice that she was the one who had doubts and what she was saying she merely said but Elizete felt and knew" (202). To elaborate again on Massumi's distinction between a visual map and a biogram, or the distinction between Cartesian dualism and Spinozoan singularity for which it stands: Verlia arrives to promote radical socialism in Grenada with what she thinks is a complete economic-historical discursive "map" of the cultural situation, but her map is affectively deficient. She is out of touch with the people's sense of their place in the local landscape and culture, and is subsequently transfixed by Elizete's deeply embodied sense of orientation. The narrator describes Verlia's connection to Elizete's biogrammatic sensibility through sex and the hope that this affective coordination brings:

> It was usually close to morning when [Verlia] missed [Elizete], when she reached over and felt for her, hoping that she was there and sensing another thing, the room full of hoping. She knew that she was safe with a woman who knew how to look for rain, what to listen for in birds in the morning. . . . She needed someone who believed that the world could be made over as simply as that, as simply as deciding to do it, but more, not just knowing that it had to be done but needing it to be done and simply doing it. (202)

Though over-idealized by Verlia, Elizete's biogram of her place creates new coordinates for Verlia. By connecting with Elizete Verlia comes to a clearer understanding of her own mission in search of enlightened living. Her idealization of Elizete's rootedness creates self-doubt, but it also equips her with a new, embodied sense of purpose.

The characters' coordination with one another also provides Elizete with a fresh sense of direction. Her attachment to place may radiate an alluring certainty for Verlia, but Elizete is aware that it is a symptom of resignation to personal and political immobilization. Verlia's earnestness in the field counteracts this fixity. Though Verlia is overzealous, she inspires and mobilizes Elizete. By setting the sexual and political dimensions of their affective coordination against the charged context of the cane field, Brand represents their brief triumph over the immediate and historical, local and global conditions of their diasporic existence.

Elizete and Verlia's victory, then, is not just over the pains of the day, but over gendered and sexualized exploitation by neo-colonial powers. Brand's blending of queer desire and intensive labour introduces the novel, not with a sentence, but with a single word: "GRACE" (3). The next line reiterates this signifier of beauty, agility, dexterity, and strength. It confirms, still in capital letters, "IS GRACE, YES" (3). "Grace" heralds the narrator's introduction of the characters. In this moment, the narrator focalizes through Elizete as she studies Verlia working furiously. Near the novel's close, Verlia resurrects this concept as she watches Elizete. She laughs at herself, "That she would envy hardship . . . That she would fall in love with the arc of a woman's arm, long and one with a cutlass, slicing a cane stalk and not stopping but arcing and slicing again. . . . That the woman would look up and catch her looking and she would hate herself for interrupting such *avenging grace*" (202-03, ital. mine). "What made her notice that she was the one needing," the narrator explains of Verlia, "was that grace, that gesture taking up all the sky" (203). Grace is more than a condition of easy movement: its suggestion of bodily dynamism, productive power, and ascendant beauty defines how these women save one another. Elizete and Verlia's queerness represents a

refusal to bear life by heteronormative means, but their desire, cultivated in the cane field, is their saving grace.

The relationship between the hypermobile Verlia and the re-rooted Elizete is sensual, but, set in cane fields and in diaspora, is not conventionally romantic. Their queerness intersects with their lives as field workers in uneven, unpredictable ways because they approach the same scene from radically different directions, each with her own cultural biogram. Elizete becomes angry, for instance, when, lying in bed, Verlia kisses the scars inflicted by her ex-husband Isaiah that criss-cross her legs. Having caught Elizete as she tried to escape to the train station, he had whipped her with the "[s]ame rhythm" they used to cut the cane, and Elizete "knows that there is no kiss deep enough for that" (55). Brand's invocation of the whip strikes a continuity between the violent contempt Elizete suffers at the hands of her husband in the neo-colonial plantation and the conditions of slavery that ought to be a fact of the past. For all of the incorporeal promise that Elizete and Verlia's erotic bodies generate together, Elizete's discomfort during this erotic scene shows that embodied hope must contend with the deadened, non-regenerative scar tissue inscribing both Elizete's legs and the corporeal history of the Black diaspora. In "Written in the Scars: History, Genre, and Materiality in Dionne Brand's *In Another Place, Not Here*," Pamela McCallum and Christian Olbey discuss this aspect of the novel by reading the text as a postmodern appropriation of the antebellum slave narrative. They draw attention to "the ubiquity of the whip" in this novel, a figure that "reminds us of the connection between past and present forms of coercion" (173). While my reading of the novel theorizes Brand's originality in her representation of the body's innate capacity to bear history in significant ways, McCallum and Olbey's materialist analysis reminds us that Brand's representation of the body is in conversation with a larger aesthetic tradition that attests to long-standing relations of bodily and economic domination.

The history that Brand inscribes upon these bodies is not only the deep legacy of slavery, but also the relatively recent history of the Grenadian socialist revolution. Brand's novel deviates from historical accounts of Grenada's socialist demise by slightly disrupting the temporality of its events. She spreads out October 19, 1983—Grenada's "Bloody Wednesday"—over a few days. This temporal distortion is necessary. Even extrapolated, the series of events feels compressed in the novel. Had she tried to represent them in an even *more* compressed time frame, Verlia would not have had time to note them in her diary. Nonetheless, Verlia records events akin to those that transpired on

"Bloody Wednesday": the imprisonment of Grenada's revolutionary leader by a usurper; the liberation of the leader at the insistence of the people; the subsequent execution of the leader; the ensuing uprising of the people in protest; and the usurper's militarized effort to destroy unarmed protesters and lightly armed dissidents with the heavy armour of personnel carriers. The factual integrity of the details that Verlia cites as she claims overarching triumph for the real Marxist revolutionaries is supported by non-fiction historical texts. Kai Schoenhals and Richard Melanson verify the magnitude of the people's will in *Revolution and Intervention in Grenada*, writing that the protest against Maurice Bishop's incarceration included ten thousand people, or ten per cent of Grenada's population and that the protest that moved to Fort Rupert included about three thousand people, many of whom where "uniformed schoolchildren" (75, 76). Schoenhals also describes how Coard's People's Revolutionary Army dispatched three Soviet personnel carriers that, in firing on the crowd at Fort Rupert, drove many Bishop supporters "fifty to ninety feet to their deaths" as they jumped from the walls "to escape the shells and machine gun fire from the three armoured cars" (77). Some historians, including Schoenhals, record that the pro-Bishop faction opened fire first while others, including Gregory Sandford and Richard Vigilante in *Grenada: the Untold Story* and Mark Adkin in *Urgent Fury*, record that Coard's armoured cars opened fire in a pre-meditated slaughter of the population. Whichever political agenda shapes their interpretation, however, historians agree that these destabilizing events were exploited by the American government as an opportunity for invasion. Considering the violence currently being performed upon other nations' sovereignties, global grassroots protesters, and the very concepts of truth and responsibility in the context of the American War on Terror, it might be argued that Brand's critique of self-serving American global policing signifies with even more importance today than when *In Another Place, Not Here* was published in 1996.

If Verlia's diary entries represent a self-consciously textual counter-narrative of the events leading up to the massacre at Fort Rupert, Brand's depiction of Verlia's final stand represents a self-consciously affective counter-narrative of the event. The latter is just as important as the former because it embodies the thousands of injustices imposed on thousands of bodies that day and because it forms a continuity with the countless injustices imposed on countless Black and Indigenous bodies in centuries before. This episode evokes a specific event in Grenada's past that also constituted an embodied protest against colonial power. Schoenhals describes how,

following Columbus' "European discovery" of the island, French colonizers from Martinique began to exploit it. They strove to annihilate the Carib people whose island it was. He explains that "[b]y 1654, the French had pushed the Carib Indians to the northernmost cliff of the island. Rather than surrender, the Caribs—men, women and children—jumped to their death into the ocean below" (2). The place of their death is now called La Morne des Sauteurs, or Leaper's Hill (2). Schoenhals does not construct a connection between the deaths at La Morne des Sauteurs and the deaths at Fort Rupert, but his statement that the spectacular death of the Caribs is "much depicted and commemorated in present-day Grenada" suggests that such a connection would be recognizable for readers familiar with Caribbean history (2). While Brand's narrator likewise does not explicitly invoke the Caribs' death, Verlia's leap performs an embodied citation of the island's earliest anti-colonial resistance as it issues an improvised, personal gesture of radical defiance.

The novel shifts from Verlia's diary into third-person narration as it describes her final rebellion. Waking in a cemetery with fellow revolutionaries, including Elizete, Verlia feels intense rage, and vows not to die passively. She rouses the group and leads them to an unnamed fort that overlooks a harbour and offers "comfort [in its] stone walls" (245). On entering the confined space, however, the group is immediately cut off from behind. Armoured cars open fire with massive guns. Elizete's response is typical of her biogrammatic sensibility, her connection to the land. She hits the ground, and even smiles at the predictability of her reaction: "solid as usual, [her body's] usual weight hitting something solid, ground." (245-46). Turning to share this with Verlia, however, she sees her lover embodying an opposite but equally characteristic biogrammatic response. She sees Verlia "running, turning, leap off the cliff . . . her back leap, her face awake, all of her soar, her arms out wide, her chest pulling air" (246). In the next paragraph the narrator's scope broadens, focalizing through the perspective of a distant spectator on the other side of the harbour. The anonymous spectator "saw them fall . . . heard the pound, pound, pound *po, po, po, po, pound* of the guns . . . saw them tumble, hit, break their necks, legs, spines, down the cliff" (246). Having admitted to the fact of mass bodily destruction in the past tense, the narrator switches into present tense and focuses tightly on Verlia flying: "She's leaping. She's tasting her own tears and she is weightless and deadly" (246). Though this tasting suggests that Verlia senses her own body for its affective meaning as she flies, the remainder of this passage transcends the

corporeality of affect and dwells on an incorporeal state that represents freedom from the oppressed diasporic body.

Though terrible, Verlia's final mobility is also euphoric and inspiring. Her incorporeal inhabitation of the liminal phase between life and death is a release from the forced restlessness that drives her every move throughout the novel. Falling, "She feels nothing except the bubble of a laugh each time she breathes. . . . Her body has fallen away, is just a line, an electric current, sign of lightning left after lightning, a faultless arc to the deep turquoise deep. She doesn't need air. She's in some other place already, less tortuous, less fleshy" (246-47). If Brand plays on the title of the novel in earlier moments to describe "another place" as the affect-negating experience of numbing nostalgia, she invokes the same phrase here to portray its opposite, an "other place" that is the shift to maximum affective incorporeality.

Despite Verlia's ecstasy, the intensity of her final flight creates an opening for multiple, conflicting interpretations. Driven by armoured-car fire, Verlia's proud defiance is also crushing defeat. The joy that she feels with her shift into incorporeality is in part a freedom from the degrading, dehumanizing conditions that continue to structure the lives of the living. So what can it mean that the novel's ultimate affective triumph is a total political and military defeat? How could such acts represent hope, let alone an enhanced power to act? I argue that, while the activities constituting Grenada's revolutionary crisis cannot be altered by a novel published in 1996, Brand's depiction of Verlia as she flies over the cliff's edge signals that the way that they are recorded, interpreted, and used for future thinking can be affected. This final climax suddenly compresses the message that has run through the rest of the novel: the body is not merely a passive site upon which histories and discourses are inscribed, but is an active producer of future histories. Verlia's silent leap screams out a counter-narrative of historical events that were twisted to justify the American invasion of Grenada and reenacts a counter-narrative first performed by Grenada's original inhabitants. Her biogrammatic redoubling is not just a repetition of her own potential for movement, but also channels a similar leap taken by Indigenous peoples in 1654. Brand's final question reintroduces a quality of openness into a capitalist narrative that often exaggerates the "death" of socialism. Verlia, and the surge of political energy that she represents, are not necessarily and finally defeated.

Brand represents the collapse of Grenadian socialism in such a way that it occurs *despite* the successes of the system and the will of the people. Her novel represents one defeat that happens to have occurred at one time under

unusual historical conditions of political hypocrisy, internal betrayal, and external invasion. The affective pulse of the novel asserts that the event was not an inevitability and has not foreclosed potential for the present. Verlia recorded the revolution as a triumph in her diary. Brand's final representation, then, does not portray a condition of loss, of final defeat for Black diasporic activism. Instead, by weaving hints of Verlia's leap throughout the body of the text before representing the event itself, Brand asks readers to think about the slipperiness of history's powerful grasp in personal and cultural terms. Her final depiction of Verlia bursts open a sense of the innumerable, unpredictable futures that can be produced by the affective body, and the words "in another place, not here" begin to signify as a promise of a rejuvenated affective politics even as they testify to the diasporic pains of an irresolvable deferral of belonging.

NOTES

1 "Feeling" is likewise absent from the index of Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley's anthology, *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social* while the distinction between "affect" and "emotion" rates only a passing mention in two of the anthology's essays.

2 Jeremy Gilbert also notes the ease of the slippage between "feeling" and "affect" as he calls for new ways of thinking the social in "Signifying Nothing: 'Culture,' 'Discourse' and the Sociality of Affect." Gilbert explicitly rejects Massumi's argument for the "autonomy of affect" and points out that both affect and feeling imply "contact, sensation, intensity, tactility and emotion" as he compares Raymond Williams' notion of "structures of feeling" and Deleuze and Guattari's work on affect. Of course, all of these terms remain pliable. Diana Brydon's "Dionne Brand's Global Intimacies: Practising Affective Citizenship," for instance, cites Rose McDermott to define "emotion" in a way that overlaps with most scholars' definitions of "affect" (1001). It is perhaps worth citing Gilbert's optimistic opinion that "[i]t is one sign . . . of its increasing significance that the meanings attached to [affect] seem to proliferate and slip around."

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Jan Conn

Storm-Damaged Alphabet

Beyond apricot-coloured curtains on a wind-swept stage
telephone poles lean haplessly, holding
each other like drunks.

He screams 50x and races up rickety stairs.
In place of a sun there's an immense ball of yarn.
Cardboard butterfly wings are lowered and attached

to her shoulders; the girl is speechless. The diamond window
in the wall sparkles & a large postage stamp is raised on a flagpole.
Ocean waves overwhelm the bathers, lined up

outside their cabanas, hoping for a tan. She has to climb a ladder
to rescue the alphabet. Water hyacinth floats on a roof—
the southern flora are putting down roots.

The signs are unmistakable: delirious
but well-intentioned. The seminal brown ink markings
blur in the continuous rain.

We find a pair of stilts; we've never felt
so marooned between any two points of land.
There are many line-ups for water; timidly

we wonder why. Some standing alone imagine
they are belovèd; others root among lemon peels
or squat to pee. She displays a forced smile

to get help. I missed you in the scramble
for a life-jacket, bobbing up and down
on a gas-streaked sea suddenly empty to the horizon.

Mixing Periods & Genres

Gil Adamson
The Outlander. Anansi $18.95

Stephen Legault
The Cardinal Divide. NeWest $22.95

Reviewed by Leonard Bond

Mary Boulton is running. Only nineteen and already a widow, murderer, and fugitive from justice, Mary Boulton must run for her very life. Pursued by her vengeful brothers-in-law for the murder of her husband, if they find Mary Boulton it will mean certain death to the outlander.

This uncommon first novel by Gil Adamson combines a thrilling adventure story with polished literary technique. Full of action and movement, the early pacing and urgency of Boulton's predicament quickly pull the reader in. Yet amid all the chaos, the narrative comes alive with rich metaphor and poetic imagery, as when Boulton stops briefly to brush off her clothes, "sitting back to watch the dust eddy about her like fairies."

Also present in the story are several classic themes: abuse, survival, love, religion, and the pursuit of justice—many of which are set against others in a kind of thematic binary that runs throughout the text. Kindness opposes abuse, survival co-exists with death, love is coupled with hate, and religion conflicts with superstition. Moreover, the pursuit of justice may be read as a quest for vengeance. Clearly a lot is happening in this novel.

Set in 1903, *The Outlander* crosses multiple genres, encompassing the western, the picaresque, the historical novel, and even a touch of the gothic. It also fits nicely within the Canadian literary tradition of stories focusing on nature, frontier life, and outdoor adventure. Its survival theme, for example, upholds Atwood's *Survival* (1972) thesis on the nature of CanLit. This is especially true of Part One in which Boulton spends considerable time alone in the wilderness. Frye's garrison mentality may also be seen at work in the text, particularly in Boulton's adventures in the small mining town of Frank—a settlement composed entirely of men.

As the novel develops, we learn of Boulton's troubled past in a series of brief flashbacks. Included here are the details of her husband's brutal murder; still, the widow remains an entirely sympathetic character. Her tragic past, her enfeebled mental state, and her hateful brothers-in-law (whose hulking size, coupled with the widow's own small stature, lends a David-and-Goliath quality to the narrative) combine to make us wholeheartedly desire her escape. Through her depiction of Boulton's past, Adamson intentionally undermines any wish in the reader for legal justice in the case.

The novel also features a unique cast of characters: the enterprising dwarf in a bowler hat, the bootlegging giant named Giovanni, and the kindly Reverend Bonnycastle (a pugilistic preacher with his own form of muscular Christianity and a thriving horse-theft ring on the side). But no secondary character grabs our

attention quite like William Moreland, the Ridgerunner. He at first saves Boulton only to later abandon her, ultimately regretting his decision. Will they see each other again? Will the widow survive?

Written in third-person omniscient mode and divided into three distinct parts (each of which brings triumph and tragedy), *The Outlander* is a difficult novel to put down. Highly recommended.

Stephen Legault's novel, *The Cardinal Divide*, affords readers an opportunity to sit back and attempt to solve a thrilling murder mystery. Set in the present day, the story follows formerly prominent, though now washed up, environmental consultant Cole Blackwater as he reluctantly takes on the role of private investigator after the vicious murder of local mine manager Mike Barnes in the fictitious town of Oracle, Alberta. Blackwater himself is the classic hard-boiled detective character: raging alcoholic, tough former boxer, failed husband, failing father, and future failed businessman.

When Blackwater receives a call from old friend Peggy McSorlie requesting his services in stopping a powerful mining operation from ravaging the beautiful Cardinal Divide, he agrees to take on the job. Practically broke, Blackwater heads to Alberta as much to receive a pay cheque as to stop the mine. Aware that the small but determined Eastern Slopes Conservation Group (ESCoG) is fighting a lost cause, Blackwater nevertheless agrees to help develop a plan of action against the mine.

As if stopping the mine wasn't enough of a challenge, Blackwater soon finds he must also deal with local wingnut and outspoken ESCoG member Dale van Stempvort. In the past, Dale's careless comments have led to a belief in Oracle that he was responsible for certain local acts of eco-terrorism. When van Stempvort again makes unwise comments to the media (loosely interpretable as threatening) and Mike Barnes turns up dead mere hours later, all suspicions immediately turn towards Dale, and he is arrested for Barnes' murder.

Ready to wash his hands of the entire operation, Blackwater packs his belongings and heads for his home in Vancouver. But before he can get very far, he begins to realize that several aspects of the RCMP's case against van Stempvort simply don't add up. Turning his truck around, Blackwater returns to Oracle with hopes of solving the mystery, and a growing list of potential suspects beginning to form in his mind.

The Cardinal Divide is a page-turner of a mystery and an interesting work of pulp fiction. What it is not is a masterpiece of the English language. While many of Legault's descriptions of the scenery around the real Cardinal Divide do evoke images of beauty, the bulk of the text is neither poetic nor aesthetically pleasing. Such cringe-worthy lines as "Holy huge hole in the ground, Batman" certainly attest to that. However, the novel should not be judged on what it is not, but rather on what it is. And what it is is what it aims to be: a pulp fiction mystery with serious environmental issues at its heart. It is also the first story in the Cole Blackwater mystery series and includes (as a bonus) the first chapter of the next volume. Recommended.

Social Commentaries

Carmen Aguirre
The Trigger. Talonbooks $16.95

Trina Davies
Shatter. Playwrights Canada $16.95

Morris Panych
Benevolence. Talonbooks $16.95

Reviewed by Sarah Banting

The Trigger stages Carmen Aguirre's own experience of rape by mixing narrative monologue, symbolic gesture, and sound. Its story sequence is poetically associative rather than realist and linear. Five female cast members slide between roles: one woman

plays both the central character, Carmen, and her male rapist; the rest play Carmen's cousin and companion during the rape, the policemen who interrogate her, the nurse who cursorily cares for her, her father, her later lovers. A vivid, symbolic set abstracts onstage representation from reality. But the play nevertheless firmly connects its onstage world to the real world. Carmen's monologues tell of her youthful emergence into sexuality, her complicated feelings about the rape, her own and her Chilean-Canadian family's attempts to cope with and to conceal her pain, the dysfunction of her later relationships with men—all with a tone of sincere, autobiographical narration. And they locate her rape and those of her rapist's other victims with a documentary precision, in the Vancouver locations where Aguirre and others were indeed attacked. When it premiered in Vancouver in 2005, Aguirre played Carmen, and Talonbooks' publication retains Aguirre's presence for the playscript by including an authorial preface that begins, "When I was thirteen I was raped by the Paper Bag Rapist." The play provides good teaching support for questions of autobiography, fiction, and located theatre.

The Trigger's staging promises moments of vivid theatricality, and its frankness offers an unsensationalized confrontation with the realities of rape. But these are not unique strengths. In several respects, it recalls Marie Clements' more ambitious play *The Unnatural and Accidental Women* (premiered 2000). And Aguirre makes a familiar story of the psychology of rape. The many long monologues she uses to tell this story, meanwhile, make for fine reading but potentially leaden theatre. The most novel elements contextualize Carmen's experience in her revolutionary Chilean upbringing. Unanchored from Aguirre's actual life-story, this dimension of the play would feel random and perhaps misfit, but as it is it offers a richly specific, located feminism.

Trina Davies' *Shatter* dramatizes the Halifax explosion of 1917 by exploring its impact on one household. The play's domestic microcosm encapsulates various forms of the personal suffering and social tension at work in wartime Halifax—post-traumatic stress, grief and worry, prejudice and suspicion—and shows how these were intensified by the explosion. War-widowed Jennie Maclean is traumatized after losing her son and her own eyesight to the blast. German-born Elsie Schultz is attacked and jailed when locals mistakenly blame the explosion on suspected spies. Jennie's daughter Anna is swept into the anti-German hysteria by her persuasive new beau, and her family's longstanding friendship with Elsie gets broken. All three women are frightened and horrified by the explosion's grisly aftermath, as is Anna's beau, a young soldier named Brian. The play also extends beyond the personal scale of these characters' experiences by occasionally converting them into "neutral" members of the Halifax community. As a chorus of "the voices of the town," they chime in together to convey collective hope, confusion, hatred, and mourning.

Shatter's four central characters are believable but stock. Young Anna and Brian's romance in particular feels like war-drama cliché, and some of Davies' dialogue lacks the freshness of the interactions in Kevin Kerr's *Unity 1918*—another play about an often-forgotten Canadian homefront disaster. Several scenes rely over-heavily on diegesis: characters doggedly narrate their own actions and perceptions. Davies' casting notes call for a musical vocal quality to this narration, which might well convey intense social experience in performance. But *Shatter* could do more to exploit the resources of theatre to suggest explosion and collective shell-shock.

The Trigger's precisely located autobiography and *Shatter*'s historical narrative earnestly call audiences' attention to documented realities. *Benevolence*, by contrast, is a Morris Panych play: it is a black-

humoured, existentialist fable of obscure morality, where the characters are types of contemporary urban humanity and the setting is abstracted and allegorical.

Benevolence explores the barriers people put up to protect themselves from change and from contact with strangers. It imagines what happens when those barriers are broken: uncertainty, discomfort, intimacy, love, revelation, madness, transfer of power, loss of self. Oswald, a small-minded shoe salesman, used to ignore Terrence, an open-minded street person; one day Oswald broke pattern and gave him one-hundred dollars. Terrence will not let him forget it, and the play stages their ensuing series of meetings in a squalid little porn theatre, as Terrence seeks to repay Oswald's benevolence by introducing change and intimacy into his life. The results teeter between liberation and chaos. At the play's close, Oswald is homeless and alone, with an unearned criminal record; Terrence has taken over his girlfriend and his apartment. Perhaps Oswald is now wiser. He is apparently not more free.

Panych's script, unlike Aguirre's or Davies', avoids bogging down in diagesis. Rather than by being told, audiences infer what is happening to Oswald's life by listening to the characters cajole and squabble about it, and the dialogue is frequently funny. But the pinched salesman, tight-laced girlfriend, philosophical homeless man, and wise hooker are all tired types. And the plot unravels through the second act, retaining little of the tension or the existential snap of other Panych plays. Oswald asks at one point, "This is some sort of social commentary, isn't it?" We are left to wonder.

Sleight of Land

Howard Akler
The City Man. Coach House $18.95

Stan Dragland
The Drowned Lands. Pedlar $22.00

Reviewed by Domenic Beneventi

Howard Akler's *The City Man*, a hard-boiled crime fiction set in depression-era Toronto, follows the cat and mouse game between "the Whiz," a gang of petty thieves and pickpockets in Kensington Market, and the police force charged with protecting "Toronto the Good" from the "sticky-fingered desperados" preying on the crowds that gather daily at Union Station. Eli Morenz, a reporter with the *Daily Star* infiltrates the gang of pickpockets ostensibly to get the inside story on how they operate, but he finds his loyalties increasingly divided between the police, his city editor, and the sultry and elusive Mona Kantor, who uses her charms to distract her victims as she deftly steals their wallets and disappears into the crowd.

While Akler's fascination with the "lingo" of the pickpocket underworld captivates in its ability to evoke another era, the prose at moments turns into the stilted artifice of the detective novel as it becomes necessary to explain expressions like "pinching the poke," a "push grift," "the stall," the "touch," and the "prat digger" to his readers. But that is not to suggest that Akler is not deft, and even graceful, in his ability to move the narrative along through precise and artful turns of phrase, particularly in his descriptions of the pickpocket's art of reading the movement of bodies in a crowd, the sleight of hand needed to pinch prized wallets as fingertips "scurry along the left-hand pockets of the mark, coat and pants, fingertips so sentient they are in fleet accord with all the geometries of scratch." Like Eli Morenz, his investigative reporter, Akler's writing demonstrates that he is

"thrilled with detail, the way knowledge is contained in so many small spaces."

The ambiguities of perception at the scene of a crime—where pickpockets, undercover police officers, reporters, and bystanders observe from different vantage points—suggest the larger difficulty of arriving at historical objectivity. This is a theme echoed in the schism between Eli's reportage, which becomes part of the public record of a historical era, and his much messier lived experience on the street. A description of the city's architecture becomes an apt meditation on the equivocal nature of truth: "Each new angle of the eye offers another storey, gaze that climbs the spandrels, clambers over a dramatic setback." Both the pickpocket's ability to pass unnoticed and the victim's inability to see go hand in hand, pushing forward events of (his)story.

Like *The City Man*, Stan Dragland's *The Drowned Lands* unfolds through the telling of a single event from different points of view, suggesting the inscrutability of truth and the dissonance between the official historical record and the lived experiences of the excluded and the marginal. Set in a small farming community in Ontario at the turn of the twentieth century, the novel traces the growing tensions over the control of the Napanee River between the River Improvement Company and the hardscrabble farmers who settled the area, "sending down roots into land that would not nurture them." Either by accident or design, Silas, a deaf and mute boy, leads Michael Deeks and Stella Bush out of town to the makeshift hut he has built in the underbrush. This land "on the edge of civilization" is, for Silas, "fraught with potential discovery", containing the buried history of landscape, rock, river, and stream. Everywhere he goes, Silas carries his collection of treasures; a driftwood stick, a manikin figure, some arrowheads, a snakeskin, the puzzling "little machine" which he later discovers to be an astrolabe, and his prized possession: a faded newspaper clipping of his father who was once a baseball pitcher. These discarded objects carry with them a buried history of the *Drowned Lands*; European settlement, the parcelling of land, the marginalization of Native peoples, and the loss of their stories. Indeed, as a deaf boy, Silas' ears "don't take words . . . no sounds at all . . . let alone stories."

Stella, physically marked by a birthmark and socially stigmatized by poverty and an uncertain paternity, finds it increasingly easy to "imagine living the life primitive out here," while Michael, who has run away from home after an altercation with his father, unexpectedly discovers in Stella the "familiar awakening" of love. Both are watched over by Silas, who becomes both Native guide and silent mystery. Interspersed with the narratives of Silas, Michael, and Stella are Mitch Deeks' reports of an impending "war along the Napanee" as the local farmers become increasingly hostile to the dams which secure the only source of water in the area. Their anger finally spills over into violence and tragedy.

Dragland's strength as a writer lies in his subtle ability to evoke the rich, often hidden tapestries of his characters' inner lives pulsing just beneath the surface of social convention, just as his descriptions of landscape suggest that it is powerfully alive beneath the surface, roiling with mysterious forces and hidden truths that can barely be contained. The pent-up floodwaters of the Napanee River bearing down on the Drowned Lands become a metaphor of the powerful and inevitable push of history, dragging everything along in its path: "we are always, always, being swept along in a moment of becoming."

Privileged Access

Pierre Anctil, Norman Ravvin, and Sherry Simon, eds.

New Readings of Yiddish Montreal. U of Ottawa P $38.00

Reviewed by Jason Ranon Uri Rotstein

It would not be wrong to think of Yiddish today as a remote, isolated historical phenomenon. While fully personifying an uncommonly rich epoch in Jewish history, Yiddish is rarely viewed within a larger academic or interdisciplinary context. A private language, "a language of insiders," Yiddish's unique appeal may be considered its downfall.

Flourishing at the turn of the twentieth century in the bustling and congested streets of East European shtetls, Yiddish was international before it went international; this might account for why Yiddish was unable to survive the turbulent move to the North American suburbs. "A language of necessity," or lingua franca for Jews from disparate and divisive European states, Yiddish inhabited the worlds of commerce as well as serving the story of the Jewish plight turned comedy. Best known perhaps as a vernacular language of almost limitless urbaneness and malleability, Yiddish seemed to accommodate itself to languages as diverse as German, Hebrew, and Russian, while employing Hebrew script. It was the language that for Kafka represented "an impossible dream of community." But it was a language that could not stave off the threat of the Holocaust to human life.

The editors and organizers of the conference that produced the gathering of the essays that form the collection *New Readings of Yiddish Montreal* see themselves in the difficult position of "recreating" the Yiddish past that has been lost twice over: first in Europe and again in Montreal. They draw on a record of Yiddish and Yiddish-influenced writing—that can never approximate the extraordinary play and turn of phrase that the spoken Yiddish inspired. Such as it is, their work is a translation of a translation. Their task is nevertheless a noble one and it is largely through the efforts of social anthropologist and translators like Pierre Anctil that the heyday of Yiddish Montreal can be recognized as unique to Jewish and Canadian history.

The essays and personal anecdotes in this book provide a privileged access inside the "double parlour" or "double vision" mentality and the sometimes "distorted mirror of guilt" that existed for the first-generation journeymen and women, whose paths are described in the humble words they commit to their experience as "twisted" ones. They write "home" to stave off "homelessness."

Above all, the collection establishes Jacob-Isaac Segal and Chava Rosenfarb as major Yiddish and Canadian writers who far outstrip the contributions even of A.M. Klein to the Yiddish scene. Klein emerges interestingly as a problematic "translator" of the Yiddish language into "archaic English."

The collection is a tremendous and courageous act of restoration that aspires at its most ambitious to participate alongside the "tinkers and cobblers" of the young urban movement of Yiddish Montreal in the 1950s.

Start to Finish

Joan Barfoot

Exit Lines. Knopf Canada $29.95

Nino Ricci

The Origin of Species. Doubleday $34.95

Reviewed by Beverley Haun

Here we all are, hurtling through space as moments of individual and connected consciousness. We react to life around us, and we make choices that form the narratives of our lives. This messy mix and the mystery of life and how to live it are at the core of two fine novels, *Exit Lines* by Joan Barfoot

and *The Origin of Species* by Nino Ricci. Each begins at a different end of the story: *The Origin of Species*, as the title suggests, at the beginning, and *Exit Lines*, with the end—just beyond the doors of the Idyll Inn.

Joan Barfoot writes with humour, wry goodwill, and grace about the end of the narrative, an infirm old age we all hope to avoid, but that we may well have to endure if we manage to make it that far. *Exit Lines* opens with the promise of a new beginning for this last chapter in the Idyll Inn, a retirement home being built for profit as part of a chain of investment properties—a "numbered company run by a management group on behalf of a collective of professionals, mostly dentists and doctors, interested in untroublesome, steady investment in what is bound to be a growth industry." With this sly nod to the management of the aged by the prosperous middle generation, we see the Inn start up. Schedules are created, formulas are followed, and efficiency is observed by the staff of the Idyll Inn whom we are aware of in the background as we hive off with a group of four new residents who arrive as the doors open, even before the landscaping is done, to make the most of or to refuse what life has brought them to. In a reversal of the comic formula, the elders resist the rules of their juniors to infuse a stagnating social contract, with its expectations to conform to numbing passive routines, with new life and vitality of an emotional, if not a corporeal, kind.

Sylvia and Ruth each have different physical infirmities shaping their decision to live communally when it would not be their choice otherwise. Greta, who has never liked to be alone, is thrilled that her generous daughters can afford to, and have chosen to, give her this residential gift. George, partially paralyzed by a stroke, has been wheeled in by his daughter against his will. Trapped in his body, he rages against the injustice of his lot in life. Into the tensions created by the desire for autonomy and the need for care is the collective will of these four to resist the infantilizing tendencies of the Idyll Inn staff as the foursome navigate the indignities of their condition. As they develop a tight social group, Barfoot by turns reveals the needs of each that drove their desires in their physical prime, that shaped their destinies, and that continue to inform their actions. The plot moves chronologically through the first year in the Inn, but is interspersed with brief chapters about an anticipated clandestine event that slowly makes itself known as the seasons unfold and elevates the gentle humour and goodwill of the narrative into a thoughtful insight into what it means for strangers to become friends, and for friends to be fully alive and enlivened to the nuances and needs of each other.

The title *The Origin of the Species* so strongly informs Ricci's novel that it holds all aspects of the narrative within its framework and shapes a reading through nuanced allusions. Despite being so focused on the central character Alex, this is a very plot-driven novel, but the plot relates to Darwin more than to Alex himself. As each scene unfolds and information is added to the plot, it is almost impossible to take in the narrative without the catchphrases of evolution surfacing: the survival of the fittest, the extinction of the weakest, natural selection, environmental factors, being prey, or preying upon. All swim up and attach themselves to events in a continuing dance with Darwin.

The novel is divided into four sections and spans a year from May 1986 to April 1987, with numerous forays into formative past experiences of the protagonist Alex, an Ontario Italian Canadian. It is a year when fallout from Chernobyl is spreading out across the Northern Hemisphere, AIDS is beginning to ravage urban gay communities, and French language laws are enacting a bullying territoriality on the small multicultural enterprises of an

increasingly diverse Montreal population.

Throughout the novel, Alex's life reflects this chaos. He is living in Montreal and finishing up the course work for his PhD in English literature. Paradoxically he is burdened by the sense that he is close to, but unable to articulate, a brilliant thesis, a grand unified theory that will connect the humanities to the sciences. But Alex himself is having trouble connecting the disparate parts of his own narrative, and it is not until he is able to piece together a coherent sense of himself that he is able to move ahead with his scholarly work. Self-reflective to the point of inertia, he moves minute by minute through his days, reacting to his students and teachers, his neighbours and landlords, and to his past. He rarely feels in control of his time or his efforts to shape his own destiny. We meet characters from Montreal, San Salvador, and Britain who are filled with a macho or entitled discursive certainty in contrast to the indecision and ambivalence of Alex, the Ontario protagonist. He engages in Freudian psychoanalysis for depression, and fulminates over his perceived ineptitude in all the roles he has observed himself playing so far in life: son, lover, scholar, and ultimately, father.

Threading through what he perceives as his own ineffectual narrative is a running dialogue with CBC Radio host Peter Gzowski. It is a comic chorus in which Alex is being interviewed about his amazing thesis that has rocked the academic world and which Gzowski is adding to his own unifying theory of Canada. As the story travels forward and backward in time, each new scene moves us closer to the imperatives of survival tied up with the emotional connections and bonds of community, and ultimately to the importance of diversity in the scheme of evolution and the importance of Canada in the scheme of diversity.

Exit Lines and *The Origin of Species,* while written in very different styles, the latter being much more self-consciously literary, both offer visions of our need to throw ourselves into life at a running tilt rather than to view it from the sidelines. Both offer the hope of reshaping old families and forming new ones, of forging new alliances at any point in what is apparently an all-too-brief journey. Ricci's novel has been justly celebrated. Barfoot's novel deserves more attention.

Women in the Market

Peter Baskerville

A Silent Revolution? Gender and Wealth in English Canada 1860-1930. McGill-Queen's UP $29.95

Reviewed by Jennifer Blair

"Speculation," "deregulation," and "mortgage market" have become dirty words as of late, but for those seeking some respite from the rhetoric of crisis that describes our current economic condition, Peter Baskerville's historical study, *A Silent Revolution? Gender and Wealth in English Canada 1860-1930*, offers a compelling alternative. Baskerville's book addresses a different era of market deregulation: the period following the passage of the Married Women's Property Laws when women began to exercise their new (and hard-won) right to own property. With chapters focusing on particular types of financial activities, from bequeathment of savings and valuables, to property ownership, lending, and entrepreneurship, Baskerville highlights the variety of ways in which urban women were participants in, rather than objects of, the world of economic exchange in early Canada.

While Baskerville is careful to be clear that women's investment in the marketplace did not equal men's, his main argument is that "women were far more autonomous in matters of finance and general economic activity than many historians and most especially many historians of Canada have as yet argued." As the book's substantial and

carefully wrought evidence shows, women played significant roles in the market—as smart speculators, as active investors in both high- and low-risk stocks, and as conscientious and, at times, uncompromising landlords. Its focus on two cities, Hamilton and Victoria, reveals surprising comparisons of financial behaviour—that "women were nearly twice as likely as men to foreclose on their loans," for example, and that, by 1930, "Hamilton's women were more aggressive investors than its men." Ultimately, Baskerville asks his readers to consider what might account for the dislink between economic activities undertaken by women in this period and the perpetuation of the "separate spheres" ideology, which posited women as lacking in interest and capability when it came to managing finances beyond "home economics."

Readers may find the book wanting in terms of its attention to the personalities and social relations behind the many exchanges it documents. To his credit, however, Baskerville does provide, when available and warranted, information regarding the lives of the women conducting these exchanges. Mary McKee, for example, a successful landlord and developer in Vancouver, was constantly pressured by her lender to sign her husband on to her loans, even though his expertise was limited to the construction end of the business. We also learn about Mrs. Cammell whose husband put a hotel in her name but later sued her when she would not give it back. Cammell argued that her husband, who had "taken to drink," could not provide for their children as well as she could running the hotel on her own. On occasion, Baskerville also uses examples from Canadian literary texts as evidence of social attitudes towards investors. He calls attention to the description of the "shrewd old miser" money-lender in Joanna Wood's *The Untempered Wind*, and he also quotes a passage from Mary Denison's novel *That Wife of Mine*, in which a husband is surprised by his wife's "accomplishments in the way of business."

These inclusions of social and literary details are minimal, but this is in keeping with their purpose, which is to serve as supplements to the main financial data presented and analyzed here. In fact, Baskerville's history does that welcome work of opening the doors to future study in our own areas of scholarship. Certainly this evidence of women's participation in the market will affect the ways we might read women characters, women's actions, and the solvency of the category "female" in works of literature from this period. Furthermore, as scholars interested in modes of representation and expression, we might be interested in the characterization of this economic revolution as "silent" (a term Baskerville takes from 1890s American feminists Annie Meyer and Julia Howe), when we know the suffragette movement to have been so *loud* to the extent that its success depended upon public performance. Also left for further consideration are the ways in which the "muted" nature of this revolution, "which in the public sphere engendered equally muted consequences," aligns with ideology's enduring stronghold on gender identity and behaviour. Indeed, Baskerville's study provides a welcome upset even to contemporary attitudes about women and wealth.

Writing Absence, Facing Exile

Katia Belkhodja
La Peau des doigts. XYZ $20.00

Anthony Phelps
La Contrainte de l'inachevé. Leméac $20.95

Reviewed by Sébastien Sacré

Many Francophone writers exhibit a fascination for notions of exile, loss, and identity, even more so when they

themselves had to emigrate or go into exile. Two recent Francophone novels that broaden these notions are Katia Belkhodja's *La Peau des doigts*, which deals with the need for physical contact and the pain of absence, and Anthony Phelps' *La Contrainte de l'inachevé*, which examines the dilemma of coming back to one's native land after exile.

Written by a twenty-two-year-old author originally from Algeria, *La Peau des doigts* is narrated by an undefined narrator who poetically describes her encounters with peculiar characters such as a painter fascinated by insects and an autistic man who wants to learn every existing language. If the novel mostly describes the narrator's carnal perception of her environment—focusing on objectified mouths, skin, and relationships fantasized through biting and tearing of the flesh—it is also deeply rooted in a feeling of loss embodied by three generations of women: the narrator, her Kabyle grandmother, and her cousin. The grandmother's story, beginning like an Arabian Nights tale of love, ends dramatically with the woman being abandoned and forever waiting for her love in the subway, filling the pain of absence with hope. The cousin's tale, on the other hand, deals with the inability to cope with grief and the desire to numb the pain by any means as when she symbolically burns her own hands while cooking. These experiences differ from the narrator's craving for solitude and her ambiguous desire for intense physical contact, which may represent the ultimate form of adaptation to an increasingly impersonal society.

Written by an eighty-year-old author from Haiti who experienced dictatorship, imprisonment, and exile, *La Contrainte de l'inachevé* is narrated by Simon Nodier, a writer-sculptor returning to Haiti to visit his sick aunt and who has to face the ordeal of returning to his homeland after twenty years of exile. Meeting with friends and family, describing how some small details evoke powerful moments of his past, Nodier has to face the fact that, during his exile, he had gradually replaced Haitian reality with old memories and fantasies and has therefore been living in a false representation of the island: his exile has been more temporal than spatial and the Haiti of his childhood is not what it used to be and will most likely never be the same.

In his attempt to deal with his incapacity to reconnect, Nodier finds refuge in his memories and in the writing of a novel fictitiously dealing with his own return to Haiti. Oscillating between exotic moments—a woman being abducted by a voodoo priest—and passages of self-reflection on the nature of exile, Nodier's novel, as a fiction within Phelps's fiction, becomes increasingly confusing: is it Nodier or his character who thinks that the worst kind of exile is the exile of the return, when one realizes that he/she doesn't belong to his/her homeland anymore? Is it Nodier or his fictitious alter ego who doesn't want to assume his heritage and regrets his lost ignorance of Haitian reality? It is only when Nodier goes back to Mexico that we may have a clearer view of his feelings towards his origins. As he produces sculptures from his Haitian experience and even plans to export his collection to Haiti for an exhibition, Nodier seems at peace with his homeland, accepting it at last as part of his identity. Implying that exiles don't truly belong anywhere, and that they are in perpetual alienation wherever they go, the novel seems to propose that one has to choose between an exile from without, through physical displacement and memories; an exile from inside the country itself (i.e. dictatorship); or an exile of return.

"Beastly Horrible French," Hein?

Chantal Bouchard; Luise von Flotow, trans.
Obsessed with Language: A Sociolinguistic History of Quebec. Guernica $30.00

Reviewed by Stefan Dollinger

Obsessed with Language is a historical study of language attitudes towards Quebec French (QFr), aiming to analyze the "collective consciousness" of QFr speakers from 1850 to 1970. It is, despite the subtitle of the English translation, a sociolinguistic history only in the widest sense of the term. The data come exclusively from comments by journalists, literati, and writers of letters to the editor, making this a metalinguistic study that cannot offer insights on the social (sociolinguistic) uses of QFr.

Central to Bouchard's argument are the various movements of Quebec peasants into the cities and their existence as a "dominated people," as laborers of Anglophone business men, which resulted in a collective identity crisis. Bouchard sets out to explain the QFr speaker's linguistic insecurity and discusses a host of phenomena, including the fears for linguistic survival in North America, the portrayal of French as "the guardian of the [Catholic] faith," the fight against English loan words and QFr regionalisms, the separation of QFr from other Canadian French (CFr) varieties, the language laws, the association of bilingualism with French language attrition, and the discussion of the concept of a CFr "patois," a term that was once praised as representing the "pure" language of seventeenth-century France, which was allegedly spoken by the CFr farmer. The latter Romantic notion is in dire need of deconstruction, which is only hinted at. While the chapters on 1910-40 and 1960-70 are most informative, chapter eight, apparently added for the translation, breaks the flow of the book.

The despair of French Canadian commentators over the differences between QFr and French French is another important theme. The label "beastly horrible French," used by an Ontario minister in the pre-World War II period in relation to CFr, illustrates the attitudinal prejudices CFr speakers have had to face. These attitudes, which have improved only fairly recently, are shared, to varying degrees, by French speakers from France, and, perplexingly, by CFr speakers themselves, which is shown in Pierre Trudeau's characterization of CFr as "lousy French." The belief that language change can be reversed to preserve the linguistic ties with France, "one of the most brilliant cultures in the history of mankind," informs much of a truly colonial debate.

Some sociolinguistic concepts would have enriched the book, two of which I can mention. First, despite discussing pluricentric approaches to French, Bouchard's terminology equates the label "standard French"—in violation of the concept—with the French of the elites in France: "standard French French" would be preferable. Second, overt prestige (prestige forms in *public* discourse) and the underlying focus of the book, is at no point discriminated from the prestige of non-standard linguistic varieties (covert prestige). While the study is not designed to investigate the linguistic insecurity of the majority of the language users, there is good reason to hope that Bouchard's volume will serve as a springboard for such work; a function that can only be hampered by a rudimentary table of contents and the lack of an index.

Alberta, Bound

Tim Bowling
The Book Collector. Nightwood $16.95

Weyman Chan
Noise From the Laundry. Talonbooks $15.95

Paulette Dubé
First Mountain. Thistledown $15.95

Erin Knight
The Sweet Fuels. Goose Lane $17.95

Jeanette Lynes
It's Hard Being Queen: The Dusty Springfield Poems. Freehand $16.95

Reviewed by Owen Percy

Edmonton-based Tim Bowling has certainly become the poet laureate of the *poisson* and the sage of the salmon. He begins his latest book with yet "another salmon run to the Fraser River," and, as ever, the salmon are not just salmon, they are "[m]etaphors for the absence of metaphor." Bowling's is a poetry of conflation and interconnection which stresses the oneness of the world, so when "the salmon throb in the chemical flow / and sewage," so do we who generate the sewage. This collection's stronger poems like "Playing Tall Timbers" and "The Book Collector" enact the ability of well-wrought poetry to access hopeful connections between past and present, human and ecosystem, so that the following stanza comes across in absolute seriousness:

> I couldn't get out of bed this morning.
> It isn't what you think,
> not illness or a hangover. Simply,
> I'd become a tributary of the Fraser River
> and the last wild salmon
> had chosen my body in which to dig her redd

The Book Collector's loudest lament is for Edenic youth. It is a search and struggle to recall a childhood innocence in the face of an ever-dawning mortality. Poems like "1972" and "Names" reach backwards to simpler times which the poet tacitly knows to be long gone, imaginary, Romantic. This is a predictable Tim Bowling collection, but one that is hauntingly imagined and deftly crafted. Perhaps the poet describes it best himself when he suggests that "*Nothing is original, only authentic.*"

Weyman Chan's poetry is also one of complicated oneness: *Noise from the Laundry* is a cacophonous collision of Chinese ancestry, Western Canadian life, and the politics of wrestling with language(s) through it all. The speaker of "how could they forget my birthday?" walks through frozen Calgary (where Chan lives) with his father who asks him "*Gong mah't-ah-wah*? / which means, *Speaking what*? / *What are you saying*? Although / the true inflection is more like, // *tell me another story—*." Like *The Book Collector*, this collection is focused on recollecting the fleeting memories of a purer youth, but *Noise* is also haunted by more collective histories as well. Kafka and Marx meet Tu Fu and Li Po, all in the shadow of the Holocaust, the bombing of Hiroshima, the massacre at Nanking, and 9/11. When Chan's typical long lyric lines stutter at the impossibility of telling these stories, we get an articulate disarticulation reminiscent at times of Fred Wah's stylistic troubling of meaning. In its joy of language, *Noise from the Laundry* is "the best uncertainty," and although it is occasionally uncertain of itself, it exults in admitting that "all that's left to join substance with shadow / is the art of reading."

Paulette Dubé's *First Mountain* lyrically chronicles 183 "days" in the mountains surrounding Jasper, where the poet has made her home for nearly fifteen years. Varying in length and style (from Confucian nuggets like "a thorn of experience is worth a wilderness of warning" and "if you are still / pushing against the wall when / it falls, so will you," to recipes, instruction manuals, and prayers), these poems are the culmination of a sustained engagement with the

majesty of place. In "One hundred-seventy-eighth day," for example, Dubé writes that the "peppery smell of leaves" is a "small miracle that / doesn't compare with castles, museums or mosques / with cafés, operas or running the bulls in Pamplona // like that stone, there / I am content to be where I am." The aesthetic of *First Mountain* is predominantly Romantic, and the book becomes a poetic sequence full of unabashedly personified nature: dancing wind, smiling stones, and laughing creeks. Imbued with a degree of Aboriginal sensibility (Coyote, Raven, and the Creator make repeated appearances), it is also where the physically and spiritually injured retreat in order to heal. The speaker suggests that "the heart must be broken / to accept big love," and this collection finds that love in its mountains.

It is not often that one wholeheartedly agrees with back-cover copy for a new book of poems, but one might hardly say it better than Goose Lane does of *The Sweet Fuels*: "With a supple, meditative approach, Erin Knight explores the complexity of transformation in her astonishing first collection." Knight's verse is preoccupied with travel, thirst, and translation, and with the inextricability of the specific from the universal. A lyric poet with a penchant for the sonnet, the Edmonton native's distinctive syntax and diction disorient meaning as much as they ground it, resulting in a reading experience with the ability to alter one's sense of equilibrium and hierarchy. The poet's translations of Spanish verse into English (or, in the case of "Milagro por el nevado in Three Translations," English to Spanish and back again) expose the fickle nature of both language and memory and suggest the possibilities behind realizing that "we haven't expected enough / of the silent letters in our language." Knight's speakers weather prairie chinooks and shortness of breath in the Peruvian Andes, all the while remaining engaged in assessing the connections in the world around them. The book bears all of the excitement and originality of a debut while harbouring notably few of a first book's common infelicities such as unevenness or inconsistency of voice. Contemplative and self-deprecating (see the book's first poem in which the poet second-guesses her opening lines: "Did I really say *end of a healing?*"), these poems exude a comfortable confidence which mark Knight as a poet to read now and to watch in years to come.

Maritimer Jeanette Lynes' connection to Alberta is immediately less evident, but as a member of upstart Calgary publisher Freehand Books' inaugural lineup, *It's Hard Being Queen* dons its white Stetson by default. Here, Lynes joins the pantheon of contemporary poets recently concerned with what has become a generic staple of CanLit: the poetic biography. These poems reimagine the life of British soul icon Dusty Springfield and gracefully raise her up to stand alongside Ondaatje's Billy the Kid, Atwood's Susanna Moodie, MacEwen's T.E. Lawrence, and Steven Price's Harry Houdini. Springfield's rise to stardom, her struggles with depression, her destructive tendencies, her ambiguous sexuality, and her golden voice—"A breath breathing a breath breathing a breath"—make her story fertile ground for the true lies of poetry. Lynes gives us a Springfield who rarely speaks in her own voice, but who is, as she often was, constructed by others. Her "lost years" see her struggling against Aerosmith and the advent of production technologies she can't appreciate ("A machine beating a drum, a monkey typing / Shakespeare, why not?"). Like *The Book Collector* and *Noise from the Laundry*, this is a meditation on identity, and it strikes a similar elegiac chord for an imagined moment when life and self seemed rather more concrete: Springfield is "pretty sure / she was, in a previous life, authentic. Like America. / Float down a river, find something real." This is a rare book in which nary a word

seems out of place, and in which every poem contains a line demanding to be re-read for its sheer shocking appropriateness. It is indeed as if each poem becomes the answer to a question you hadn't known you wanted to ask. So long live the Queen.

In and Out of the Wild

Tim Bowling
The Lost Coast: Salmon, Memory and the Death of Wild Culture. Nightwood $29.95

Michelle Benjamin, ed.
A Passion for this Earth: Writers, Scientists & Activists Explore Our Relationship with Nature & the Environment. Greystone $21.00

Reviewed by Nicholas Bradley

Near the end of *The Lost Coast*, Tim Bowling proposes that the "Shakespearean" world, now vanished, of the fishing community of Ladner, BC, "deserves, at the very least, a final turn on the stage." Bowling's book, a memoir of a childhood during the ostensibly remote 1960s and '70s, plays the demise of this world as tragedy. Moreover, it suggests that tragedy might be the fate of all of the coastal resource communities of which Ladner is an example. The salmon, Bowling writes, "can look forward with one eye, backward with the other, simultaneously!" He attempts in *The Lost Coast* to look into the past and into the future at once, like Janus, like the salmon, in order to lament the loss of his father's way of life and to warn of the cultural cost of the collapse of the Fraser River fishery. *The Lost Coast* also serves as a prose companion to Bowling's fine collections of poetry, especially his book of elegies, *The Witness Ghost* (2003), which treats much the same material as this volume.

One of the strongest aspects of the book, in my opinion, is Bowling's modulation of his often sentimental tone with a reluctance to view environmental crisis as a solely contemporary phenomenon. Although he writes nostalgically (and unapologetically so) about his father's generation of fishermen, he condemns fiercely the long history of greed and the lack of foresight in BC's resource industries: "It is the worst kind of falsehood," he declares, "to believe that the movers and shakers of the nineteenth century aren't the ancestors of today's most rapacious capitalists." *The Lost Coast* never lapses into jeremiad, but Bowling's contempt for our lack of ecological regard is withering: "everyone is complicit in the disrespect we show the earth by the manner in which we have structured our lives." His reflection on his past leads to a demand for change: "We have no choice: we must turn and face our lives if we are going to make it, if we are going to give successive generations a chance." Yet his convictions are muted by an awareness that earlier writers have made pleas that went largely unheeded: "Robinson Jeffers, the California poet, saw all this sixty years ago as he watched his Carmel paradise get overrun with 'civilization' . . . The critics turned against him, his readers abandoned him, and he died from that most fatal of poisons and wildest of elixirs, the truth." The salmon, then, is perhaps less like Janus than like Cassandra.

The Lost Coast, generally highly praised by reviewers, has been criticized by Terry Glavin for its fictional qualities. Put briefly, Bowling writes about his childhood and his family with impossible accuracy, representing events and dialogue with a novelist's license. Glavin has also suggested that the salmon that return to the Fraser are, today, not nearly so imperiled as Bowling indicates. I am not able, here, to judge the veracity of Bowling's book (which has none of the apparatus of a scholarly work), but perhaps a useful way of approaching *The Lost Coast* is to view it primarily as a work of memory and imagination. Bowling's vision, forcefully expressed, is compelling even as an individual response to ecological

change. Alternate accounts might modify his version, and should be welcomed, but the implications of his book will remain important.

Like *The Lost Coast*, *A Passion for this Earth* is highly nostalgic. The collection of essays addresses environmental topics that bear upon the scientific and activist work of David Suzuki. In his foreword, Bill McKibben contends that "There's really no one on Earth quite like David Suzuki, and this volume illustrates why." The final three of the seventeen essays are personal reminiscences about Suzuki himself; their authors further assert Suzuki's singularity. For example, John Lucchesi, a distinguished geneticist, describes his stint in Suzuki's lab at the University of British Columbia in 1967 as "one of the great professional and personal experiences of my career." It was, after all, the Summer of Love: "we ate together, fished together, camped together, listened to the Animals, the Beatles, Credence Clearwater Revival, Gordon Lightfoot, the Mamas and the Papas (sure, we smoked some weed together, but of course we never inhaled!)." Yet the anthology lacks a clear focus and fails to provide a rigorous discussion of environmental problems. Ronald Wright's chilling essay on Easter Island, a parable of ecological collapse, is more effective as it appears in *A Short History of Progress* (2004), from which the present version is adapted and in which Wright demonstrates that the catastrophe of Easter Island is but one way for a society to destroy itself. In "My Credo," Helen Caldicott, physician and antinuclear advocate, describes her beliefs on political and spiritual matters; her essay is intended as a rejoinder to the perception that environmentalism is deeply pessimistic. She writes, for example, of her love of classical music: "Beautiful music could unite all peoples on Earth and inspire them to commit their lives to saving the Earth for their children, their grandchildren, and all their descendents." And yet, two centuries after Haydn and Mozart, the global environmental prognosis, as Suzuki himself suggests, is grim indeed. As McKibben notes, "it looks as if we're entering a period of enormous stress, whose outcome is by no means assured." If this is indeed the case, we need a more discerning vision than this book provides.

Potential Energy

Joseph Boyden
Born With A Tooth. Comorant $20.00

Saleema Nawaz
Mother Superior. Freehand $23.95

Reviewed by Duffy Roberts

While it is odd to be reviewing Joseph Boyden's short story collection, *Born With A Tooth*, in 2009, some eight years after first publication, the reissuing of the collection allows a contemporary retrospective on Boyden's recent critical acclaim for *Three Day Road* and *Through Black Spruce*. While *Born With A Tooth* is an uneven collection (which might very well be true of many short-story collections), Boyden has a uniquely wonderful voice and the collection has so much potential energy that Boyden's recent kinetic, novelistic success comes as no surprise. And while the subjects of bingo and alcohol (and alcoholism) and rez life and competing conceptual models of the universe (Christian and Native, Capitalist and Not) are not new, Boyden strikes an accessible, unique, and nuanced tone when writing of them: loss, celebration, nostalgia, irony, and resolve all coalesce into a definitive wisdom.

I think "Painted Tongue" to be the collection's born-with-a-tooth: only one in every two thousand children is born with a tooth, and the same odds apply to the number of resonant stories out of nearly as many short stories. Painted Tongue, the character of "Painted Tongue," is a little off, and wants to

say so much, but the saying only ever comes out as a *hum* on his lips, and in the rhythm of his walk, and in the rock he sits on and calls home, and in the quiet inspired by the substances he uses. The story reads like a drum beat: slow to fast, silent to cacophonous—insight to introspection, protest to inquest.

I like that story. I also think the final four stories of the collection are strong. Each one is narrated by a different character about the same loss (although *what* is lost depends on which character you ask). Not only does this closing sequence add to a rich tradition of Canadian short-story cycles/sequences, but it demonstrates that, more often than not, dialogue happens when monologues collide, if only in the mind of a more wise reader.

In the final story of Saleema Nawaz's *Mother Superior*, "The White Dress"—which won the inaugural Robert Kroetsch Award for Best Creative Thesis at the University of Manitoba—the child narrator, Shay, can make her abrasive, arrogant, and shitty friend, Mim, "interested enough in [any] story" because Shay knows what kinds of stories "appeal to [Mim]: anything with a young female heroine who suffered terribly." The irony here—ironic because Nawaz seems to criticize Mim-ean audiences or readers—is that that's how *Mother Superior* reads: stories about bulimia, avant-garde artists, abortion (or not), failed love and inadequate men (including domestic abuse), drugs, dead children, or about "young female heroine[s] who suffer terribly."

I am conflicted in my response to *Mother Superior*. It is well-written; the characters are developed; I have the utmost respect for Robert Kroetsch, as well as Neil Smith and Warren Cariou (dust-jacket praisers); I think short stories valuable and champion their publication. But I can't get past the clichéd, angst-driven subject matter in stories such as "Scar Tissue" and "The Beater," get past the characters one expects to see on soap operas and *Gossip Girl*, characters like Georgia and Daniel *and* Holly *and* Lisa *and* Will in "The Republic of Rose Island," get past that I know the outcome of the plot pages before its dénouement, and get past the fact that the stories aren't that exciting.

I'm willing to admit that this collection isn't for me. I like a little more of the unexpected in my prose. I am also willing to admit that Nawaz's collection is a collection for the times, times with popular media inundated with conversations about drugs, inadequate men, obesity, bulimia. My concern is that the plot and character choices of certain stories dictate what type of story *is written*, stories that lack imagination. A story that features a bulimic character, or abortion for that matter, may always contain themes of loss and failure—but a story that contains loss and failure need not have a bulimic in it. I'm not asking that all short stories "instruct and delight," but I am asking that I leave a story, and a short-story collection, wiser (somehow) than when I began (Lisa Moore's metaphors are wise, Neil Smith's plot, character, and stylistic choices are wise, Jack Hodgins' odd neighbors are wise, and Madeleine Thien's *Simple Recipes* doesn't contain that much wisdom, for similar reasons as *Mother Superior*).

"Bloodlines," a story about, as the back cover suggests, "the daughters of a Montreal bagel shop owner navigat[ing] the tricky terrain of being young, Sikh, and female," holds promise, but not for the predictable direction it takes or where it winds up. When I think of a Sikh-owned Montreal bagel shop I get excited by the tension, the potential; when the story ends up with anorexia nervosa (escalating into bulimia) and obesity, I'm disappointed by the lack of unique, imaginative, and exciting choices that could have been made for the story, but were not.

Mother Superior winds up being, at least for this reader, an exercise in potential.

Fédéralisme asymétrique et minorités linguistiques

Linda Cardinal

Le fédéralisme asymétrique et les minorités linguistiques et nationales. Prise de parole 39,95 $

Compte rendu par Pierre Senay

Avec cet ouvrage, Linda Cardinal réussit un tour de force, intéresser à un sujet de prime abord austère. Les auteurs auxquels elle a fait appel apportent un éclairage vivant au fédéralisme, mode de gouvernance touchant quarante pour-cent de la population mondiale, et à son application pratique aux minorités linguistiques.

L'ouvrage couvre le sujet largement, traitant des fondements et définitions, de l'asymétrie et des droits linguistiques, des minorités francophones au Canada, et de leur relation avec le Québec; une quatrième section rassemble des interventions d'éminents acteurs de la scène politique canadienne.

Le fédéralisme asymétrique est d'abord démystifié par la description, la comparaison et l'exploration. Une connaissance de l'application de l'asymétrie à divers régimes fédéraux contribue à en relativiser les effets, permettant de mieux comprendre son utilité, et son importance.

La problématique des langues est ensuite décrite sous divers angles. Un premier article de cette section par Linda Cardinal et Anne-Andrée Denault met en place les enjeux d'une manière étoffée en dressant un portrait de l'incidence de la mondialisation sur les langues minoritaires avant d'examiner les régimes linguistiques canadien et québécois; les notions de langue publique, langue publique commune, langue culturelle, langue de communication, langue comme élément constituant de l'identité, et de langue de pouvoir y sont explorées. Suivent deux articles ancrés dans la réalité québécoise et présentant la situation linguistique vue de deux points de vue différents. Enfin, un quatrième article nous fait découvrir la situation des langues minoritaires en Italie, réalité ignorée de la majorité des Canadiens, ce qui nous permet de relativiser les débats de majoritaires.

Dans la troisième section, on expose les droits des minorités francophones au Canada. Cette section fait appel à l'angle constitutionnel, à la vision de la situation à partir du Québec et à partir des communautés francophones et acadiennes, et enfin explore le regard néolibéral de l'École de Calgary sur la Charte des droits et libertés. Les articles de cette section sont particulièrement intéressants, notamment celui de Rodrigue Landry qui propose un cadre conceptuel et des principes de revitalisation ethnolangagière du processus d'aménagement linguistique.

Dans la dernière section de l'ouvrage, des interventions nous permettent de faire le point et de dégager des pistes à suivre pour l'avenir. On y retrouve notamment un article de feu Gérald-A. Beaudoin qui souligne l'évolution de la protection des minorités au Canada, relevant notamment la différence fondamentale entre l'article 93 de la Constitution et l'article 23 de la Charte, et le fait que la Constitution n'est pas figée mais qu'elle évolue.

Enfin, Benoît Pelletier clôt l'ouvrage avec un article sur la manière dont l'asymétrie peut servir pour répondre aux défis de la diversité. Son point de vue de constitutionaliste et d'homme politique est à la fois étoffé et pragmatique. Posant l'équité comme la véritable raison d'être de l'asymétrie, et les limites à l'égalité formelle dans la poursuite d'une véritable justice, il propose l'asymétrie comme un principe à la fois rassembleur et porteur d'avenir.

Un ouvrage recommandé pour bien cerner la situation des minorités linguistiques au Canada.

The Unbearable Lightness of Being

Andrew Cohen
The Unfinished Canadian: The People We Are. McClelland and Stewart $29.99

Reviewed by Karin Ikas

To this day, the contours of Canadian identity are only vaguely defined. This gives rise to myriad—and often quite controversial—debates about what is a Canadian and what constitutes Canadian identity. In *The Unfinished Canadian: The People We Are* Andrew Cohen goes as far as to ascertain that even 140 years after the foundation of the Canadian nation "[p]ondering ourselves is the occupational hazard of being Canadian."

Like his former book *While Canada Slept: How We Lost Our Place in the World*—an award-winning lament of the aimlessness of Canadian foreign policy after World War II — Cohen's *The Unfinished Canadian* has all it takes to be a bestselling book. It is an intriguing, easily readable, and entertaining book, full of colourful imagery and metaphors, and hence attractive for a general Canadian and a broader international readership alike interested in better knowing Canadians.

Cohen's effort to paint "in broad brush rather than short strokes" the character of Canadians is enticing at first sight. This relates especially to his ambitious project to break down the more than "32,146,547 [and more] different things . . . a Canadian is," according to *The Globe and Mail* columnist Roy MacGregor, into a subdivided Unfinished Canadian character. The Unfinished Canadian, Cohen admonishes us, is a composition of "The Hybrid Canadian," "The Observed Canadian," "The Unconscious Canadian," "The American Canadian," "The Casual Canadian," "The Capital Canadian"—who trumpets "Ottawa as the kingdom of the imagination"—"The Chameleon Canadian," and "The Future Canadian." At close hindsight, however, the book does not go much beyond what Cohen himself calls an "unscientific, selective and subjective" study in character. What makes it particularly unsatisfactory, especially in its research outcome and in its usability for scholarly and teaching purposes, is Cohen's peculiar way of proceeding, most of all, his not giving any documentary proof for the numerous and often very apt interspersed quotations, statistics, and other data. For a journalist striving to release another bestseller this might be pardonable. Yet for a professor like Cohen who avowedly sees himself committed to contributing his mite to make the contours of the never-ending identity issue in Canada clearer, this unbearable lightness of being involved in the Canadian identity debate is an indefensible procedure.

These major flaws apart, in terms of content, the book provides some valuable food for thought. We learn, for instance, that Yann Martel "calls Canada the greatest hotel on earth". This is not only because "[Canada] welcomes people from everywhere" as Martel himself argued, but also, as Cohen explains, because in Canada where "some thirty per cent of immigrants are thought to return home after getting citizenship . . . no one wants to make an extended commitment." Therefore, everyone is rather "a visitor" in hotel Canada and a hotel "is impermanence, by its very nature the most tenuous of loyalties."

Finally yet importantly, in the concluding chapter entitled "The Future Canadian," Cohen rightly cautions us that disintegration is among the major challenges for Canada to meet while advancing further into the global era of the twenty-first century. In his words: "the threats to Canada in the next half century will come not from the United States, which won't absorb Canada, or Quebec, which won't leave Canada. . . . Most likely, the threats to Canada will come

from immigration and decentralization." He continues, "The second threat will be the quiet devolution. . . . If unchecked, devolution will balkanize Canada, transferring powers to the provinces and turning the Parliament Buildings into a tourist attraction."

The enormous challenge and task ahead for contemporary and "Future Canadian[s]" to provide for a shared bright and sustainable future is therefore, as Cohen concludes, "to summon the strength to imagine a country with a clearer idea of itself, a reason to exist at home and abroad, a *projet de société.* A country. Not a cliché, as some would have it. One that believes in itself and has a purpose for itself. A country in more than name." Such a conclusion sounds depressingly familiar as it causes us inevitably to plunge into the deep and vast ocean of the Canadian identity debate all over again.

Love and Liminality

Méira Cook

Writing Lovers: Reading Canadian Love Poetry by Women. McGill-Queen's UP $80.00

Verna Reid

Women Between: Construction of Self in the Work of Sharon Butala, Aganetha Dyck, Mary Meigs, and Mary Pratt. U of Calgary P $39.95

Reviewed by Linda Quirk

Writing Lovers and *Women Between* are ambitious books that employ a wide range of theoretical approaches to a disparate collection of texts. Both Méira Cook and Verna Reid self-consciously acknowledge their own personal position in relation to their textual subjects as a way to account for structures which are far from organic. Cook performs her own romantic sensibility by figuring herself as a lover whose infatuation drew her into an exploration of an idiosyncratic selection of Canadian love poetry in an attempt to "articulate a language of love." Reid deconstructs and reconstructs her own identity along with the identities of a divergent collection of visual artists and writers whose autobiographical "art practice" is examined as a way to gain insight into a generation of women who "occupy a liminal space between the modernist world of their mothers and the postmodernist world of their female descendants." In their explorations of feminine subjectivities, Cook and Reid are themselves both subject and object, entirely engaged and engaging.

Women Between explores the practice of autobiographically-based art, literary or visual or both, of a group of senior Canadian women. It explores the still-life painting of Mary Pratt, much of which focuses on "the effects of light reflecting on the familiar objects found around the home," and the autobiographical writings through which artist Mary Meigs came to terms with her lesbian identity late in life. It explores the implications of Aganetha Dyck's remarkable collaborative work with bees and beekeepers, in which she induces bees to embellish art objects with honeycomb, and the ways in which Sharon Butala's fiction and life writing portray her increasingly intimate relationship with the natural world as a spiritual journey. Frequently reading against the texts and reading life writing as well as fictional and visual forms as autobiographical, Reid supplements such readings with extensive interviews and relies on a range of theorists (from sociologists to theologians to literary critics) to develop a highly structured portrait of shifting personal identities. Reid speaks with authority about a specific generation of women, a generation whose very liminality—caught between the domestic world of their mothers and the professional world of their daughters—opens up a special creative space.

Given the varied media under discussion and the wide range of theoretical approaches that she employs, Reid has produced a narrative which is unexpectedly readable. Those who are not well-versed in

theoretical approaches to life writing or to visual art will find that Reid offers an accessible point of entry. Although she writes about a group of women who express themselves through a variety of visual and written generic forms, Reid has created a highly unified portrait of a group of artists and writers who "model a different scenario from that ordinarily assigned in our society to older women because, instead of playing a diminished social role as expected, they continued to pursue a vital art practice into the sixth, seventh, and, in Meigs' case, eighth decades of their lives." In this fascinating book, both the author and her subjects offer mature women an imaginative vision of the possibilities for self-determination.

Writing Lovers is less conclusive. Indeed, Cook acknowledges it as an inevitability that her "exploration of borders, passion, and metaphor led to the realization that love, or at least the event of love in writing, is an impossible, inescapable, and absolutely ambiguous event that exceeds all categories of expression and signification while at the same time attempting—ceaselessly, repeatedly, ardently—to articulate itself." This beautifully written book, which is as much a celebration of language as it is of love, is densely theoretical and at the same time surprisingly fresh.

Imagined as "a series of excursions," *Writing Lovers* offers chapter-length readings which treat Kristjana Gunnar's *The Prowler* and Elizabeth Smart's *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* not as novels but as long poems. Cook explores Dionne Brand's "significant, honest, necessary" poetry; she contemplates the absence of the beloved in Dorothy Livesay's "The Unquiet Bed," Kristjana Gunnar's *Carnival of Longing,* and Nicole Markotic's "No Goodbye, Just:"; and she ponders the mourning and the healing at the heart of Louise Bernice Halfe's *Blue Marrow* as well as the shifting and porous boundaries in Daphne Marlatt's *Touch to My Tongue*.

Insightful, complex, and learned, this book stands as a love letter to a group of poets who "have written about love, written off love, been written by the effects of love, written for and against and towards love, written to and beyond the lover, written over and been overwritten by a discourse that continues—joyously, bitterly, gently, maliciously, ardently, adjectivally—to confound writing."

From Blood to Ideas

Dennis Cooley; Nicole Markotic, ed.
By Word of Mouth: The Poetry of Dennis Cooley. Wilfrid Laurier UP $14.95

M. Travis Lane; Jeanette Lynes, ed.
The Crisp Day Closing on My Hand: The Poetry of M. Travis Lane. Wilfrid Laurier UP $14.95

Louis Dudek; Karis Shearer, ed.
All These Roads: The Poetry of Louis Dudek. Wilfrid Laurier UP $14.95

Reviewed by Michael Roberson

In the Foreword to the books in the Laurier Poetry Series (LPS), General Editor Neil Besner writes that the intention of the series is to "help create and sustain the larger readership that contemporary Canadian poetry so richly deserves." The format of each text is therefore based on a selection of "thirty-five poems from across a poet's career" chosen by a critic who also writes "an engaging, accessible introduction" to which is added an Afterword by the poet (if still living). Besner and the LPS deserve acknowledgement for making and taking such a smart opportunity. Bracketing the selections with a critic's introduction and the poet's reflection offers readers important reminders that beyond being simply texts susceptible to criticism, poems are expressions from the hearts and minds of people. In the selections of work by Dennis Cooley, Louis Dudek and M. Travis Lane, three under-anthologized poets, their respective editors do much to create the appropriate

contexts whereby new and familiar readers can look more closely and feel more in touch.

Nicole Markotic's *By Word of Mouth: The Poetry of Dennis Cooley* is the second and most recent selection of work by Cooley; the first was *sunfire* (Anansi) in 1996. Despite including work published after 1996, this book minutely overlaps poems collected in *sunfire*. One explanation for this is that while Markotic, a poet herself, capitalizes on the playful spirit in Cooley's work in her poetic-cum-academic introduction, she astutely draws much attention to the body, particularly its blood, using the corporeal as the touchstone for most of her choices. Boldly, her epigraph comes from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Cooley, she coyly notes, defies "sanguinity" and refuses "sanguinarity" and this clearly shows in the first poem of the selection, "A Poem for You, Leaving Winnipeg," where pathos and solemnity add up over the broken and uneven lines of the ledger-like poem. Solemnity, however, is not Cooley's only mode of defiance in the face of sanguinity. His lineation employed or deployed enables a consistent cadence in the work which anxiously defies the pressures of time and age by pushing the reader through. In fact, some of the most cheeky and pleasurable pieces, "moon musings" or "jack's dictionary of cunning linguists," are list poems which, through a succession of quips, simultaneously remind the reader of life's seriousness and reinvigorate the reader with humour. The moon, Cooley muses, is both "a cancerous lung" and "an eye of a cat open in sleep / death" but also "a pimple on ms. cynthia harpers bum" and "an Amazons nipple playing me for a sucker & me just trying to keep abreast of current affairs." Literal bodies exist in these examples; rhetorically, however, punning forces readers to be conscious of the material quality of language, elsewhere reinforced by Cooley's considerable use of alliteration and homonyms/homophonics.

Unlike Cooley's embodied and cadenced poetics, the poetry of M. Travis Lane forces attention outward into the natural world where the language evokes concrete imagery in lines which hang, sometimes like winter branches, stark and simple, or like spring boughs, full and engorged. "Walking Under the Nebulae" begins, for example, with the line "From my thumb in the hole in my pocket" and moves quickly to a flood of images: "a cold hole flocked with gossamer, / goose-quill electrons, spiral snails / of geologic colloids, gas." The poems collected in *The Crisp Day Closing on My Hand* owe something of their construction to the same mouthable material as Cooley, but in Lane the reader tends to hesitate at the end of lines, captured by the images—their clarity and resonance. Lane's poems defer to what she calls in a poem of the same name "the weight of the real." Jeanette Lynes, editor of the selection, rightly characterizes these poems as "bearing witness to the tenacious presence of the natural world." As Lynes suggests, and as is obvious from her fine selections, Lane's poems balance attention to writing and to the natural world: "Each pencil mark's a fiddlehead / unfolding to an island of wild fern."

Contrasted to the poetry of Dennis Cooley and M. Travis Lane, selections in *All These Roads: The Poetry of Louis Dudek* engage the material or imagistic dimensions of poetry less than what editor Karis Shearer calls a "poetry of ideas." Shearer divides the book into three sections: "On Poetry and Profession," "Dedications and Intertexts," and "Long Poems" in order to facilitate the central tenets in her solidly "engaging, accessible introduction." Shearer posits that Dudek's signficance as a poet arises from his poetic-based criticism and his position as an educator, editor, publisher, and correspondent. Shearer also suggests that Dudek's first major long poem *Europe* helps inaugurate a long-poem tradition in

Canada which foregoes narrative in favour of more formal innovation. Like the poems chosen for *The Crisp Day Closing on My Hand*, most poems in *All These Roads* exude a reflexivity about poetry itself or the worlds Dudek's poet-peers traverse, but they hardly reach past the knowledge of intellectual work. At best, we get a poem like "Line and Form" in which the reflexive connotation of the title is deferred; instead we get an invocative meditation on the beauty of poetry: "the moving principle and the natural limits imposed / work against each other, / give in, and resist."

Popular Postmodernism

Andrew Davidson

Gargoyle. Random House $32.95

Reviewed by Brandon McFarlane

Andrew Davidson's *Gargoyle*, his first novel, rejoices in storytelling's excesses. The text shares many similarities with Yann Martel's *Life of Pi*—a narrator forwards an unreliable protagonist's story, a constant questioning of the tale's truth, a complementary investigation of religious beliefs, and a tendency towards verbosity. The postmodern narrative structure and motifs destabilizing the boundaries between story, belief, and truth are becoming increasingly trite; *Gargoyle*'s individuality originates entirely from the novel's characters and plot. A cocaine-addicted pornographer crashes his car, burning the majority of his body. During his lengthy hospitalization he meets Marianne Engel—a psychotic patient who claims the two were lovers in medieval Germany. The beautiful seven-hundred-year-old's romantic tales woo the cynical narrator, whose monstrous body now mirrors his grotesque soul. Marianne's quest is to gain the man's love so that she will finally be able to end her centuries-long life. The burn victim writes *Gargoyle* as a tribute to his deceased lover.

In writing a text with two narrators, Davidson strategically peppers the pornographer's vocabulary with excessive vulgarities to create a distinct difference between his and Marianne's chapters. The former's writing is self-referential, colloquial, and pensive while Engel's narration mimics the prose style of children's fairytales and contains healthy doses of medieval German, Italian, Icelandic, and Japanese. The contrast is quite humorous. For example, the narrator introduces a hated art dealer as "an anthropomorphized butterball turkey, cast as a lead character in a Raymond Chandler novel." Ten pages later, Marianne's subsequent chapter begins, "Long ago in old Japan, a girl named Sei was born to a glassblower named Yakichi. At first her father was disappointed that she was not a son, but his disappointment ended the second that he held her." The narrator's diction becomes a trail marking his progress towards redemption. As Marianne's stories increasingly enamour the modern cynic, his lexicon correspondingly matures.

Manic overindulgence is the novel's primary theme. The narrator's drug addictions parallel Marianne's obsessive devotion to her art: after a medieval near-death experience she is returned to Earth with too many hearts. She transfers these hearts to the stone gargoyles that she carves and brings to life. The practice, however, is physically destructive; she cannot sculpt until her three imaginary masters command her and launch her into insane week-long carving binges. The episodes climax with her hospitalization for exhaustion and starvation. Marianne's tales also star characters who perform extreme bodily sacrifices for their lovers. While all the characters' deeds are saturated with sin, *Gargoyle* argues they will all be excused in the afterlife because the actions were motivated by true love. If it were not for the narrator's potty mouth and troubling past, the clichéd romance would be unbearable.

Gargoyle's devotion to extravagance is questionably reflected in the novel's formal choices. An extended description, about sixty pages, of the narrator's car accident and burning flesh opens the book. The passage uses a combination of vivid imagery and encyclopedic asides to explain the more scientific and technical aspects of the injury. The section is actually the novel's weakest due to its reliance on tired postmodern devices. The narrator interrupts a description of broiled flesh with this self-reflexive consideration of the novel's opening: "I have no idea whether beginning with my accident was the best decision, as I've never written a book before. Truth be told, I started with the crash because I wanted to catch your interest and drag you into the story. You're still reading so it seem[s] to have worked." Similarly, Davidson continually explains medical facts and procedures. The device heightens the narrator's authority, especially in regard to his later research into Marianne's claims about medieval Germany. The narrative excess, particularly the many page-long catalogues of a meal's content, may bother some readers. Davidson is a talented writer, but his style and form are too similar to older "best-selling" postmodernist works such as *Life of Pi*, Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, and Salman Rushdie's magical realism.

Pressing Concerns

Michael deBeyer, Kate Kennedy, and Andrew Steeves, eds.
Gaspereau Gloriatur: Liber Beati Anni Decimi. Volume II: Prose. Gaspereau $27.95

Robert Bringhurst
Everywhere Being Is Dancing: Twenty Pieces of Thinking. Gaspereau $31.95

Reviewed by Nicholas Bradley

Gaspereau Gloriatur is an occasional book, an anthology intended to celebrate, as the title page trumpets, "the decadian accomplishments of Gaspereau Press," the publishing house run by Gary Dunfield and Andrew Steeves in Kentville, Nova Scotia. Such a collection risks appealing only to a small audience—most readers, one might think, are more interested in books *qua* books than in the house that publishes them. Yet the anthology, beyond the pleasures of its contents, serves at least three important functions. It reminds its readers of the vital role that small presses play by publishing works that, for formal or topical reasons, would not be at home on the lists of the major firms. It also makes the case for books as well-made things; Gaspereau's books, perennially successful at the Alcuin Society Awards, are acclaimed for their typographic excellence and their tasteful design. And *Gaspereau Gloriatur* suggests significant connections among the works of some of the most noted contemporary Canadian authors.

The book contains, in addition to Dunfield's introduction, selections from eighteen authors and from twenty-three books. The editors have organized the contents alphabetically according to the authors' surnames, but other groupings suggest themselves. Perhaps the most obvious division is between fiction (for example, excerpts from novels by Tim Bowling, Jonathan Campbell, and Sean Johnston, and stories by Carol Bruneau and Larry Lynch) and non-fiction (including essays by Robert Bringhurst, Don McKay, and Peter Sanger, a memoir by Harrison Wright, and a bibliophile cyclist's paean to reading and riding, by Kent Thompson). But the book equally features writers from Atlantic Canada (Bruneau, Campbell, Susan Haley, Glen Hancock, and others) and writers from elsewhere, including John Ralston Saul, John Terpstra, and Thomas Wharton. This eclecticism makes *Gaspereau Gloriatur* particularly enjoyable.

But the most salient aspect of the miscellany is, I think, its recurring attention to the meeting of poetry, philosophy, and ecology.

Gaspereau has regularly published works by poets with ecological and philosophical leanings: notable collections of poetry by Bringhurst, McKay, Jan Zwicky, Bowling, and Sanger have been accompanied by several volumes of essays, chiefly about poetics, and of literary philosophy. Gaspereau's roster includes other distinguished writers, certainly, but the extent to which a continuing, multi-generic literary conversation has been made possible by the press becomes apparent in *Gaspereau Gloriatur*.

Its variety of writers, genres, and approaches makes the anthology thoroughly agreeable to read, although it is hard to forget, because of this variety, the book's celebratory *raison d'être* and its consequently wide scope. To whom will the book appeal? Dedicated readers of Bowling, Bringhurst, McKay, *et al.*, will want these authors' individual volumes. But the collection is valuable as a Gaspereau primer, or *aide-mémoire*. In his introduction, Dunfield describes his ambitions for the volume: "As you read these excerpts, I hope that they will lead you back to the original books, and that those books in turn will lead you on to other books, and from there others still." *Gaspereau Gloriatur* had exactly that happy effect on me.

Bringhurst's *Everywhere Being Is Dancing* is also a medley, although the book is unified by its predominant concerns with cultural and biological diversity, by its exacting ethical sense, and by its author's elegant prose style. As poet, translator, and typographer, Bringhurst has enjoyed considerable esteem. *Everywhere Being Is Dancing* collects his essays on language, poetics, philosophy, and Indigenous literatures, all of which bear on the principal theme: "to find out where we live, and how to live there." In his foreword, Bringhurst explains the book's relation to its companion volume, *The Tree of Meaning* (2006): "Everything in that book was written to be spoken; nearly everything in this one was written to be read." The rest of this opening paragraph establishes one of the book's guiding ideas: "Speaking and writing are just as different, just as easily confused—and can, I think, be just as complementary—as breathing through the feet and breathing through the hands—or playing the lute and dancing." Much of what follows is devoted to asserting the importance of the world's oral literatures, often neglected and misunderstood.

The collection includes essays that will likely be familiar to devotees of Bringhurst's writing—such as his contributions to *Poetry and Knowing* and *Thinking and Singing*, two collections edited by Tim Lilburn—as well as others that are probably unknown to most readers, including some from Italian publications and from books with highly specialized audiences. The value of *Everywhere Being Is Dancing* thus partly consists in its making available otherwise obscure works. In addition, the context of a single volume lends the essays coherence and gravity, where once they might have seemed incidental or, in the case of chapbooks and broadsides, ephemeral. Bringhurst's entry on "Mythology" in W.H. New's *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada* (2002), here retitled "The Meaning of Mythology," and the foreword to a new edition of Gary Snyder's *He Who Hunted Birds in His Father's Village* (1979, 2007), here given the title "Jumping from the Train: How and Why to Read a Work of Haida Oral Literature," are especially notable in this regard.

Bringhurst's essays are undeniably provocative. The range and depth of his knowledge compels less erudite readers to turn—to quote Dunfield again—"to other books, and from there others still." And his vision of the "perfect critic" might be taken by readers of this journal as an unsettling indication of the form to which literary studies in Canada might aspire: "The truly perfect critic would know the flora and fauna no less well than

the books, and would be fluent in fifty or sixty ancestral languages indigenous to the coast . . . None of us, of course, is going to come close. But each of us could try to do our share." Bringhurst here is writing about the Northwest Coast, but his point pertains to other places, too, and as a result, his essays demand to be read by everyone concerned with the fate of the humanities in the New World.

Sweetly, Sourly Canadian

Anthony De Sa
Barnacle Love. Anchor $18.95

Brian Tucker
Big White Knuckles. Vagrant $17.95

Reviewed by J.C. Peters

Barnacle Love by Anthony De Sa and *Big White Knuckles* by Brian Tucker are both joyfully, if painfully, Canadian stories. Both follow a sensitive young man struggling between emulating and rejecting his father's influence and an older generation's traditions, with all the violence and fear that process implies. That one set of traditions is from Portugal, however, and the other from old-school Cape Breton gives the flavour of these two experiences a distinctly different taste of sour.

De Sa's Canada in *Barnacle Love* is multicultural Toronto. Like Rohinton Mistry, Madeleine Thien, and David Bezmozgis before him, De Sa explores what it means to pursue the Canadian dream: finding new hope and pride in a new place and leaving the oppressions of homeland far across the sea. This is a doomed process for many, as these other authors have shown, and the Rebelos are no exception. At one point, the young narrator is trying to revive his drunken father on Canada Day as he "clutched his invisible heart, silently mouthing the words to the anthem," symbolizing his father's desire and inability to make Canada his "home and native land."

The collection of interconnected short stories starts out as mythically as any journey to a new land must. Eager to escape his small Portuguese village, Manuel falls off a fishing boat and is caught in the net of a grizzled old Newfoundland fisherman and returned to the shore, where a beautiful daughter awaits her father's return on "a glossy bed of kelp." Manuel falls immediately in love with this new place and the young daughter. He writes long, eloquent letters in Portuguese to his mother back home about this magical new home. Soon he discovers that his lover has hidden the letters instead of mailing them; his new land commits its first betrayal, and we do not read any more of Manuel's letters. He is left with a broken English, and even the narration is turned over to his son Antonio. Manuel's mother tongue seems lost to the pages.

For Antonio, Canadian life holds its own confusions, from trying to fit in when his family slaughters pigs in the garage to losing his classmates to pedophiles in dirty Toronto alleyways. The threat of abuse to young boys is an uncanny inheritance from Manuel's childhood, and lends a sense of fragility to the younger generation as well as an untrustworthiness to the elders of one's homeland.

If Antonio's troubles stem from a lost homeland and mother tongue, Dagan's in *Big White Knuckles* come from being in the same homeland for too long, and having a mother tongue that spits curses from the time every man is a "wee fucker" till his very old age. Tucker's Canadianness, in this novel, veers more towards the violent, specifically the alcoholic, rageful, coal-mining kind of life a small boy is destined to live in a place like small-town Cape Breton.

Dagan has always looked up to his father, Ray, and his big, manly buddies. These are the heroes of this town, the men who can threaten other men with a look and beat them to a bloody pulp. Here, physical force is a source of pride, and the neglect and even abuse of women is the norm. The book

problematically accepts male power more than it criticizes it, and the hidden sensitivity of these violent men becomes their saving grace.

This does not change, however, the qualities of the book that make it hard to put down. The short chapters ring with the simplicity and innocent humour of a young Cape Breton narrator, and the story's brashness fits right in with an emerging genre of Maritime writing that, with Lynn Coady, David Adams Richards, and Kate Story, celebrates traditions of fishing, cursing, mining, and drinking. I agree with Dagan that, like the Silver Surfer comics, these stories can be "more tragic than anything I'm forced to read in English class and that includes anything that fell out of the dusty arse of William Shakespeare."

Both *Barnacle Love* and *Big White Knuckles* are, remarkably, first books. Tucker paints a portrait of a Cape Breton community so visceral you can smell its farts, while De Sa's lyrical realism offers an elegiac and dreamlike vision of Toronto as the new world. In both cases, the reader is initiated into a very specific community, but one that is ultimately familiar and distinctly Canadian, for sweet or for sour.

Torment and Dislocation

Marion Douglas

Dance Hall Road. Insomniac $19.95

Reviewed by Julie Cairnie

Marion Douglas knows all about life as a teenager in a small town in Ontario. On her website Douglas describes her own high school experience as "years of torment." *Dance Hall Road*, Douglas' fourth novel, details only one year of torment for a small community, Flax, and most especially its young people, from fall 1970 to spring 1971. It is estimated that approximately thirty-five per cent of Ontarians live in small towns; the figure would have been higher in 1970. This would make the protagonists in Douglas' Ontario gothic novel more or less representative of the population as a whole. There are bright boys in special-education streams; girls and boys struggling with their sexualities; girls who elevate themselves through their bitter invective and/or stunning beauty; and parents who are dead or missing, but mostly incompetent and oblivious to their children's torment and needs. *Dance Hall Road* is not an uplifting read, a tale of overcoming by the residents of a small, closely-knit Ontario town. And it is not an exercise in nostalgia. Ultimately, the novel reveals the complexity, tension, and even danger of life—particularly for social outsiders—in a racially homogeneous small town in Ontario in 1970.

The reader immediately feels dislocated; there is no map of Flax in the glove compartment, no directions in or out—just the turning of pages. The narrative moves back and forth between the disturbing events of fall 1970 and their reflective aftermath: spring 1971. We are first introduced to the aftermath narrative, which is focalized through Adrian Drury, a young teenage boy who is intelligent, but special needs; sexually experienced, but naive; culpable for the tragedy that hangs over the town, but also innocent. This opening narrative bombards us with slyly conveyed information about the past: hence the dislocation. At a certain point—much later in the text—the two narratives meet up, more or less, and clarity is, again more or less, achieved. We understand the facts, but we don't necessarily understand the motives.

The novel centres around three families and a small cast of independent characters. The first family is the Drurys, consisting of George, the father (an emotionally remote dentist), and the two "part-time" orphans, Adrian and his sister Rose. The Farrell family comprises Frog and Angel and their three children: Cora is beautiful and intelligent; Randy, Adrian's best friend, suffers (mostly)

from the stigma of epilepsy; and Maddy is an excellent basketball player, but doesn't conform physically or behaviourally to the society's expectations about teenage girls. The Deckers, Reg and Loretta, have just lost one child (Richard) and in their grief neglect their remaining child, Cheryl. There are two older men, Alfred Beel and Jimmy Senior, with "unnatural" obsessions: a teenage girl and electric chairs, respectively. These men play key roles in the novel's finale.

One consequence of the text's sense of dislocation is that we imagine we are reading Adrian's coming-of-age narrative, but we discover a range of other fascinating characters, mostly girls and women. Adrian is a boy discovering his sexuality who makes an admittedly selfish decision to take another girl (not his girlfriend) to the much-anticipated September dance at the Dance Hall on the outskirts of town. This decision reverberates, but the girls and women have their own (sometimes parallel) stories to be told. Intelligent and competent Rose strikes up a relationship with the outcast, Maddy, and no one can understand her motivation. These two girls have their own parallel dance, but there are dire consequences; clearly it is dangerous to explore lesbian sexuality in Flax. Maddy's mother Angel is ironically named, and emerges as a character who feels unfairly burdened by her "unnatural" daughter and monogamy (there is a peculiar and darkly humorous affair with the town's electric-chair obsessed janitor, Jimmy Senior). Loretta is consumed by grief and simply disappears; the townsfolk assume that she moves to the west coast. Mothers are just as complex, tormented, and unsure as their daughters.

Dance Hall Road is a riveting and unsettling portrait of a small Ontario town at the beginning of the 1970s. Some residents—for better or worse—manage to relocate, physically or emotionally. Some residents are irrevocably damaged; there seems to be little or no chance of recovery or redemption. It is a tricky thing to write about the experience of past torment and dislocation. Douglas clearly draws extensively from her own past and sense of marginalization; she says as much on her website. To her credit, the novel doesn't read as self-indulgent or as an exercise in teenage-demon-exorcism. I risk hypocrisy now. My students are repeatedly instructed not to read texts through the lens of identification, but many of us, I conjecture, can relate (there's the word) to the torment of these mostly teenage characters in *Dance Hall Road*. We can recall and perhaps even relive our own torment and (hopefully) celebrate our own move from dislocation to relocation.

Short Frictions

Peter Dubé
At the Bottom of the Sky. DC $16.95

Christian McPherson
Six Ways to Sunday. Nightwood $19.95

Stirling Noh
Wildness Lies in Wait. Atomic Quill US $17.95

Elyse Friedman
Long Story Short. Anansi $18.95

Reviewed by Owen Percy

In his entry for "Short Story and Sketch" in W.H. New's *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*, Gerald Lynch seems to mourn short fiction as a "threatened form of literary pleasure" even though short stories by Canadian writers have long been "among the best . . . published anywhere." These recent publications, then, might signal the potential sustainability of the genre as a particular Canadian strong suit on the world's ever-globalizing literary platforms.

Peter Dubé's second major work of fiction, *At the Bottom of the Sky*, is sophomoric in a number of different ways. Dubé's shadowy urban world is populated with menacing strangers, deceptive friends, and tortured artist-figures who regularly trumpet the

Romantic ethereality of art over and above all else. The photographers, filmmakers, and conceptual artists at the heart of these linked stories are too often happy enough to tell-not-show through conversation, with the voice of Thom—the collection's primary speaker—leading the pack with his narratorial penchant for surreal ornamental imagery. Dubé's phraseology often seems to aim for curt starkness ("Ariadne" begins "Footfalls. Behind me. A Vanishing.") but the effect—on paper at least—is usually more barren than striking. There *are* some striking moments in *At the Bottom of the Sky*: two friends lost in the bowels of the city's drainage system; an explicit sexual encounter at a gay cruising spot; the unbowed victim of a hate crime wildly attacking his attackers; but they—like the writing in which they are encased—are often trying too hard to portray something that is never fully or convincingly achieved.

There are some genuinely hilarious moments, and several confidently crafted stories, in Christian McPherson's similarly urban *Six Ways to Sunday*. In "Killer Dope," the author describes a graffiti mural which could stand in for the collection as a whole: "It was a landscape that contained heroin hookers and pimp daddies; glue sniffers and panty sniffers; . . . it was a landscape that contained fear." The urban misfits—strippers, armed robbers, bikers—that populate this book are more prone to gritty cliché than those in *At the Bottom of the Sky*, but like Dubé, McPherson is at his best when the threatening *potential* for deviancy, dishonesty, or violence remains spectre instead of spectacle. Thus, the hilarious fledgling romance of "Clown Face" and the slow trainwreck of a gambling addiction in "Lucky Break" shine brighter than the collection's other stories. Several pieces here are over-written in that they refuse to trust themselves with open-endedness. "Autograph" and "Beautiful Bruises," for example, are both one story-altering paragraph too long. As the book's back cover suggests, "some things just aren't very subtle"; however it is in the book's subtleties that the writing and storytelling is most accomplished.

Published by Detroit-centric Atomic Quill Press, Stirling Noh's *Wildness Lies in Wait* flashes across borders and time in order to chart its course from the dilapidated tenements of Detroit and "Tijuana North" (Windsor) to the sexy tourist beaches of Brazil. Its protagonist is the car-thieving, booze-swilling psychiatrist Dr. Dragan Panic; a man coming not-so-slowly undone by his failed relationships. Like Noh's writing, Panic is erudite, sardonic, culturally savvy, and full of a heterosexual masculine bravado (the book is rife with "chicks," "molls," and "libidos") that recognizes itself as such but refuses to defer to any disingenuous political correctness. Panic, and the book, are content to be absurd. And in this way, *Wildness* asserts a certain gutsiness (about race, sexuality, politics) by refusing to make that gutsiness the laboured *point* of the story itself. The result is an effortless ugly realism which refuses to allow its boorish characters to become straw men. The narrative is occasionally uneven and unfocused, leaving several characters unsatisfactorily in the lurch, but the strength of the narrative voice manages ultimately to contain the novella's various threads with its genuine cadence and wit. The writing deserves better editing than it receives in this publication. Like the faux-gangster drawl of one of its characters, *Wildness Lies in Wait* is "half serious, half self-parody," and suggests, like *Six Ways to Sunday*, that its author has planted the promising seeds of literary potential to be reaped in years to come.

Elyse Friedman's *Long Story Short*, to extend the metaphor, is contemporary short fiction in glorious full bloom. Tremendously funny and refreshingly consistent, the novella and short stories in this collection mark Friedman as a confident, plucky, and wittily capable heir to the

CanLit short fiction legacy. Like Pasha Malla's *The Withdrawal Method* (also recently published by Anansi), this is a collection fascinated by urban and suburban ennui, in finding humour in the workaday, and in uncovering the pathos at the core of that humour. The novella, "A Bright Tragic Thing," is rooted in the dark flippancy of middle-class adolescence and the vagaries of celebrity. By turns hilarious and staggeringly sad, it is, I think, one of the most poignant pieces of fiction published in Canada in recent years. It may not teach much that its contemporary readers don't already tacitly understand, but it articulates itself uncannily; it delights. The short stories are rife with similar weight. Amazingly, one empathizes with the Lexus-driving tobacco-executive protagonist of "The Soother," surrounded by a needy, privileged family obsessed with his failures, organic quinoa, and the neighbours' lawn. Other stories explore the uncertainty of online dating, reframe *It's a Wonderful Life* for the suburban set, and access the terrifying humanity of a likely sexual predator. They beg various uncomfortable "what if?" questions that lesser fiction might be content to elide through humour; Friedman, though, embraces the dark inseparability of the devastatingly tragic and the wryly comical. The writing is everywhere strong, economical, and direct, and—at the risk of deferring to cliché myself—the biggest disappointment that *Long Story Short* offers is when one turns its last page and realizes there are no more. Beyond being deft and visceral, these stories satisfy the most basic of our readerly needs, if not the most often obfuscated by theory, criticism, or politics: they are interesting tales, cleverly rendered, compellingly written, and enduringly resonant.

La vie comme un fil

Louise Dupré
L'été funambule. XYZ 23,00 $

Compte rendu par Lyne Girard

Au fil de ce recueil de brèves nouvelles, Louise Dupré ouvre au lecteur (j'oserais dire à ses lectrices) une fenêtre sur les réflexions de ses narratrices : une écrivaine qui, incapable de couper le lien qui la retient à son quotidien, assouvit son ardent besoin d'évasion par procuration, à travers les aventures de ses personnages préférés; une mourante qui, alors que la fin approche, s'invente une vie faite de tout ce qu'elle a manqué; une femme qui vit de voyage pour couper le noeud qui la relie à sa mère, mais qui ne peut s'empêcher, à chaque fois, de songer à elle et de lui rapporter un présent . . . pour se faire pardonner; une jeune femme qui, bien que ne croyant pas en la cartomancie, se fait tirer aux cartes pour répondre à son « besoin de croire que le bonheur est possible »; une femme qui sent peser sur elle, lorsque l'homme qui la côtoie porte les yeux sur elle, le regard de son père; une femme qui, observant les vagues de la mer qui emporte à chaque avancée un peu de sable, de galet, et aimerait qu'elle emporte le souvenir de la mort d'une bonne amie, et celui de son rire sonore et joyeux qui résonne chaque jour dans sa tête; une femme qui, lors d'une première rencontre, se surprend à espérer un bonheur quotidien; une fille qui, au décès de son père, regrette de ne pas l'avoir mieux connu, mieux aimé . . . « cet homme qui [lui] est resté étranger »; une femme qui, dans maint pays, fuit son existence et se sent telle une île perdue, mais heureusement la mer est toujours là, près d'elle; une soeur jumelle qui se sent coupable de survivre à son frère, mais se fait pardonner par l'entremise de son écriture; le regard d'une fille qui n'accepte pas de voir vieillir sa mère, de devoir, à son tour, prendre soin d'elle; une amante qui préfère vivre seule et

heureuse de se souvenir, plutôt qu'à deux mais dans la douleur, etc.

Qu'elles soient mère ou fille, amante ou épouse, toutes les femmes imaginées par Louise Dupré avancent sur une corde raide : en arrière les souvenirs, les regrets, l'attachement d'une mère ou la douleur d'une séparation, d'une mort; en avant, l'inconnu, l'étranger, la fuite, mais aussi l'amour et l'espoir. Ce recueil est une petite douceur qu'on consomme lentement pour faire durer le plaisir. On aime partager l'existence de ces femmes attachantes et, à l'occasion, souffrir ou sourire avec elles.

« Vous vous voyez comme une funambule qui traverse lentement la piste sur son fil en essayant de se concentrer. Personne n'est là cependant pour vous applaudir. C'est dans la solitude que vous avancez. »

Integrating Violence

Nick Faragher
The Well and Other Stories. Thistledown $16.95

Lien Chao
The Chinese Knot and Other Stories. TSAR $18.95

Shauna Singh Baldwin
We Are Not in Pakistan. Goose Lane $22.95

Reviewed by Richard Cassidy

"We men are all as bad; it is a sad truth," admits Rufus, in solidarity with his host Nathan's imputed cruelty, his not knowing what to do with his infant daughter except to wish her (albeit playfully) back to sleep until her mother returns from the kitchen. This performance of a certain stereotyped kind of masculinity, in the title story of Nick Faragher's first collection, will seem relatively innocent, even good-natured, compared with some of the really *bad* things that men do elsewhere in the book. Indeed, "informed and inspired," not only by the author's travels in Italy, France, and Greece, but by his experience also working in "probation and parole," these semi-autobiographical stories are full of absent and deadbeat dads, violent and macho youth, repellant homophobia and misogyny, even murder and conspiracy. Sadly, representations of loving, caring, and attentive men and fathers are absent here.

Rufus and his wife have come to this reclusive French village where Nathan and his family live to purchase a piece of land on which, it turns out, rests the old well of the title, long unused. As they make the purchase, however, they uncover a haunting secret that has lain buried in the well since World War II. Likewise, and with a biting twist of irony each time, Faragher's stories turn out to be uncompromising, though not for that matter simplistic, autopsies of the violent, if not even murderous, forms of masculinity available to men and boys still today. For that "sad truth," then, as well as for the quality of the writing itself—its often well-crafted rhythms and turns of phrase—I find here a welcome new voice whose next collection will remain for me the object of anticipation.

If Faragher's collection is about men and the limited and limiting roles we (are given to) play, then Lien Chao's stories tell of women and of the limitations that gender and national identity put upon them. It is a collection, she says, of "snap-shots" taken by her "mental camera" over the course of some twenty years, of women and their successful, or as yet unfinished, processes of integrating into the urban landscape of Toronto: the story of Wei Ming, for example, who integrates into, and gives back to, the relatively insular society of parents and children at the playground; of Rose, who paid dearly and unjustly for the "success story" that she has no doubt become. However, though the intermedial image of the short story as a photograph is interesting, I am afraid, in this case, it functions rather as a sign of the collection's failure, its as-yet-unfinished quality. There is, indeed, something of the *still* image, the journalistic, even the academic in these

stories and in how they are rendered; as if though Chao has been "touched unforgettably" by the stories she has collected, her writing has not yet found out how to make them touch her readers in turn. The third-person, present-tense narrative form, for example, that all these stories uniformly take, do indeed reproduce the feeling of looking at someone's (someone else's) photographs—which is a good place for a story to begin. There is, however, none of what Barthes calls that *punctum*, that detail that tears through the distance between first and third person and so allows me to treasure, as dear to me, an experience that must otherwise remain simply foreign. The stories of failed and successful integration, then—which are in themselves so compelling—have not, I fear, managed yet to find themselves integrated into this short form of fiction. Or maybe this sense of lack that I'm left with is only the unfortunate effect of this collection's being reviewed alongside the determined and accomplished success of *We Are Not in Pakistan*, new fiction by Shauna Singh Baldwin.

For Baldwin's fourth book of fiction also tells about the process and labour of integrating, though in usually twice the number of pages allotted to Chao's stories, as well as in at least as many different forms. The title story, for example, is about a young woman faced with the trauma of having to integrate into a new high school in a new city, when she and her mother are forced to move in with her grandparents. However, the teenage anger that she misdirects at her grandmother soon turns to sadness, and she forgets about "acting bored and nonchalant" as she had been, when her grandmother one day disappears. What is interesting is how, at this point, that teenage terror of being unable to control how her new classmates will see her and judge the shape of her ethnic nose and her "backpack full of wrong stuff" takes on new and horrible meanings as it intersects with, and becomes increasingly hard to distinguish from, the terror inspired in the whole family by the totalizing eyes and ears of the US Department of Homeland Security.

Indeed, the shadow of those two fallen towers, and of the rigid security apparatus erected in their stead, recurs in a number of the stories in this collection. That culture of ambient fear is present even retrospectively in the collection's opening story about a family's flight from the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. Or in what is perhaps my favourite story, "Rendezvous," a series of three consecutive "conversations" that Jimmy McKuen has with Enrico, who is "Mexican outside" and "gringo inside," with Tula, a second-generation Greek waitress and aspiring sculptor, and with Carlos the 'illegal' Mexican busboy, Jimmy's "friend." Though these conversations are clearly not totally one-sided, the narrative only represents what Jimmy's interlocutors say, and not at all what he responds; as if, perhaps, to place us, Baldwin's readers, in that uncomfortably panoptic (hearing, but unheard) position. One thing is certain, though: Baldwin's stories are so compelling as to make me wish they'd go on to become novels, which of course they are not, so that what remains is only to read them again and again, and then look forward to her next collection.

Dreaming of a New World

David Hackett Fischer

Champlain's Dream. Knopf Canada $37.00

Reviewed by Victoria Dickenson

Samuel de Champlain was a remarkable man and in David Hackett Fischer, he has a remarkable biographer. In this long and gracefully written biography, Fischer narrates with erudition and enthusiasm the story of Champlain's adventurous life, from his early years in Brouage through his education at sea, his first voyages to the New

World, his problems at court and dedication to his great enterprise in New France, the founding of Quebec and its loss, and finally Champlain's death at Quebec on Christmas Day, 1635. This is foremost a book about an individual. It begins as Fischer says not with theory or ideology but with profound curiosity about the shadowy figure Fischer claims was responsible not only for the founding of New France, but also for the establishment of the kind of society that we like to feel characterizes Canada today—diverse, tolerant, and just. Champlain's legacy is, Fischer believes, "the success of principled leadership in the cause of humanity." Despite sometimes slender historical resources, what a portrait Fischer has given us of this seventeenth-century leader—an accomplished warrior, a renowned mariner, a pious Christian, an honest gentleman, and a visionary.

The biographer's perspective on the man is evident from the dust jacket on. How wonderful that Fischer chose to see in Vermeer's allegorical painting of "The Geographer" the figure of Champlain. (The Canadian historian Timothy Brook also connected Champlain with the painter in his 2008 book, *Vermeer's Hat*.) The subtitle, *The Visionary Adventurer Who Made a New World in Canada*, is equally large, and I have to confess that as a self-effacing Canadian, the American historian's exuberant approach at first made me uneasy. Could one of our own be that visionary, that significant in the scheme of things? I am delighted to say that David Fischer convinced me that yes, we should acknowledge the principled, honest gentleman from Saintonge as one of the great makers of the modern world. And Fischer convinced me not just through the sweep of his grand narrative, which reads like historical fiction (all footnotes are at the end, and they are copious), but by his very methodical and scholarly use of Champlain's own works, coupled with contemporary references, and a deep appreciation of the context of early seventeenth-century France. Champlain's life was intimately linked with the intrigues of the court under first Henri IV (perhaps his unacknowledged father?), then Marie de Medici, her son Louis XIII, and finally the *eminence rouge*, Cardinal Richelieu. Fischer has woven Champlain's own accounts into the history of France during a bellicose and difficult period, throwing light on the concerns that shaped the founding and direction of the new colony.

At the same time, Fischer has attempted to reconstruct the world along the great river of Canada that the French encountered. He has paid particular attention to Champlain's relationship with the Aboriginal inhabitants, a relationship he feels has been maligned or perhaps misread by recent scholars. Though he concedes that Champlain could not but see the inhabitants of Stadacona or Huronia with the eyes of a seventeenth-century Frenchman, Champlain's great store of common sense and deep respect for humanity, made the "other" into the known. Champlain knew Aboriginal people by name and described them as individuals; he saw them as allies, as friends, as enemies, and it was to this particular vision of the inhabitants of the New World that Fischer suggests we owe the lineaments of our society today.

Champlain in his writings, which are extensive, reveals little of himself and his personal life, and Fischer has managed to extrapolate his character from random remarks and complementary sources. Champlain is revealed as a doer, not a philosopher; a man of action, not reflection. David Fischer reveals something of this makeup himself, and his book is much enriched by his own accounts of the miles he has walked or paddled while following Champlain. His appendices are an absolute joy, and will for me be a new reference for details on the names of Aboriginal groups, seventeenth-century French

weights, measures, ship types, and the chronology of Champlain's twenty-seven Atlantic crossings. More significantly for historians, he has included a detailed historiography on Champlain. This is an elegant, erudite, richly illustrated, and profoundly humane biography of the dreamer who founded Canada.

NCL Paperback History

Janet B. Friskney

New Canadian Library: The Ross-McClelland Years, 1952-1978. U of Toronto P $45.00

Reviewed by Paul Hjartarson

In "The New Canadian Library: A Classic Deal," published in 1994 and reprinted in *Making It Real* (1995), Robert Lecker examines the role of the New Canadian Library reprint series in developing English-Canadian literature as an academic field and in establishing the post-World War II pedagogical canon. Lecker's research on the NCL led him to the McClelland and Stewart papers held by McMaster University, in particular to the correspondence between publisher Jack McClelland and NCL editor and university professor Malcolm Ross. "A reading of these letters," Lecker declares, "led me to some unsettling conclusions about the ways in which the pedagogical canon was established in Canada. Moreover, when I asked the archivists at McMaster how many people had consulted this correspondence, I was told, to my astonishment, that I was the first." Lecker may have been among the first researchers to examine the correspondence—Carl Spadoni and Judy Donnelly certainly read it in preparing their book on M&S imprints released by Robert Lecker and Jack David's own ECW Press in 1994—but future researchers will have the benefit of Janet Friskney's thorough and judicious assessment not just of the correspondence but of the McClelland and Stewart papers as a whole.

Friskney's study provides the firm groundwork on which future scholars can build. The information she provides (in appendix B) concerning the yearly sales of each NCL title alone promises to alter critical assumptions about postwar Canadian literature. In 1958 NCL released titles by F.P. Grove, Morley Callaghan, Stephen Leacock, Sinclair Ross, Gabrielle Roy, Thomas C. Haliburton, Charles G.D. Roberts, and Hugh MacLennan. Which title outsold the other seven by a wide margin between 1958 and 1979? The Leacock title? No, Roy's *The Tin Flute* (146,309) followed by Ross' *As for Me and My House* (116,906) and MacLennan's *Barometer Rising* (107,121). Leacock's *Literary Lapses* (51,563) proves a distant fifth.

Like Lecker, Friskney focuses on the Ross-McClelland years. She divides her study of the NCL into two parts. Part One, "The Historical Narrative," examines the period between Ross' first overture to M&S about the possibility of a paperback reprint series in 1952 and his resignation in 1978. In Ross' two decades as general editor, NCL issued 152 titles in the reprints and twelve in the original series. (Ross himself edited *Poets of the Confederation*, the first volume in the original series). Although the success of the NCL reprints prompted other Canadian publishers to launch quality paperback series, M&S dominated the market. Whether readers are interested in the development of English-Canadian literature, the postwar book trade, or Canadian culture generally, Friskney's account opens new perspectives on transformative decades.

In Part Two, "Editorial Practices and the Selective Tradition," Friskney considers the editorial practices Ross and McClelland adopted for the series, particularly the process by which titles were chosen or rejected. Part Two also includes a chapter on the issue of source text and another on the role the NCL played in the development of the postwar canon. As Friskney points out, and as the sheer number of NCL titles attests,

Ross and McClelland were more interested in getting texts into the hands of readers than in the niceties of scholarly editing; nevertheless, issues did routinely arise, particularly concerning editorial work on early Canadian texts such as Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* and John Richardson's *Wacousta,* and concerning titles in the original series. Friskney's study demonstrates the value of the M&S papers to anyone studying either the history of particular titles or Canadian publishing or literary scholarship in these decades. In the final chapter, she considers the role of individual NCL titles—Ross' *As for Me and My House*, for example—and of the series as a whole on postwar canon formation. No discussion of this issue would be complete without careful consideration of Ross' arguments with McClelland over planning for the Calgary Conference on the Novel and Friskney does not disappoint. Here, as throughout the volume, she makes effective use of the extant correspondence.

Inevitably, a volume this strong—a study that opens perspectives on so many issues—leaves the reader wanting more. The biggest absence here perhaps is the lack of a conclusion—not to tie up loose ends but to point to work that remains. In the introduction, Friskney writes: "Several appendices and a selected bibliography have been included in this book as an aid to future researchers, whose scholarly and critical preoccupations with the NCL of the Ross-McClelland era may prove quite different from the ones that have animated me as a book historian." It is a testament to her scholarship that Friskney understands her research as service in a larger project.

Legitimate Children

Miriam Fuchs and Craig Howes, eds.
Teaching Life Writing Texts. Modern Language Association US $22.00

Reviewed by Simon Rolston

There is a sense among life-writing scholars that the discipline has yet to find its place as a legitimate field of study. This may have something to do with the variety of narrative forms that fall under the life-writing rubric. Autobiography, biography, diaries, journals, ethnography, letters, *testimonio*, even obituaries and blogs (to name a few), are all covered by the life-writing umbrella, which makes generic conventions hard, if not impossible, to pin down. Because it encompasses so many genres, life writing is decidedly interdisciplinary, showing up in departments of law, sociology, anthropology, language, gender studies, and art history. Fortunately, life-writing scholars have embraced life writing's indeterminacy and interdisciplinarity, even though its protean nature makes it something of a stepsibling in humanities departments—loved, certainly, but still a bit of an outsider.

As part of the Modern Language Association's Options for Teaching series, *Teaching Life Writing Texts*, edited by Miriam Fuchs and Craig Howes, is a timely collection that does the difficult but necessary work of providing pedagogical tools (like classroom activities, course suggestions, recommended reading material, syllabi, curricula, assignments, and theory) for this indeterminate and interdisciplinary field of study. Like the field in which it makes its intervention (which is large, containing multitudes), this collection is vast in scope, covering a wide variety of disciplines in at least seven countries, and across all levels of postsecondary education.

Even though most chapters are developed around specific courses, the methodologies discussed in the book are quite flexible.

Those interested in finding pedagogical tools for teaching Canadian life writing, for example, are well-served with excellent essays by Gabriele Helms on the slippery nature of genre in Canadian life writing, Michael Young on early American and Canadian Life Writing, and Daniel Heath Justice on the ethics of teaching Indigeneous life-writing narratives. But reading beyond one's own subject area will prove fruitful here, as teaching strategies focused on one subject can be easily transferred to another. Consider Alison Booth's innovative assignments that (among other things) help students recognize and historicize their own reading practices, or Cynthia Huff's approach to teaching archival work through highly innovative collaborative research projects (in both cases, their appended assignments are extremely useful). Sandra Chait and Ghirmai Negash's cutting-edge "pedagogical experiment," where students at the University of Asmara in Eritrea were partnered with students at the University of Washington in order to "teach ethnographic life-history writing through internet exchanges," suggests an ambitious and important future trajectory for life-writing pedagogy in an increasingly globalized community. There is a wealth of information here—and this collection is well worth perusing.

I have two quibbles with *Teaching*. First, the collection is not as user-friendly as it could be (a subject index would have been a great help, for example). And second, some (fortunately not many) contributors do not rely enough on current scholarship and debate in preparing their classes or guiding their students toward an exploration of the major discussions that eddy around life-writing texts and practices. For example, while Kenneth Womack's course on the Beatles is an engaging concept, he relies too heavily on the work of a single theorist—albeit an important one, James Olney—rather than offering multiple ways for his class to engage with the "various narrative-driven aspects of the Beatles' musical canon." Consequently, the course seems restricted and narrow in its development, too close to the instructor's own concepts rather than providing students with the means to develop concepts of their own. Likewise Joanne Karpinski's course on diversity in American life writing makes use of Philipe Lejeune's *On Autobiography* (1989), but she uses no other texts that theorize how race, class, sexuality, or other forms of diversity are negotiated in America, or in life writing (and reading) practices generally. Perhaps as a consequence, Karpinski makes several problematic assumptions about race and class relations. For example, she suggests that reading enables her middle-class students to experience "exactly the same predicament" as poor people of colour—a misinterpretation that could have been avoided through a deeper engagement with theories of race and class that are integral to life-writing studies.

But these are, as I say, just quibbles. On the whole, *Teaching Life Writing Texts* is an invaluable resource. And what better way to address the legitimacy of life writing than by developing exciting and engaging classrooms, the necessary spaces of learning that will nurture the next generation of life-writing scholars.

Apocalyptic Revisions

Marlene Goldman
Rewriting Apocalypse in Canadian Fiction.
McGill-Queen's UP $80.00

Reviewed by Jennifer Bowering Delisle

Amidst warnings of the devastating repercussions of global environmental destruction, nuclear proliferation, religious fundamentalism, and economic collapse, a book on apocalyptic fiction feels particularly timely. But as Marlene Goldman notes in the introduction to *Rewriting Apocalypse in Canadian Fiction,* her project is specifically attuned to biblical notions of apocalypse

drawn from Revelation. "Although the word apocalypse conjures images of nuclear disasters and doomsday cults," Goldman explains, "this study is primarily concerned with how Canadian authors rewrite the narrative of apocalypse, which envisions the end of the world and the creation of a heavenly world reserved for God's chosen people." Central to this "apocalyptic paradigm" is the division between the elect and the non-elect, and the notion that catastrophe brings transformation and revelation.

Goldman's title is not "writing apocalypse" but "*re*writing apocalypse"; her study contends that Canadian literature represents the perspective of the non-elect, the marginalized, and that it "refuses to celebrate the destruction of evil and the creation of a new, heavenly world." She powerfully argues that the traumas of the Holocaust and the Cold War make the narrative of apocalypse seem "too sinister to countenance," and considers the ways in which Canadian fictions both reveal the dangers of such a narrative and offer alternatives. At times the analysis does slip from biblical revision to a discussion of "apocalyptic thinking" as a kind of shorthand for violence, consumption, and the binary divisions of Canadian society. The book is strongest when Goldman discusses her texts in terms of biblical allusion and the specific structural features of apocalypse that she identifies, such as intertextuality, allegory, witnessing, and revelation.

Rewriting Apocalypse examines canonical Canadian works—Timothy Findley's *Headhunter*, Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, Margaret Atwood's short story "Hairball," Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*—reading apocalypse through depictions of the Second World War, the colonization of the Americas, and the racist divisions of Canadian society. These may not be the first texts that come to mind when one thinks of apocalyptic Canadian fiction; Goldman's choice to focus on Atwood's "Hairball" rather than, say, *Oryx and Crake* is particularly surprising. But Goldman does locate these works within the contexts of the authors' oeuvres and of broader Canadian literary history in order to make her argument that an apocalyptic paradigm continues to profoundly influence Canadian literature.

This tracking of a paradigm or theme occasionally leads Goldman to sweeping generalizations about the tendencies and preoccupations of Canadian literature, generalizations that jar uncomfortably with her persuasive arguments about Canada's "non-elect." Her contention, building on Linda Hutcheon's work, that Canadian writers adopt a "characteristically ex-centric perspective" is repeated but unfortunately not interrogated, despite interventions such as Smaro Kamboureli's powerful critique of the term "ex-centric" in *Scandalous Bodies*. The phrase "ex-centric Canadians," when used offhand, blurs the distinction between the "elect" and the "non-elect," obscuring the important histories and hierarchies of difference that elsewhere Goldman is at pains to expose. While writers like Atwood may be responding to a colonial relationship with Britain as a kind of "centre," mapping such anxieties onto a generalized Canadian literature or psyche sits oddly alongside Goldman's strong indictment of the Canadian treatment of First Nations peoples and Japanese Canadians during World War II.

Goldman's writing is, however, for the most part lucid and engaging as she navigates through theories of trauma, nationalism, feminism, postcolonialism, and Christian and Aboriginal theologies. *Rewriting Apocalypse* represents a useful new perspective on Canadian fictions that have been frequently studied and taught in CanLit courses. Even as she identifies what she considers key features of a national literature, she shows how these fictions "unveil the limits of the discourse of Canadian nationalism" as a discourse built on the exclusion of certain others from an imagined new world.

A Dramatic Life

Sherrill Grace
Making Theatre: A Life of Sharon Pollock.
Talonbooks $39.95

Reviewed by Shannon Hengen

Literary critic Sherrill Grace's study of Pollock's life and work is capacious. At 480 pages, including three major sections, four appendices, a thirty-six page bibliography, notes, and index, the book contains material of invaluable use to theatre scholars. Grace assumed the daunting task of recording Pollock's accomplishments within wider Canadian contexts—cultural and political—in an effort to counter typical Canadian ignorance of our history and neglect of our talent.

The book's three large parts follow Pollock's life chronologically. Crucial shaping events in the young woman's life are detailed in early chapters and returned to often throughout. An epigraph to Chapter 9 "Still Making Theatre" captures succinctly Pollock's approach to dramatic writing, in her own words: "Meaning is derived from the act of telling the story. Meaning is not derived from living the story." We might say the same about Grace's life of Pollock: her telling of it gives it the meaning that Grace judges it deserves.

To chronicle the making of twenty plays over some forty years, Grace adopts a storytelling style, one that we imagine she chooses not primarily for the literary critics who will read this book but rather for the theatre practitioners; that is, Grace attempts to tell Pollock's career dramatically, including meticulously detailed production histories of every script. Tales of successful and failed collaborations, so integral to the theatre world, abound.

Discussion of each play follows a pattern of outlining its genesis, then describing the process of bringing it to the radio program or the stage or into print, and surmising its possible roots in Pollock's past experience or present engagement in issues (or both together). These are accompanied by contemporary reviews and finally Grace's own textual analysis. Those who know Grace's work as a literary critic will appreciate especially those analyses. But given her apparent choice to write for the theatre world of which Pollock is an integral member, she keeps textual analysis to a minimum that may disappoint literary critics.

Making Theatre is compiled with utmost care, an obvious marker of which is that we will find no typographical errors in its many pages dense with words. It is nothing less than encyclopaedic in its information. More, Grace has taken pains to clarify her point of view as a biographer, her relationship with her human subject, and her theoretical understanding of the genre of life writing as a whole. We come to the closing pages of this book with a keen sense of one woman's appreciation of the personal and public achievements of another's, an impressive and lasting testament to them.

Pollock is without doubt a central Canadian female playwright. Completely versatile as—at different times and in different places—an actor, theatre manager, artistic director, lecturer, and of course writer for the stage (and radio), Pollock and the development of our own Canadian theatre cannot be separated. Grace's Pollock has reminded audiences throughout her long career that we abdicate personal responsibility—that is, we identify ourselves as powerless—at the cost of our hearts and minds. Her reminder should call us to heed developments in our cultural and political milieus, participate in them, and act on them.

Pollock succeeds in showing Canadian audiences to themselves in her dramatic writing that includes murder mystery, political and social history, and family chronicle, among other forms. With Grace's study in hand, we now have ample evidence of that success.

Stratterfly

Jolly Gurbir, Zenia Wadhwani, and Deborah Barretto, eds.
Once Upon a Time in Bollywood: The Global Swing in Hindi Cinema. TSAR $25.95

Hervé Fischer; Rhonda Mullins, trans.
The Decline of the Hollywood Empire. Talonbooks $17.95

Mel Atkey
Broadway North: The Dream of a Canadian Musical Theatre. Natural Heritage $29.95

Reviewed by Mark Harris

Jerry Seinfeld once whimsically suggested that, if the International Olympic Committee ever wanted to concoct a summer event as absurd as the winter biathlon, they could hardly do worse than "swimming and strangle a guy." While the three books under discussion here are less risible than this, their inherent affinities are only slightly more pronounced, *unless* one concentrates on the various meanings of artistic "success" and "failure." For instance, the annual eight-hundred-film outpouring of Bollywood is obviously an economic "triumph" of some sort, whereas the extremely low velocity of Canadian musical theatre is nothing to, uh, *sing about*. And what about the future of digital cinema? Is it, as Hervé Fischer enthusiastically suggests in *The Decline of the Hollywood Empire*, the thin edge of the cultural wedge that will eventually undo all forms of US imperialist hegemony, or is it simply a good idea fated to wind up on the same scrap heap as Betamax?

Only time will tell.

Ironically, time is also a factor in the proper appraisal of these very different books. (How could it be otherwise? Even Jules Verne's prophetic "batting average" wasn't all *that* good). One must therefore forgive Ahmad Saidullah for choosing Quentin Tarantino as the quintessential western film festival director. Since that opinion appears in an essay entitled "Power and Representation in Modern Indian Cinema: Case Studies from the Toronto Film Festival (1994)," the author could not possibly have predicted the ex-indie film-maker's career trajectory post-*Reservoir Dogs*. In any case, Saidullah is on firmer ground when analyzing the right-wing nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party's role in the creation of the new Hindi cinema, and Westerners can't help but be struck by such pithy observations as "Kerala has the highest rates of literacy and suicide in India."

From my point of view, *Once Upon a Time in Bollywood* was by far and away the most interesting "leg" of this literary tripod, not least because there were so many points I wanted its authors to clarify. While a number of Western scholars are represented here (Susan Dewey, Jenny Sharpe), a good two-thirds of the contributors are of South Asian descent. Thus, Indian movies for them are the *real* cinema, the parallel universe that must be navigated in the same way that the rest of us are immersed in Hollywood (whether we like it or not). Some of their assumptions are either refreshing (unapologetic Marxism repeatedly trumping postmodernism) or intriguingly "other" (compulsory virginity and arranged marriage preoccupying the gender theorists to the almost complete exclusion of homosexuality). As for the deep historical background, it often seems maddeningly opaque (for instance, due to the absence of *dhimmi* status, the conflict between Muslim rulers and Hindu ruled must have been very different in pre-Raj days from the social models obtaining in North Africa and the Near East, but how?).

For Western critics, what is perhaps most astonishing is the almost complete lack of auteurist sentiment in these pages. Satyajit Ray rarely gets mentioned, and when he does it's usually as a bad example (as for his "disciples," forget it).

The Decline of the Hollywood Empire presents problems of an altogether different

order. In Rhonda Mullins' fluent English translation, this is a highly compelling, provocative, often hopeful, but ultimately infuriating read. Clearly, this is because author Hervé Fischer (a European polymath who has taught for many years in Montreal) is torn between two different traditions: the Anglo-Saxon, fact-heavy historical overview and the French book-length essay. Thus, detailed analyses of the financial practices of Hollywood's major studios are typically followed by hypothetical riffs on how downloading electronic images is certain to cause the demise of 35 mm cinema. Some of these disorienting segues have the unfortunate effect of calling into question much of what we've just read.

A case in point is the author's overestimation of the success of the Québécois film industry. To be sure, in *really* good years, twenty-five per cent of ticket sales might well be spent on home-grown product in *la belle province*, but there are other years when the figure is less than ten per cent. If Montreal weren't the microcosm he uses in relation to the global macrocosm, this might not be so noticeable (especially if Fischer had chosen to mention the Nigerian film industry, Planet Cinema's only real reel-free success story).

By simultaneously attempting to employ Roland Barthes' and David Bordwell's very different approaches, Fischer winds up succeeding at neither. There's too much guesswork for the latter and too many facts for the former. Fischer acts as if DV has already won, when the jury is not only still out but seems disinclined to render a verdict any time soon.

Mel Atkey's book is, of course, the real wild card in this hat trick. For one thing, it deals with theatre, not film. Even more disconcertingly, it is primarily concerned with Canadian musical theatre, a field generally understood only by concerned practitioners. As very few of his readers are likely to have seen more than one or two Canadian musical productions in their entire lives, this is a serious impediment, as is the general neglect of the Québécois musical tradition (which is, as in virtually every field of cultural production in this country, vastly superior to its English Canadian counterpart).

Atkey's credentials to write *Broadway North: The Dream of Canadian Musical Theatre* are, of course, impeccable. A former critic, this Vancouver native has worked on the musical stage for more than two decades, first in Toronto, then in London (the British city where he currently resides). Most of his information comes from one-on-one interviews rather than books, and Atkey has actually collaborated with many of the people he mentions.

On the downside, there's precious little theory and only slightly more plot information on the mainly doomed shows he describes. And while one can easily understand the practical reasons behind it, Atkey's Toronto-centrism now seems curiously quaint.

Of course, to be honest, I'm speaking as someone who generally hates musical theatre, and who considers it as fundamentally unnecessary as mime. Conversely, if you fall into the opposite camp, you might well sees this book as an answered prayer (i.e., you'll still be swimming in this text long after I've finished "strangling" it).

Ce banal refus du silence

Maurice Henrie
Esprit de sel. Prise de Parole 21,95 $

Compte rendu par Stéphane Girard

Dans son plus récent ouvrage, le romancier, nouvelliste et essayiste franco-ontarien Maurice Henrie offre, sous la forme de brefs fragments en prose à l'ordre et à la longueur aléatoires, un dépouillement tout intime des divers signes qui l'entourent, soit une véritable entreprise de sémiologie. Télescopant ainsi Barthes et Montaigne, dont les *Mythologies* et les *Essais* font sentir, en palimpseste, leur

évidente influence, Henrie interroge le sens et la valeur qu'ont pour lui certains souvenirs d'enfance, la vieillesse, la mort (la sienne, celle des proches), la politicaillerie (canadienne), la culture (nord-américaine, i.e. méprisable) et les affres du bilinguisme officiel, tout en écorchant au passage la banalité des titres universitaires, la stupidité de la gloire (sportive, politique, ou plus généralement médiatique) et la médiocrité des masses. Reste, ultime mythe peut-être, la littérature (Proust, Valéry, Shakespeare, Joyce et al.), la sienne surtout, sa probable vacuité, de même que la tentation du vide qui hante de plus en plus un auteur pour qui « toute la vie mène au silence ».

Cela dit, cette démystification de l'activité scripturale sert surtout à Henrie à mieux . . . *l'essentialiser* : « Il faut que j'écrive! », révèle-t-il, « et ce, même si j'ignore encore ce que j'ai à dire ». Il affirme du même souffle qu'« un auteur doit écrire fébrilement, aussi longtemps que sa fenêtre demeure ouverte et qu'il le peut encore. Aussi longtemps que l'espoir et la candeur continuent à fleurir en lui ». On y apprend enfin, par l'intermédiaire de métaphores révélatrices, que, pour lui, « l'écriture est pur diamant », que « la création littéraire est une dentelle fragile et superflue », que les mots sont « comme des oiseaux blancs » et, parfois, « des ballons rouges ».

Bref, contrairement à la Loth biblique, dont l'insubordination, on le sait, la figea en statue de sel, la plume de Maurice Henri refuse quant à elle de s'immobiliser en un quelconque monument et de se taire. Si le silence est l'horizon de toute écriture, le refus de ce même silence en est, semble déclarer l'auteur en une ultime tautologie, pour ainsi dire l'unique et banal possibilité.

Une femme de son temps

Anne-Marie Jézéquel
Louise Dupré : Le Québec au féminin.
L'Harmattan 24,50 €

Compte rendu par Mélanie E. Collado

Louise Dupré est une écrivaine bien connue au Québec et dans le milieu des études féministes pour ses études critiques sur la littérature féminine, sa collaboration à la revue *Voix et Images* et, bien sûr, son oeuvre fictionnelle et poétique. Le nouveau livre d'Anne-Marie Jézéquel, *Louise Dupré : Le Québec au féminin,* confirme la place importante de cette auteure dans la littérature féminine québécoise contemporaine, et souligne la portée universelle de ses textes.

Jézéquel aborde l'oeuvre littéraire de Louise Dupré sous l'angle de l'espace, qu'il soit public ou intime, réel ou imaginaire. Son ouvrage commence par un premier volet où elle présente les oeuvres de Louise Dupré en la situant dans le paysage littéraire québécois. Le deuxième chapitre se concentre sur la représentation des lieux « par où la mémoire revient et se crée » : la ville, les paysages, la maison, la chambre. Dans son troisième chapitre, Jézéquel examine le rapport entre le corps, l'espace, et l'écriture. Elle montre que, chez Louise Dupré, l'inscription du sujet féminin dans l'espace passe par les gestes quotidiens, la peau et le désir; autant d'espaces intimes à explorer et à écrire. Vient ensuite un quatrième chapitre consacré à l'espace familial vu comme un espace de la mémoire où l'exploration de la relation avec le père et avec la mère révèle le manque, la douleur et l'amour. Comme le rappelle Jézéquel, la carrière littéraire de Louise Dupré commence avec son engagement dans le féminisme québécois des années soixante-dix, et cet engagement se retrouve dans l'ensemble de son oeuvre. Le cinquième chapitre examine donc plus particulièrement la femme moderne dans les différents « espaces » de sa vie ainsi que sa

quête de liberté et de bonheur. La conception de l'oeuvre de Louise Dupré comme une exploration pluridimensionnelle de l'espace féminin permet à Jézéquel de caractériser cette écriture comme le voyage intérieur et extérieur d'une femme de son temps; c'est l'analyse qu'elle développe dans le sixième chapitre. Le dernier chapitre intitulé « le geste d'écrire » porte plus particulièrement sur la matérialité de l'écriture et sur les motivations de l'écrivaine. Il faut noter que, tout en soulignant l'originalité de Louise Dupré, Jézébel relève aussi les liens qui la rapprochent d'autres critiques et écrivains français et québécois. Elle montre ainsi, avec justesse, que si l'oeuvre de Louise Dupré est profondément québécoise, ses préoccupations dépassent les frontières géographiques du Québec et ont une portée universelle : « Dupré analyse les problématiques de la vie, de la mort, l'amour et la douleur, la passion, le désir, le deuil. Relevant de la survie, la recherche profondément subjective de Dupré est un voyage dans un espace infini, il permet de découvrir la liberté. »

Dans *Louise Dupré : Le Québec au féminin*, Jézéquel nous livre une étude rédigée avec clarté, simplicité, et passion, à l'image de l'écrivaine sur laquelle elle se penche. Souhaitons que ce livre publié chez l'Harmattan contribue à mieux faire connaître une oeuvre riche et polyvalente. L'exploration de l'itinéraire poétique et romanesque de Louise Dupré a également l'avantage de donner un aperçu de la production littéraire et critique au Québec après les années soixante-dix.

Hors-solitudes

Claude Lalumière, dir.
In Other Words: New English Writing from Quebec. Véhicule 16,95 $

Marie Carrière et Catherine Khordoc, dirs.
Migrance comparée. Les littératures du Canada et du Québec / Comparing Migration: The Literatures of Canada and Québec. Peter Lang US 74,95 $

Compte rendu par Pénélope Cormier

On oublie parfois que c'est la littérature qui a fourni au Canada l'expression « deux solitudes », reprise du titre d'un roman de Hugh MacLennan de 1945 (et traduit en français en 1963). Depuis, on l'utilise souvent à toutes les sauces pour décrire l'état des relations entre les francophones et les anglophones, ou encore rendre compte de la structure historique du pays, né en 1867 d'un pacte entre les deux « nations » fondatrices, mais aussi sa déclinaison contemporaine dans le bilinguisme officiel, dont l'effet est de permettre, voire d'encourager, l'existence parallèle de deux communautés linguistiques unilingues.

Le schéma est simplificateur et on ne compte plus ses critiques, mais on pourrait dire qu'en littérature il maintient encore une certaine pertinence, peut-être en raison de la barrière de la langue. Si on constate peu de rapports entre les deux principales traditions littéraires au Canada, il existe cependant un certain nombre d'expériences d'écriture « hors-solitudes », c'est-à-dire évoluant à la marge, dans l'interstice, occupant des zones d'ombre, ou constituant des points de contacts, pour ne pas dire des points aveugles, entre les littératures québécoise et canadienne-anglaise.

La littérature anglo-québécoise en est un excellent exemple. Si son intégration au corpus québécois est de plus en plus débattue, l'institution anglo-canadienne y semble à peu près indifférente. Pourtant, l'enjeu essentiel de l'ensemble littéraire anglo-québécois demeure sans conteste son

exploitation d'une véritable spécificité par rapport à la littérature canadienne-anglaise. Nécessite-t-elle une double compétence lectoriale, du fait d'être écrite en anglais mais à partir du territoire québécois? C'est ce que semble réclamer *In Other Words. New English Writing from Quebec*. Il s'agit d'un recueil de nouvelles réunissant les meilleurs textes proposés à la CBC-Quebec Writers Federation Literary Competition. Ce prix annuel donne lieu à une publication aux trois ans. En l'occurrence, *In Other Words* (2008) rassemble les textes gagnants et mentions honorables de 2005 à 2007, faisant suite à *Telling Stories: New English Fiction from Quebec* (2002) et *Short Stuff: New English Stories from Quebec* (2005).

Patricia Pleszczynska, directrice régionale de CBC Québec, relève dans sa préface le caractère ultimement performatif des recueils : « Three full volumes that constitute in and of themselves the narrative of emerging Québec prose writing of the last decade. » En effet, l'ouvrage démontre surtout que la littérature anglo-québécoise existe bel et bien, appuyée par des organisations, célébrée par des prix et incarnée par des textes et des auteurs distincts. En conjuguant les trois invariants des titres—« stories », « English », et « Quebec »—on affirme que le Québec anglophone a des histoires à raconter. Mais le recueil est constitué de textes somme toute plutôt banals, la plupart certes assez habilement ficelés, mais qui n'exigent pas de réelle double compétence lectoriale. Autrement dit, *In Other Words* constitue une preuve institutionnelle d'existence de la littérature anglo-québécoise, mais la définition de cette dernière en double marge des littératures du Canada ne semble pas être commandée par les textes mêmes. Heureusement, d'autres manifestations de la littérature anglo-québécoise rendent cette classification réellement pertinente.

Pour sa part, le recueil bilingue d'articles savants *Migrance comparée / Comparing Migration* se réclame du projet original de comparer, non pas les littératures du Québec et du Canada anglais, mais la place respective que ces « deux solitudes » font aux oeuvres dites « migrantes ». L'écriture migrante est une catégorie dûment acceptée des milieux littéraires tant québécois que canadiens-anglais, mais dont la légitimité est toujours problématique.

En témoigne le travail sur la terminologie théorique fait tout au long de l'ouvrage. Dans leur introduction, les directrices de publication (Marie Carrière et Catherine Khordoc) font une brève présentation de l'utilisation des divers concepts dans les deux traditions littéraires. Fort intéressant par ailleurs, cet exposé aurait sans doute mérité un plus long développement, rendant compte du travail labyrinthique sur les notions théoriques par les chercheurs universitaires. À leur suite, presque tous les articles vont reprendre et remettre en question d'une manière ou d'une autre les divers moyens d'aborder l'écriture migrante. Cosmopolitisme, transculturalité, altérité, universalité, exotisme, multiculturalisme, et transpoétique (Hédi Bouraoui) sont autant de termes et de concepts disséqués et décomposés en cours d'ouvrage, sans évidemment qu'on établisse de consensus; ici comme ailleurs, la recherche demeurera toujours préférable à la solution.

L'intérêt principal de *Migrance comparée / Comparing Migration* est cependant d'étendre l'horizon de la migrance littéraire pour inclure certaines autres zones d'ombre des littératures « nationales » du Canada. C'est ainsi qu'à côté d'articles sur des écrivains immigrés au sens strict du terme, on s'intéresse également à des écrivains sino-canadiens nés et/ou éduqués au Canada (comme Wayson Choy), on développe une perspective féminine sur ces questions de déplacement et d'étrangeté (avec des écrivaines comme Dionne Brand ou Marie-Célie Agnant) et on examine des phénomène migratoires non spécifiquement

culturels, comme la tension entre urbanité et ruralité. L'originalité majeure de l'ouvrage demeure toutefois d'inclure dans cette réalité migrante les oeuvres écrites par des auteurs amérindiens. Le paradoxe a de quoi frapper les esprits, puisque les Amérindiens —cette « troisième » solitude—sont le groupe culturel pouvant le mieux réclamer une réelle appartenance au territoire canadien. Dans leur perspective, la migrance devient alors celle des autres (dont on est d'abord le témoin puis la victime), ou encore celle imposée par les autres qui déplacent et restructurent les populations amérindiennes.

Brève beauté

Yves Laroche, dir.
Le Désaveuglé. Parcours de l'oeuvre de Robert Melançon. Noroît, 23,95 $

Compte rendu par Émilie Théorêt

Au moment où Robert Melançon tire sa révérence, ses amis et collègues lui rendent hommage. Par des poèmes, des lettres, ou des lectures, chacun à sa façon jette un peu plus de lumière sur cette oeuvre aux multiples facettes en explorant ce qui donne titre au collectif et qui attribue définitivement le surnom au poète : *Le Désaveuglé.*

Bien sûr, cela renvoie à la citation de de Vinci, qui dit de la poésie qu'elle est peinture aveugle, et qui inspire le titre du premier recueil de Melançon. Pour ce dernier, faire de la poésie, c'est affronter sans cesse l'obscurité. La poésie constitue chez lui l'effort de centraliser l'éparpillement et l'angoisse de l'être au monde. Le poème devient un tableau cadrant le réel tel qu'il se donne à voir. Le travail de Melançon, inlassablement comparé à celui du peintre, resserre son champ de vision sur les choses banales qui se révèlent de manière éphémère dans le paysage quotidien.

Car au-delà du savoir, duquel l'universitaire ne peut se soustraire, il y a la présence. L'expérience du monde se vit dans l'immédiat, mais dans la lenteur aussi de celui qui désire capter la beauté du présent. Cependant, cette poésie (descriptive) n'est jamais statique, comme l'affirme entre autres Jacques Brault.

Si la lumière est l'espoir au sein de la noirceur, elle n'est pas indicatrice d'un au-delà à atteindre. Au contraire, comme le spécifie Jacques Martineau, elle signifie l'existence d'un paradis (du Verger) dans l'ici, dans ce monde des apparences. Melançon invite son lecteur à jouir de ce théâtre. Le poète fait donc voir, mais plus précisément (Antoine Boisclair le distingue nettement), il donne à voir. De fait, il ne tente pas de percer les illusions, d'être voyant, il tente de les rendre telles qu'elles sont. Ainsi, le mystère demeure, le silence est conservé sur ce qui ne peut être dit.

Le dépouillement marque d'ailleurs le style de Melançon. À la fois classique et moderne (mais jamais tel qu'on l'entend—Gilles Marcotte s'attache particulièrement à la question), toujours en marge des courants dominants, il se caractérise par sa structure, et par sa souplesse. Au terme de cette lecture du *Désaveuglé*, on garde l'impression d'une poésie humble qui, sous ses apparences simple et austère, recèle des richesses insoupçonnées, nourries de ses rapports avec la littérature anglophone et japonaise. À qui prend la peine de s'y attarder, c'est la vérité des choses simples du monde qui se révèle dans sa brève beauté.

Déjouer la fatalité

Claude Le Bouthillier
Karma et coups de foudre. XYZ 21,00 $

Compte rendu par Jimmy Thibeault

Karma et coups de foudre de Claude Le Bouthillier raconte les mésaventures amoureuses de Vladimir-Xavier, un Acadien qui enchaîne coups de foudre et ruptures. Comment expliquer son incapacité à s'abandonner à l'amour? Comment

rompre avec cette nature qui le pousse à constamment sombrer dans des amours impossibles? En fait, le problème lui semble plus profond que son seul rapport aux femmes, comme une fatalité qu'il porte en lui et dont l'origine se trouverait chez ses ancêtres. Un jour qu'il s'intéresse à sa généalogie, le protagoniste trouve l'explication à son drame : en 1888, sur l'île Caraquet, Catherine, épouse d'un homme alcoolique et violent, et Augustin, mari d'une femme contrôlante, ont un coup de foudre l'un pour l'autre et vivent une aventure extraconjugale qui les mènera à leur perte. Au moment où l'épouse et le mari des deux amants découvrent leur histoire, Catherine et Augustin tentent de fuir, mais sans succès. Les autorités les arrêtent et les condamnent pour leur liaison adultère, mais également pour le meurtre du mari de Catherine, trouvé mort la nuit de leur fuite manquée. Un enfant, Agnès, naîtra de cette union extraconjugale : commence alors la ronde des drames amoureux qui se succéderont d'une génération à l'autre, jusqu'à Vladimir-Xavier.

Vécue comme un mauvais karma, l'incapacité du narrateur à trouver le bonheur amoureux devient, pour Vladimir-Xavier, l'expression d'une faute ancestrale qu'il doit à tout prix réparer. Parallèlement à sa vie amoureuse mouvementée, il se plonge dans une quête de rédemption et tente d'innocenter ses ancêtres. Au-delà des histoires d'amour, c'est une véritable quête de libération du soi par rapport à la destinée collective, le désir du personnage de prendre pied dans son présent, que présente Claude Le Bouthillier.

Canadians as Tourists

Cecilia Morgan
"A Happy Holiday": English Canadians and Transatlantic Tourism, 1870-1930. U of Toronto P $37.95

Reviewed by Wendy Roy

The common image of Canada in the nineteenth century is of a place travellers visited rather than one from which they departed. But as Cecilia Morgan's *"A Happy Holiday": English Canadians and Transatlantic Tourism* demonstrates, many Canadians travelled to Britain and Europe as tourists in the sixty years between Confederation and the Great Depression, and a number left written records of their experiences in diaries, letters and, occasionally, published accounts. Morgan has compiled a lengthy thematic study of these writings, under headings that include "Porters, Guides, and the Middle-Class Tourist," "The Hot Life of London Is Upon Us," and "Natural Wonders and National Cultures." Her approach to the cultural history of Canada through Canadians' responses abroad is intriguing, not least because the diaries and letters provide relatively unstudied and unrehearsed accounts of experiences of entertainment and personal education. The book provides a fascinating glimpse into the ways that middle-class Canadians of a hundred or more years ago experienced and wrote about relations of class, gender, culture, and imperialism, in the context of the international modernity that, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, brought Canadians wealthy enough to travel for pleasure into contact with "Others."

As Morgan makes clear, the numerous archival and published accounts she excerpts cannot be read as "straightforward or uncomplicated documentary reportage of 'other lands' " because they "helped construct and shape conceptions of 'nations' and their 'peoples.'" These texts show not

only how Canadian travellers from 1870 to 1930 constructed other people and places, but also how Canadians perceived themselves. Morgan argues that self-assessments from abroad resulted either in "self-congratulation on being a member of a white, settler dominion and thus closest to the top of the imperial hierarchy" or "consternation about being a 'colonial cousin.'" Some Canadian travellers called themselves Americans, while others complained about the crassness of tourists from the United States. Some interpreted European landscape through the Romantic lens of the picturesque and the sublime, while others were critical of representations of Canada that relied on "symbols of endless winter and a barren landscape."

Canadian travellers assessed international gender relations through descriptions of women's work in Italy, but also provided information about women's place in Canadian society through their involvement in newspaper competitions to send groups of young women, called "Maple Blossoms" and "Spectator Girls," overseas to promote Canada. Some tourists demonstrated feelings of class or ethnic superiority by complaining about their guides or "the natives," but Morgan points out that the lack of alternative accounts by those guides or "natives" reveals "relations of power" that "determined who had literacy skills and the leisure to exercise them." And while some writers ignored Ireland's colonial history and suggested that the best way for the Irish to solve problems of poverty and land ownership was to emigrate, others, such as Margaret Dixon McDougall in 1882, highlighted the injustices of Irish property and labour relations.

Morgan's book considers narratives by both unknown and well-known writers that describe a wide variety of travel activities in many different countries, but her assessment ends before the First World War and resumes in 1920. She explains convincingly that transatlantic travellers during the war were almost universally engaged in wartime activities and their accounts might necessarily be censored; her approach avoids these pitfalls but still allows for consideration of differences between pre-war and post-war travel.

'A Happy Holiday' has three deficiencies. Since I am familiar with some of the travellers about whom Morgan writes, I craved more coherent narratives of their travel experiences, rather than simply multiple brief references to the ways their diaries or letters illuminated various topics. For example, Mabel Cameron's diary entries about her visit to England in 1910-11 stemmed from her work as secretary to her aunt, Agnes Deans Cameron, well-known writer about Canada's North and promoter of the country abroad. Because Mabel's story is presented in fragments, however, the serious purposes for her travels, as well as the paradoxically gay list of entertainment and touristic events in which she participated, are not evident to the reader. My second criticism is related to Morgan's admittedly reasonable caution against making too many generalizations. While, as she points out, the travellers she considers had very different motivations, experiences, and interpretations, the occasions on which she comes to broad conclusions about multiple narratives help her arguments about the way these narratives illuminate social relations both in Canada and abroad cohere. My third criticism is about the frequency of typographical and editing errors in the book; references to a "school for the death and dumb," the joy of sunshine after "a few overcoast days in Venice," or a man who "with one hand picked up a women sitting on a chair," are too numerous to overlook. Despite these faults, however, Morgan's book is a valuable resource for those interested in a nuanced analysis of hard-to-find accounts that reveal the cultural history of Canadians abroad.

The Utopia of a Remembered Spring

Ken Norris
Going Home. Talonbooks $18.95
Stephen Collis
The Commons. Talonbooks $17.95
Alison Pick
The Dream World. McClelland & Stewart $17.99
Reviewed by Emily Wall

In their new books, Ken Norris, Stephen Collis, and Alison Pick are all writing winter poems. Pick might be said to introduce all three books with the lines: "If it should ever happen that / I lose my way and winter arrives." Norris laments the lost self in the "winter" of his life. Collis' poems are a blizzard, a whiteout of all we know and understand. These poems are laments for the lost self, the lost home, the lost world humanity used to inhabit. The speakers are, as Collis puts in, each a "feeble leaf" in a world that's far from spring.

In his poem "Return to a City" Norris says:

> Now it occurs to me that I have been
> not just one man but many,
> that I have died many times
> without knowing how I was reborn, as if
> changing clothes.

In a collection called *Going Home,* this poem poignantly illustrates the impossibility of that title, of that moment. The book sketches the postmodern life of homelessness in the middle-class, middle-aged man. It is a book of yearning, but also of resignation.

There are moments of sweetness and wishful thinking—images that sneak in of their own accord ("we are exploring / what it means to meet / mouth to mouth")—as they do in life. But like real life, they are swept away or overlooked in the next moment ("I can't find the street or the apartment / of that crazy girl who once loved me"). Norris has many poem-pairings like this throughout the book and they are his most interesting work. This giving and erasing is a way to show us how we lose ourselves. It's a whiteout of a poem, a way of showing lostness. Norris' gift is his ability to show the lost self without entirely losing the speaker and the reader.

The book would be stronger if it was pared down to these poems. There are many short, haiku-like poems that could be cut; most of them repeat simple platitudes (spring is good, the world is lonely). Other poems fail to become laments for the human condition and slip instead into self pity: "The world isn't fair / and really isn't fair to me." These unnecessary poems weaken the larger sense of lament in the book. Norris has some fine moments of poetic clarity—some rich observations of the human condition—and the entire book would benefit from some paring down, to let those moments shine.

Stephen Collis' new book, *The Commons,* takes us through a world of dislocation. The book most closely resembles a collage made entirely of language. If we imagine the collection as a whiteboard, the poems are words and phrases collaged into every corner of the board.

Collage is most emotionally powerful when we see the juxtaposition of stories and images on each other. This instead is the juxtaposition of ideas on each other—history, critical theory, and poetry itself. Collage in meditative form is tough to grasp. In his "Introduction" Collis says this book, "choruses out of context." This is perhaps a fitting title to sum up what's happening here. In deconstructing the ideas behind the context, in shying away from language as a means of construction, the poet has left us with an open space, a "commons" that anyone might own. But without definable borders, without a sense of the types of trees that inhabit this space, without the smell and colour of the bench we might sit on, why would we want to own it? With whom would we have this space in common? And in fact, do we exist in this text at all?

In this book Collis is speaking about the common people, but not *to them.* His fragmented syntax, obscure allusions, and lack of image or narrative mean he's talking to an academic audience, not to the common people. In the introduction, the writer tells us this book is part of a project that "begins and ends nowhere. It is in fact *of* 'nowhere' in a very completely incomplete sense." Although intriguing, poetry about "nowhere" is tough for the reader to own. In not allowing us to "own" the poetry, Collis makes his point, but also leaves his reader out in the snow.

Alison Pick's poems in her new book *The Dream World* oscillate between hope and despair, loneliness and the love of being alone. Like Collis, Pick writes about large ideas: about deconstructing language, about the absence of self, about a utopian society. But she gives hers weight and form, connecting ideas to the real world: an *apple* deconstructed, thought imaged as a *forest of snow.* We grasp her ideas; we taste them with her. In "Ethics" she describes her speaker as an origami crane, flattened: "Why the ache to fly with the flock? Smooth out the paper: / the animal creases remain." Pick's lyric poems are haunting elegies to the self, and to lost love. But there is no self-pity in these poems, even in the poem titled, with humour, "Poor Me." Although the poems deal with loneliness and with loss, they don't demand sympathy from an audience full of strangers. They instead aim to share the human condition of loneliness. She conjures up for us a "driftwood heart so quick to ignite—huddle around its thin flicker."

A reader does huddle around these poems, but they don't give off just a thin flicker—they ignite our hands with light and warmth. Pick is a master of figurative language. In its true sense, she uses it to illuminate moments, rather than to create poetic statements. In her poem "Thank you for not Smoking" she uses vivid and delightful personification: "On the seventh day Solitude comes to my door / with a bottle of cheap scotch / and matches." The speaker of these poems lives in the real world: in a bar, in a bed, along a riverbank. The reader wants to reach out and touch these poems, to be warmed by them, and at moments, have fingers singed by Pick's vision of our world.

All three of these poets are writing elegies. These poets move back in time—both personal and collective—to a time when things were more possible: when the speakers had love, when the world was fresh on their fingertips, when Spring, figurative and real, was still upon us.

The Old World and the New

Britta Olinder, ed.

Literary Environments: Canada and the Old World. Peter Lang US $46.95

Reviewed by Birgitta Berglund

When I first saw the Vancouver street called Broadway, on an early evening in August 2008 only a couple of hours after my arrival in Canada, I thought it was rather grey, dull, and dingy. Now, having lived just around the corner for six months and used it daily for shopping, eating out, and taking the bus to and from work, I see it as a vibrant place with a large variety of interesting and colourful shops and restaurants. I have sometimes wondered why my initial perception of the place was so different from the one I now have. Could it have had something to do with the weather? (But August 2008 was not grey. It was hot and sunny, and the day I arrived was no exception.) Was it because I was tired and jet-lagged? (I certainly was, having travelled for almost twenty-four hours.) Or did it have something to do with the way we look at something unfamiliar as opposed to something familiar? And in that case, which view is the correct one? According to Yi-Fu Tuan in *Topophilia: A Study of Environ-*

mental Perception, Attitudes and Values, a visitor, somebody who sees a place for the first time, is more liable to evaluate it from an aesthetic perspective—and as often as not this is one based on more or less superficial, formal criteria of beauty—whereas this perspective disappears when you become a resident. In "Finding a Place: Female Space in the Evolving Pioneer World in Canada, 1828 to 1846", one of the essays in *Literary Environments*, Jane Mattisson makes use of Tuan in her discussion of female English immigrants to Canada in the first half of the nineteenth century, showing how the woman who comes with the intention of staying in Canada sees things differently from the one who comes as a visitor.

Literary Environments is a collection of conference papers and has the shortcomings of most such collections. The individual contributions are short and they vary greatly both in quality and content. Most of the articles are analyses of literary texts. There are essays on the writings of Margaret Atwood, Joy Kogawa, Marlene Nourbese Philip, Rudy Wiebe, Gwendolyn MacEwen, Janice Kulyk Keefer, Jane Urquhart, and Alistair MacLeod, as well as more general musings on such varied topics as urban fantasy, historiographic metafiction, anglophone representations of Acadia, contemporary English-Canadian plays and (wait for it) "Hockey Fictions." It took the last-mentioned article by Björn Sundmark to make this traveller from the Old World notice that the new five-dollar bill has a picture of children playing hockey.

A handful of essays also deal with journals or travel narratives by early settlers. For instance, Richard Davies writes "The Travel Book's Itinerary: The Case of Sir John Franklin". Both military and fur-trade personnel travelling in the New World in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were required by their employers at home to keep detailed daily journals, several of which were later published and helped construct an image of the New World for European readers. Davies asks "How did it come about that such foundational books were produced by men who enjoyed little education beyond the professional training they gained in the workplace?" Davies shows how these writers in general, and perhaps Franklin in particular, habitually edited and made later additions to their daily journal entries, so that the borderline between daily (factual) journal and literary (artful) text becomes fluid. This article forms an interesting counterpart to Mattisson's essay on the journals of female travellers. Each sheds light on the other, and they thus illustrate the strength of a collection like this: the shortness of the individual essays is to some extent made up for by the accumulative effect they have on one another, and the whole becomes more than the sum of its parts.

Indigenous Histories

Daniel N. Paul
We Were Not the Savages: Collision Between European and Native American Civilizations. Fernwood $27.95

Michael Ross interviewing Joe Crowshoe Sr.
Weasel Tail: Stories told by Joe Crowshoe Sr. (Aapohsoy'yiis), a Peigan-Blackfoot elder. NeWest $32.95

Reviewed by Tasha Hubbard

Savage/civilized has been a stubborn binary in the realm of Indigenous-European history, with the term 'savage' being exclusively applied to Indigenous peoples. Mi'kmaq author Daniel N. Paul builds a case that it was actually the European governments and settlers who deserved the "barbarian savage" mantle. He calls his book*We Were Not the Savages* "a history of one of the Native American peoples, a people who gave their all to defend home and country and fought courageously for survival." As Indigenous peoples of Canada still find themselves

locked in this struggle, a well-researched revisionist history of contact between the Mi'kmaq and Europeans is of particular value as it turns the savage/civilized binary on its head.

We Were Not the Savages was first published in 1993. In this third edition, Paul retains most of the material of the second, including extensive quotations from primary sources outlining the trajectory of European contact, colonization, and twentieth-century racism and centralization as well as the impact of this trajectory on the Mi'kmaq people. The book contains detailed descriptions of early Mi'kmaq civilizations, European contact and conflict, and the treaty-making (and breaking) process. In the updated edition, Paul adds contemporary developments, including more details of the infamous Scalp Proclamations, a particularly disturbing aspect of Indigenous-European relations. Several of these proclamations were issued by colonial governments in the mid-eighteenth century. One, issued by Governor Charles Lawrence, remains on the books of Nova Scotia's laws, and Paul outlines the twenty-first-century attempt and failure to have it struck from the records.

A long-time employee of the Department of Indian Affairs as District Superintendent of Reserves and Trusts for Nova Scotia, Paul includes stories of racism and oppression from his own experience to supplement his account of the more contemporary struggles for Mi'kmaq people. He is not afraid to stray from the typical "objective" tone found in most historical texts. This edition includes an "Afterword" which provides some textual history of *We Were Not the Savages*, and the reception to its difficult and controversial message. Paul is an author heavily invested in his past and his people, and he is telling a history that many would like to forget.

In *Weasel Tail,* the emphasis is on "not forgetting" the knowledge and stories of this particular "Old Man." Following in the vein of such texts as *Write It on Your Heart*, a collaborative effort of Okanagan storyteller Harry Robinson and editor Wendy Wickwire, *Weasel Tail* is also a collaboration between storyteller and historian. Audio recordings of Joe Crowshoe that began in the 1990s by Brian Noble were halted and then taken up again by Michael Ross. The resulting twenty hours of Crowshoe's stories were translated from Blackfoot to English, left uncondensed, and kept closely to the stories' original form. The process is described by Ross as "piecing together a complicated jigsaw puzzle." Regardless of the challenges, the final text is a wealth of personal history and Blackfoot cultural knowledge. It provides an example of a life lived in a good way. Unfortunately, because Crowshoe died in 1999, he was unable to participate in the actual editing process. Still, his wish for his stories to be disseminated has come to fruition.

Ross surrounds Crowshoe's stories with photos, notes, and sidebars in order to provide "insight into the subjects he talks about." The notes and sidebars provide quotations from other historical texts, short biographical sketches of photographers, anthropologists and Blackfoot elders, and contextual information on Blackfoot culture. This allows the book to be read in multiple ways: a reader familiar with the Blackfoot history and culture could choose to focus on the stories themselves, or a reader less knowledgeable can stop to read the assorted marginalia alongside the stories, in order to understand the "historical context of culture, time, and place." The stories tell of specific ceremonial traditions, trips Crowshoe took abroad, and family histories. Several of the stories read as conversations between Crowshoe, his wife Josephine, and his sons Reg and Ross. Together Joe and Josephine held several important ceremonial positions within Blackfoot society. Ross notes how she would interject "Listen to this!" at particularly important junctures in the stories. The

subtext of her comment is echoed by Indigenous leaders and scholars, who tell us that stories are inherently necessary for a community's survival. We should all listen.

Whether stories are of historical events or of a more personal nature, all are valuable. We are told that both the oral and the written have roles to play in understanding our pasts in order to negotiate our futures. Both of these books participate in this multi-layered approach of telling Indigenous history.

Canadian Forests

Stephen J. Pyne
Awful Splendour: A Fire History of Canada. U of British Columbia P $34.95

George Stanley Godwin; Robert S. Thomson, ed.
The Eternal Forest. Godwin $20.00

Reviewed by David Brownstein

Awful Splendour is the latest volume in Stephen Pyne's growing library of fire histories. After other examinations which have included national and global studies, this American environmental historian now turns his attention to Canada. *Awful Splendour* "describes why (and how) fire exists in Canada, or what might be termed fire's Canadian condition." According to Pyne, Canadians have expressed a relationship with fire through machines and institutions for its suppression, excelling at technological control and negotiated politics. This is contrasted with Australia and the US in which fire management intertwined with land management "in ways that made questions about what to do with fire of importance to . . . national culture." This is a marvellously encyclopaedic synthesis of a vast secondary literature on a complex topic.

Written in three unequal parts, "Torch," "Axe," and "Engine," the book explores the intersection of a boreal environment with the dynamics of a political confederation. "Torch" describes Indigenous fire use organized by bioregion, with emphasis on contemporary understandings of regional ecologies and, to a lesser extent, on Indigenous inhabitants' traditional use of fire. In "Axe," Pyne recounts how this pyric regime was rewritten by European contact and the associated increase in combustible debris resulting from logging and agricultural settlement. Finally, in "Engine"—the lengthiest part by far—we learn of Canadian institutional attempts to manage uncontrolled combustion in the industrial age. These themes are a rehearsal of familiar ideas in a context new to Pyne. As such this work is best understood in concert with Pyne's previous scholarship, which more clearly articulates that fire prohibition has unintended, often deleterious ecological consequences.

Frequent comparison with the American experience nudges the book into the realm of comparative history. However, on occasion the border disappears entirely when Pyne draws upon American archival vignettes to bring Canadian fire regimes to life. Canada's lack of an obvious national narrative frustrated Pyne, and in his introductory author's note we learn that this imposed upon him an uneasy confederation of stories; in Pyne's words, these are "awkward" narratives, encompassing distinct yet related federal, provincial, and territorial fire histories. Despite the structural complications, with so few books devoted to Canada's forests at a national level, *Awful Splendour* fills a gaping hole. Pyne should be applauded for having drawn together an enormous body of grey literature found only in personal libraries and departmental back-office filing cabinets.

The Eternal Forest was also written by an author new to Canada. It is a fictional homesteading account, informed by the four years that English expatriates George and Dorothy Godwin spent eking out an existence in British Columbia's forested Fraser Valley. Godwin (1889-1974) renamed

their Whonnock clearing "Ferguson's Landing" for the purposes of the story, and he himself assumes the anonymous title "the Newcomer." Originally published as a 1929 single printing, the book was more recently revived with a 1994 edition by the author's grandson, Robert Thomson.

In this period-eye-view of pre-First World War British Columbia, Godwin recounts the harsh and arduous experience of Canadian land-clearing. Through the Newcomer's trials, we appreciate the Fraser Valley residents' impotence; they must labour to extract a meagre subsistence from nature, at the same time feeding an urban capitalist system hungry for these paltry profits. Looking for any means of escape, however unlikely, Valley inhabitants were easy prey for soft Vancouver real-estate agents and slimy oil-stock promoters.

Godwin's frank expression of racist anxiety can also be tied to the gross financial insecurity of the homesteaders. While Thomson's edition has removed the most offensive epithets of the original, the colonial tension between the British immigrants and their Scandinavian, Asian, and Native neighbours is clear. Having displaced the Natives as the dominant population only decades before, the Newcomer and his kin did not feel sure in their control of the province. Moreover, that they experienced so much difficulty in extracting wealth from their forest clearings, while Chinese, Japanese, and Sikh immigrants were thriving in increasing numbers, caused them very real fear. When presented with a means of escape in the form of a Japanese buyer for his clearing, the Newcomer refuses to sell on principle, even though nobody would thank him for "putting his puny carcase in the way of the Japanese invasion."

The experience of land-clearing erased the Newcomer's youthful idealism. Indeed, it was through fighting a forest fire that he concluded that "the powers of destruction rule the universe." He felt similarly with regard to economic cycles. Once an oil stock boom had imploded, gullible Valley investors returned to the work of their clearings. "They were like men after a night's debauch. . . . The fun of anticipation was rather more than offset by the letdown." Ultimately Godwin was forced to return to England with his family, economically defeated by both forest and Vancouver capitalists. He took quixotic satisfaction in the prediction that some day the eternal forest would witness the city's passing and reclaim its own. This has yet to happen, but a reading of both books gives a window into the past and insight into questions regarding possible forested futures.

Visions (socio-)poétiques de Marie-Claire Blais

Janine Ricouart et Roseanna Dufault, dirs.
Visions poétiques de Marie-Claire Blais. Remue-Ménage 24,95 $

Compte rendu par Marilyn Randall

L'ouvrage présente des « perspectives fraîches sur des textes bien connus, ainsi que sur des romans plus récents » et vise à combler l'absence d'ouvrage consacré à l'écrivaine depuis celui de Mary-Jean Green (*Marie-Claire Blais*, Twayne, 1995). Les quatorze essais du volume traitent ainsi des romans mais aussi des carnets d'écriture, des illustrations, des nouvelles et des essais, des pièces de théâtre et d'un scénario de film. Un extrait du roman *Naissance de Rébecca* . . . (Boréal, 2008), inédit à l'époque, un poème en hommage à l'écrivaine, un entretien avec elle et une bibliographie, « la plus complète à ce jour », enrichissent le volume qui s'ouvre par une brève « Préface » de Nicole Brossard. Sa relecture d'*Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel,* quarante-trois ans après sa parution, n'est pas à négliger.

Les essais sont présentés sans organisation explicite, mais on y constate un mouvement du mieux connu vers le moins connu. Les

trois premiers textes consacrés à *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel* constituent une entrée en matière judicieuse qui orientera le lectorat non-spécialiste, tout en maintenant la promesse des « perspectives fraîches » : après l'essai sur l'enfance et « le salut par l'écriture » de Pascale Vergereau-Dewey, ceux de Kirsty Bell sur les illustrations de Mary Meigs et de Julie LeBlanc sur la génétique du « Testament de Jean Le Maigre » abordent des aspects du roman moins accessibles. La suite des contributions présente deux tendances; des études thématiques proposent des analyses synthétiques d'une oeuvre qui s'étend sur plus de quarante ans : l'espace dans *Soifs* (Nathalie Roy); la présence de l'hiver (Katri Suhonen); le désert (Irène Oore); l'imaginaire de l'eau (Pascale de Vaucher Gravili); l'influence de Dostoïevsky (Oriel MacLennan et John Barnstead). D'autres essais abordent des oeuvres particulières : les pièces de théâtre (Karin Egloff et Célita Lamar) et le scénario du film *Tu as crié / Let me go* (1996), documentaire sur la toxicomanie réalisé par Anne-Claire Poirier (Winifred Woodhull). Les contributions des éditrices mettent en lumière les aspects engagés de l'oeuvre, d'abord, dans les écrits non-fictifs, notamment les carnets américains et les essais (Roseanne Dufault), et ensuite dans l'oeuvre romanesque, où la « vision politique » témoigne d'un « monde en déclin depuis les années 1960 » (Ricouart). Or, cet engagement se manifeste aussi dans le scénario de film et dans le roman *Ange de la solitude* qui interroge les paradoxes des « solidarités identitaires », surtout celles issues du racisme et de l'homophobie (Ghislaine Boulanger).

La grande diversité de sujets traités contribue à la richesse du volume où étudiants et spécialistes trouveront chacun à s'alimenter; une autre de ses forces est de rassembler l'abondante critique blaisienne, autant par les relectures qui en sont faites que par le biais de l'outil bibliographique. En dépit de la généralité du titre « visions poétiques », l'insistance mise par les éditrices sur les aspects engagés de l'oeuvre laisse soupçonner la présence d'un projet en sourdine : ouvrir la perspective sur les « visions *socio*-poétiques » d'une oeuvre dite *visionnaire*.

Trajets littéraires

Hélène Rioux
Mercredi soir au Bout du monde. XYZ 25,00 $

Daniel Castillo Durante
Un café dans le Sud. XYZ 25,00 $

Andrée Laurier
Horizons navigables. XYZ 24,00 $

Pierre Chatillon
Île était une fois. XYZ 25,00 $

Compte rendu par Marilou Potvin-Lajoie

S'il fut un temps où la plupart des fictions québécoises étaient géographiquement désincarnées, on ne saurait reprocher aux auteurs Hélène Rioux, Daniel Castillo Durante, Andrée Laurier, et Pierre Chatillon de ne pas nommer le territoire qui les habite. Ainsi, les quatre romans de la maison montréalaise XYZ dont nous rendons compte sont des voyages littéraires doublés d'un parcours géographique aux frontières élastiques, ce qui n'est pas sans déplaire au lecteur en mal d'évasion.

L'ouvrage d'Hélène Rioux, intitulé *Mercredi soir au Bout du monde*, est un roman habile, bien ficelé, illustrant de brillante façon cette idée que les mots s'interpellent les uns les autres. À partir d'un petit restaurant minable de l'Est de Montréal, le lecteur est littéralement projeté dans un tour du monde physique, grâce aux points géographiques que le récit couvre, et linguistique, par l'exploration des registres de langue. Des extraits de texte sont constamment repris d'un chapitre à l'autre, et tissent en écho le fil ténu de la trame narrative, tout en offrant au lecteur de lumineux points de jonction entre chaque événement. L'auteure explore les individus

dans leur spécificité, mais aussi dans ce qu'ils ont de plus banal, en articulant gestes et paroles autour du manque, moteur du récit. Le Bout du monde se présente à la fois comme le point de départ et d'arrivée pour ces personnages presque familiers, en quête d'amour, de liberté, de beauté. Indéniablement, cet arrimage culturel subtil entre la Russie, l'Ukraine, le Mexique, la Floride, et le Québec dénote une maîtrise certaine de la langue et de la stylistique, de l'art d'écrire des dialogues en passant par la construction de personnages, le tout dans une poésie fluide, mais lourde de sens. On referme le livre avec la sensation d'avoir bouclé la boucle, sans pour autant avoir élucidé l'énigme propre à chaque personnage, qu'on pourra peut-être retrouver dans les trois autres « Fragments de monde » que l'auteure souhaite offrir à ses lecteurs. *Mercredi soir au Bout du monde* serait donc le premier opus d'un cycle de quatre romans.

Sur un ton plus amer, Daniel Castillo Durante parcourt les Amériques, surtout celle au sud de l'équateur, dans ce qu'elle a de plus dérangeant. Contrairement au roman précédent, la lecture d'*Un café dans le Sud* laisse un profond malaise. Au départ, la texture du roman n'est pourtant pas sans plaire : le narrateur se laisse aller à de fort belles images, colorées, sensuelles, érotiques. Mais la vie dans toutes ses rondeurs se flétrit rapidement sous la plume de Castillo Durante. La mesquinerie et la misère humaine, autant matérielle que psychologique, vole la vedette, peut-être malgré elles, pour devenir prépondérantes, empester les pages, et en masquer la beauté. Les odeurs et les couleurs qui inondaient les premiers moments de lecture s'estompent dramatiquement, et l'on referme le livre en se demandant ce qu'on avait à y gagner, si ce n'est ce profond malaise, qui perdure plus longtemps que l'on ne le souhaiterait. Si c'était là l'intention de l'auteur, c'est réussi. *Un café dans le Sud* est tout de même à l'image de son titre, chaud et sucré, titillant les sens comme l'arôme invitant du café à la cannelle, mais à trop forte dose, le parfum finit par donner la nausée à mesure que le soleil se couche dans la vie du héros. Le roman de Castillo Durante s'adresse au lecteur averti, qui connaît un tant soit peu les excès et dérapages d'une Amérique latine durement dépeinte. Soulignons l'alternance de la première et de la troisième personne, du personnage principal et du narrateur externe. Le héros, alors qu'il se raconte, ne maîtrise en rien sa situation : il se déresponsabilise constamment et remet la cause de ses problèmes sur le dos d'une relation difficile avec un père qu'il a refusé de mieux connaître. Lorsque le narrateur externe prend la relève, c'est pour confirmer l'issue inéluctable que prendra le récit. Un homme a couru à sa perte; qu'il sombre. *Un café dans le Sud* demeure malgré tout l'oeuvre d'un romancier d'expérience, pour qui la fiction est un lieu de prédilection pour transgresser les limites de l'amour et de la mort.

On délaisse l'humidité de la jungle argentine pour le sable soufflé par Andrée Laurier dans *Les Horizons navigables*, livre écrit sur un tout autre ton. Loin du réalisme empirique de Castillo Durante, le roman de Laurier semble de prime abord totalement éclaté, voire ésotérique, sans pour autant être poétique. Le début n'est pourtant pas sans intérêt : l'héroïne que Laurier présente a déjà commencé sa métamorphose; ouvrir le livre, c'est surprendre la chenille tissant sa chrysalide. On entreprend ainsi la quête ardue d'une jeune femme à travers le désert, métaphore de son intériorité. Myriam cherche l'amour, et c'est son pendentif qui confirme son désir voilé : défiant les lois de la gravité, il se déplace vers la gauche, en insistant sur le coeur. Pour entreprendre pleinement cette quête du moi et de l'Autre, Myriam doit quitter ses proches. La jeune femme met le cap vers l'Afrique du Nord; les descriptions deviennent floues et nébuleuses, toujours orientées vers la métaphore du sable. Ce que l'on retient de ces

Horizons navigables, c'est cette ambiance flottante de songe et de rêve, dans laquelle se fondent une héroïne atypique et le fascinant pouvoir de séduction qu'elle exerce. Il faut cependant être patient pour naviguer sur la trame à peine esquissée de ce roman; le texte, tout comme le personnage, se laisse difficilement pénétrer, et il faut persévérer pour apprécier le doigté de l'auteure dans sa quête de beauté.

Le dernier ouvrage revu dissèque justement une quête assumée de la beauté, cette fois par le poète Pierre Chatillon. Ce carnet aurait tout aussi bien porté le titre de journal de bord d'un érudit : l'auteur y raconte sa grande passion pour la musique savante, indissociable de la poésie. Les mots du poète servent la cause de la musique; il semble que c'est pour mieux lui rendre hommage que Chatillon a rendu public ses méditations sur la vie, la nature et l'art. Fait à noter, l'auteur en profite pour inclure quelques fragments de fiction qui n'ont jamais été publiés, des inédits de fantasmes loufoques, qui marquent une agréable pause dans l'étalement de notes et de mots célébrant les plus grands chefs d'oeuvre de l'humanité. Chatillon offre ses réflexions, à décortiquer lentement sur une sonate de Bach pour entendre, de concert avec l'écrivain, cette nature qu'il chante dans le vent et l'écume de son paradis floridien. Les mots d'*Île était une fois* donnent envie qu'on les laisse mûrir doucement, lentement, pour mieux en savourer la finesse.

Culinary Memoirs

Denise Roig
Butter Cream: A Year in a Montreal Pastry School. Signature $18.95

Elizabeth Driver, ed.
Culinary Landmarks: A Bibliography of Canadian Cookbooks, 1825-1949. U of Toronto P $185.00

Reviewed by Nathalie Cooke

While these two books could not be more different in size and scope, they are both culinary memoirs of a kind that address a growing fascination with Canadian foodways and what they reveal about who we are.

Neither one of these is a cookbook, although recipes do punctuate both. Elizabeth Driver, for example, offers recipes by way of introducing each province's foodways: "Cod Tongues in Cream Sauce" for Newfoundland; "Bloaters on Toast" for Nova Scotia. Denise Roig's chapters detail her struggles to perfect a particular dish or ingredient, often concluding with the recipe itself: Alfred's French Meringues, for example, Génoise, Ganache, and Italian Meringue Butter Cream.

Roig's *Butter Cream* is the memoir of one year spent completing the French pastry program at Montreal's Pearson School of the Culinary Arts. The year unfolds in 251 pages of breathless present tense. Readers accompany Roig to the pastry classroom or "lab" by day and to her kitchen for the late nights of baking homework, vicariously taste blissful mouthfuls of cream, and witness the endless race to fit everything in when one is mother, wife, writer, and student. The narrative voice is unabashedly autobiographical: the "I" narrator has authored the same collections of short stories as Roig herself. Classmates and teachers appear under their own names in the book and the acknowledgements. I was struck by her candour—confessions of exam jitters, of being the oldest student in a class of youngsters, even of earlier bouts with an

eating disorder. Rather than being a confession, it is a memoir. But while memoirs are typically written by famous people who move in circles of equally famous and therefore interesting people, *Butter Cream* is a memoir of interesting people, told by someone who simultaneously signals and diminishes her expertise—perhaps uneasy with the genre's need to engage readers through the celebrity of its author? While Roig points to the extraordinary tenacity and talent of Montreal chefs—those at Pearson, in their own bakeries or Montreal's top restaurants and hotels—the climactic moments of the book have to do with triumphs in the classroom, gestures of friendship, and the emerging dynamic of a group that starts the academic year as a heterogeneous bunch and becomes, through dint of trial, error, and bomb scare, a team.

If *Butter Cream* is a memoir of a year in the life of a student and her classmates, *Culinary Landmarks*, like a memoir, chronicles the way Canadian cookbooks can best be understood in the context of their time and place, and the company they keep.

Elizabeth Driver's *Culinary Landmarks* chronicles 125 years of Canadian cookbooks in its 1257 pages, tipping the scale at about ten pounds (five pounds more than the maximum weight for my kitchen scale). Driver began the project in 1990, a year after she published her *A Bibliography of Cookbooks Published in Britain, 1875-1914*, and travelled across the country to libraries, museums, and the homes of private collectors, turning up information on 2,276 Canadian cookbooks. It is the first and only comprehensive bibliography of Canadian cookbooks. Its thoughtful introduction, extensive acknowledgements detailing librarians, collectors and scholars, detailed citation information, and annotative notes are a treasure chest. Driver's organizational scheme, where cookbooks are catalogued first by the province and next by date of their publication, establishes a framework on which subsequent discussions of Canadian cookbooks will be built. Section introductions situate culinary history within the context of Confederation and cultural history, even in the case of a province or territory boasting few cookbooks, like the Yukon Territory's one cookbook, or the Northwest Territories' two. What was the first cookbook published in English? 1831, *The Cook Not Mad*, or O.1: O (for Ontario) and 1 (for the first cookbook published in Ontario). What were the first locally authored cookbooks in French and English? 1840, *La cuisinière canadienne*, henceforth to be known as Q3.1; and also 1840, *The Frugal Housewife's Manual* or O2.1. The organizational scheme allows and invites readers to easily identify new additions to the corpus. Ironically, the more successful this bibliography is in prompting such responses, the more quickly it will become outdated. University of Toronto Press would do well to ask Driver to issue annual updates, and to release the book on a CD to facilitate easy searching, not to mention portability. *Culinary Landmarks* is itself a landmark in bibliographical scholarship and an invaluable research tool for those working in the area of food studies broadly, and Canadian women's, culinary, and social history more specifically.

Two Literary Lives

Val Ross

Robertson Davies: A Portrait in Mosaic. McClelland and Stewart $36.99

A.B. McKillop

Pierre Berton: A Biography. McClelland and Stewart $37.99

Reviewed by Nicholas Bradley

In *Robertson Davies,* Val Ross creates a chronicle of her subject's life by compiling anecdotes about Davies that she collected from his family members, friends, and literary colleagues. As a result of her method, her

book does not displace Judith Skelton Grant's biography, *Robertson Davies: Man of Myth* (1994), which Ross acknowledges as "authoritative," yet this compendium of responses illuminates Davies, his works, and his place in Canadian literary history. Ross, probably best known as a reporter for the *Globe and Mail*, explains her approach by referring to the powerful presence that Davies commanded and to the distinctly theatrical nature of his public persona: "despite his passion for privacy, Davies lived large. He made impressions, sometimes very deep ones, on many people. In this oral history—a collection of spoken memories and impressions of the man—it is my hope to cast an image of this shape-shifter of an artist." Ross draws on recollections from an impressive array of public figures, including Margaret Atwood, David Cronenberg, Kildare Dobbs, John Irving, Shyam Selvadurai, and Scott Symons. Although the reminiscences of Davies' family are fundamentally important to the book, the stories of the more famous of Ross' interviewees add considerable general interest to the volume.

The "portrait in mosaic" that emerges depicts a highly idiosyncratic man who, especially at the end of his life—born in 1913, Davies died in 1995—was generally seen to be out of step with his world. My own sense is that the works of several other Canadian authors who were roughly Davies' contemporaries—such as Sheila Watson (b.1909), Irving Layton (b.1912), P.K. Page (b.1916), and Al Purdy (b.1918)—seem more vitally linked to the contemporary world, while Davies' works seem further removed from the present than they actually are. By suggesting the vibrancy of Davies' writing and by demonstrating the author's prominence in the literary circles of his time, Ross does his reputation a valuable service. The book has no critical apparatus to speak of—although the index is thorough—rendering it less than ideal as a scholarly resource. However, *Robertson Davies* will certainly prove useful to critics and students of Davies' works, while readers with an interest in the author's life will find it engaging. A publisher's note concludes the book poignantly, explaining that Ross died shortly after she finished work on the biography.

In contrast to *Robertson Davies,* A.B. McKillop's *Pierre Berton* is a full-fledged academic biography. Nearly eight-hundred pages long, including eighty pages of notes, and with a generous selection of photographs, it provides a comprehensive and tremendously detailed record of Berton's life. McKillop enjoyed the cooperation of Berton and his family; the biography is, according to its author, "a sympathetic and affectionate, but not uncritical, account of its subject." McKillop suggests that one of his primary challenges was to contend with Berton's own self-portrayal. In his note on sources, he makes a telling observation about the durability of Berton's version: "By the time I interviewed Pierre Berton in 2002 and 2004 [he died at the end of November that year], he had long since established in his own mind a set narrative of his life, suggested in this book, having spoken and written about it so often and at so much length over so many years. Words and phrases he used in interviews with me echoed those he had deployed in his two volumes of autobiography, *Starting Out* (1987) and *My Times* (1995), and in scores of interviews." This self-presentation was abetted by earlier representations of Berton's life. As McKillop describes it, "Elspeth Cameron's profile of Berton [in *Saturday Night* in 1987] . . . portrayed him as the perpetual Boy Scout whose adolescent enthusiasms helped explain his life and career. The lengthy article briefly mentioned the Sordsmen's Club [sic; a private social club started by Berton and Jack McClelland] but said nothing of Berton's philandering. Yet some people Cameron interviewed made clear that his circle knew a good deal about it but had remained discreetly silent." The biographer's

task, McKillop implies by his anecdote about interviewing the elderly writer, was to find a way of escaping the powerful, enduring influence of Berton's understanding, or invention, of his own life.

The familiarity of the events of Berton's life—as well as the interpretation thereof—provided another potential obstacle for McKillop. The contours of Berton's writing life, from his beginnings as a reporter during his student days at the University of British Columbia to his rise to the part of "Mr. Canada, the popular historian," and author of *The National Dream* (1970) and *The Last Spike* (1971) are well known. Yet McKillop recounts the story with confidence and subtlety. His appreciation of his subject is evident in this passage describing Berton's start at *The Ubyssey* in 1939: "Pierre Berton's first headline as a recognized journalist was 'New Books Grace Library Shelves,' and the opening sentence of his first story read, 'The following six books were purchased this week by the library.' He read those printed words over and over again, and was thrilled each time. 'I thought it was beautiful,' he later wrote." McKillop treats non-literary matters—including Berton's sexual peccadilloes, his attitudes toward women, and his remarkable arrogance—delicately. His astute discussion of the academic reception of Berton's books is especially interesting, and reveals a Berton deeply affected by criticism. "Insecurity is the flip side of arrogance," McKillop observes, proceeding to remark that Berton "told people that he was indifferent to the academics' criticism of his books, but attacks from this quarter invariably drew his attention and sometimes his ire." McKillop's meticulous attention to the personal and historical circumstances in which Berton wrote his works makes *Pierre Berton* a superb biography, one that documents both Berton's writing career and his defining role in the Canada of his time. Quite in addition to the book's significance as a source of information about Berton, McKillop's excellent rendering of Berton's life is a notable accomplishment.

Comics Journalism

Joe Sacco

Palestine: The Special Edition. Fantagraphic US $29.95

Reviewed by Janice Morris

"Some of the world's blackest holes are out in the open for anyone to see." Indeed. Fifteen years after its first publication, Joe Sacco's *Palestine* continues to provoke—a groundbreaking comics journalism *tour de force* that lays bare the human misery hidden in Middle Eastern plain sight. Sacco's nine original comic books are reissued here in a special anniversary edition with Edward Said's original introduction, along with new essays, commentary, journal notes, photographs, and reworked pages. *Palestine* remains a landmark work of reportage and nonfiction forms, chronicling Sacco's experiences on the ground as he explored the occupied territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in the waning days of the First Intifada. Perhaps never timelier in light of recent escalations in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, *Palestine* has withstood its harshest critics and emerged as a journalistic and literary touchstone, throwing into relief not only Palestinian suffering but also the narrative range of the comics medium.

Sacco's gonzo-style approach—opportunistically traversing neighbourhoods, towns, refugee camps, prisoner camps, and no-man's lands—locates itself not in military strategies, troop movements, or war rooms, but rather cafés, bars, rented rooms, and people's homes, where the coffee flows, and the wounds and martyrs are plentiful. His depictions of Palestinian life are at once boisterous and enlivening yet repetitively monotonous—a paradox perhaps most fitting a chaotic,

arbitrary existence emblematized by the very predictability of that randomness. Sacco is relentless in his pursuit of first-person Palestinian testimonies, drawing out what sadly become familiar accounts of the mechanisms of institutionalized, sanctioned *apartheid*—the unending cycle of capricious laws, restrictions, curfews, harassments, deprivations, occupations, detentions, arrests, imprisonments, torture, and perhaps even more damaging, the resultant internalizations—burning hatred in some and resignation in others. His artwork is similarly unflinching, from the painstakingly dense stippling and striping of splash pages, to the dark, angular, individuated frames and faces heavy with despair. *Palestine*'s unrelenting visual stylistics not only capture the reader's eye, but force it along, tethering it to a steady stream of word balloons, narrative captions, and lengthy prose.

While it draws heavily on those who suffer under Israeli occupation, *Palestine* also emphasizes Sacco's reporter's role and, in so doing, draws forth two dominant themes. First, by his own admission, Sacco's is a purposely limited, and thus, unapologetically biased perspective, largely eschewing the Israeli stories he claims have been well established in favour of previously unheard voices. However, feigning neither neutrality nor moral authority, Sacco instead makes obvious his apprehension and ambivalence, constantly questioning his own motives (and that of his hosts for whom he holds no delusions of totalized victimhood) and acknowledging a perception that is always already subjective and unavoidably fallible. Second, that subjectivity throws open the larger myth of "objective journalism" and reveals the rhetoric inherent to all cultural production, in particular mainstream news media where the traditional currency is dispassionate and detached "facts." And perhaps it is on this point that *Palestine*'s comics medium deliver its most leveling blow: narrative by way of typically fragmented and multiple interpretations—whose meanings derive from both words and images, from plain "realism" as much as symbolic "surrealism"— is more proximate to the often unpredictable, impenetrable human rhythms it seeks to record. Precisely because it allows for a variety of interpretive codes, the comics medium presents an unlikely, but nonetheless apt, documentary aesthetic suitable to capturing our politically dissonant times.

Traduire la poésie

Robyn Sarah; Marie Frankland, trad.
Le tamis des jours. Noroît 20,95 $

Charlotte Melançon
La prison magique. Noroît 23,95 $

Compte rendu par Patricia Godbout

Dans *Pour une critique des traductions*, Antoine Berman propose en guise de méthode d'effectuer un « patient travail de lecture et de relecture de la traduction ou des traductions, *en laissant entièrement de côté l'original* ». Devant l'édition bilingue intitulée *Le tamis des jours* réunissant des poèmes choisis de Robyn Sarah dans la traduction de Marie Frankland, il est toutefois difficile de résister, dans un premier temps du moins, « à la compulsion de comparaison ». Cette première lecture de la traduction pour elle-même est cependant essentielle, écrit Berman, pour voir si le texte « tient ». Dans le cas présent, vérification faite, « ça tient », pour reprendre le titre français d'un poème de Sarah. Sensible—dans le poème « Solstice » par exemple—aux effets de réfraction du soleil qui, dans les chambres hivernales, atteint « with / tremulous light, interior places / it has not lit before », la traductrice prolonge cette obliquité lumineuse (et sonore) en parlant de la « clarté frémissante des endroits / qui ont oublié sa lumière ». Certains des poèmes du recueil avaient été traduits en 1990 dans la revue *Ellipse*. Le choix de poèmes à traduire ayant,

à l'époque, aussi été fait par l'auteure, on en déduit que ce sont des poèmes qu'elle affectionne particulièrement. L'un d'entre eux, « Nocturne », y avait été traduit par Pierre Nepveu, qui signe ici la préface et note avec justesse que cette poésie du quotidien, de la lessive qui s'accumule et des ourlets à refaire n'en est pas moins « ouverte sur les constellations ». Sarah nous offre en effet une très belle poésie méditative qui se pose dans les interstices (« entre la coquille intacte / et l'éclosion », dit le poème intitulé « Vivante »), qui explore, comme le suggère le titre d'un de ses recueils, *The space between sleep and waking*.

Se mettre au diapason d'un auteur, c'est aussi ce que fait Charlotte Melançon dans *La prison magique. Quatre essais sur Emily Dickinson* (Prix Victor Barbeau, 2007). Les réflexions d'une grande richesse que nous livre ici l'essayiste s'appuient sur une connaissance intime de l'oeuvre, acquise entre autres en la traduisant (choix de poèmes de Dickinson présentés et traduits par Melançon dans *Escarmouches*, Paris, La Différence, 1992). L'auteure se penche, dans un premier essai, sur les significations à donner à la « Petite robe blanche » que Dickinson s'est mise à porter au moment où elle s'est retirée de la société pour écrire. Le deuxième essai, « Lettre aux amis », s'intéresse à l'abondante correspondance de cette poète longtemps recluse dans sa maison d'Amherst. Dans le troisième essai, « Catalogue d'oiseaux », l'auteure examine notamment la place toute particulière qu'occupe le merle dans le bestiaire de Dickinson. Celui-ci, explique-t-elle, « sous-entend à la fois son appartenance nord-américaine et sa conscience d'être écrivain ». Charlotte Melançon a montré ailleurs, de façon pénétrante—dans « Les mésaventures du merle : les américanismes chez Emily Dickinson » (*Meta*, avril 2000)—, l'importance de s'imprégner de cette appartenance nord-américaine au moment de traduire cette poète. « Comment peut-on rattacher la retraite de Dickinson à la littérature sapientielle? », se demande enfin l'essayiste dans le quatrième et dernier essai, « La prison magique », qui donne son titre à l'ouvrage. Comme le montre bien Melançon dans ces quatre essais finement travaillés et émaillés d'extraits de lettres et de poèmes traduits par ses bons soins, le refus du monde urbain, caractéristique de la littérature de la retraite, n'équivaut pas pour autant, chez Emily, à un refus du monde : « Tout se passe en fait comme si c'était ce silence même qui lui avait permis de percevoir l'infinie rumeur de la vie, autant l'horreur de la guerre et le théâtre bigarré du monde que le bruissement de l'herbe et le chant de l'âme. »

A Walking Review

Johanna Skibsrud
Late Nights with Wild Cowboys. Gaspereau $18.95

Barbara Klar
Cypress. Brick $18.00

Meredith Quartermain
Nightmarker. NeWest $14.95

Barbara Pelman
Borrowed Rooms. Ronsdale $15.95

Reviewed by Aaron Giovannone

"What justification is there," A.R. Ammons asks, "for comparing a poem to a walk?" His answer suggests that both poem and walk require an orientation between "the external and the internal," that both move through physical and intellectual landscapes. I think Ammons' question applies equally well to a poetry review that strolls through four recent books, taking notes when they come into view of each other and admiring their most suggestive vistas.

While the title of Johanna Skibsrud's *Late Nights with Wild Cowboys* stirs up visions of wide open spaces and the fireside intimacy of a western-themed Harlequin romance, this book only has a few cowboys in it. The phrase, however, does convincingly evoke the collection's restless, unsettled, even

westering poetic. In the title poem, two women travel through the American west in an emotional rollercoaster over mountains and melodrama: "Montana, she told me, was the closest you could get on the / green earth to God, and Idaho was / ten thousand Montanas in one." It seems like a lot of fun until the two women settle, finding themselves fantastically transported to the old west and unsatisfying, gender-defined lives in service of itinerant cowboys. While Skibsrud seems fascinated by literal and figurative domesticity, she usually rejects it to follow an imagination that is continually displacing itself in search of its own boundaries. In the suite "Suburban Dreams," the speaker fantasizes about a rooted, comfortable life where "we'll be / lonesome when away from home, and not in an / abstract way, but precisely— / for an exact address." But even her fantasy of at-homeness is most compelling when imagined away from home. While Skibsrud's poetry is quite confessional—and often quite 'moving'—she is at her best when she keeps *moving*, doesn't rely on static self-revelations, but remains evasive, locating the centre of being somewhere off-centre, outside.

Unlike Skibsrud, who is most graceful performing echappés over definite geographic boundaries, Barbara Klar digs ruthlessly into the sensual and imaginative experience of a precise place. Klar's second collection, *Cypress,* is inspired by her work as a tree planter in the Cypress Hills of southwestern Saskatechawn, a powerful landscape that provokes in the speaker simultaneously alienating and ecstatic visions: "Valley so deep the oceans have forgotten it, sky wringing dry. I can smell stone. It is rolling full of missing in a steaming line between the sun and someone who thinks of me." Klar's abandonment to nature is a gesture of great risk and great reward: like a "black cell / dividing and dividing into more alertnesses," her language keeps slipping, is worn out by cultural and historical processes as implacable as the weather. As an endnote points out, the Cypress Hills have no cypress tress: its English name is derived from a mistranslation of the Métis. This place, then, is strangely unnameable, uncontainable, unfolding in a spiral of sensuality that often ends only in exhaustion. The anxiety to respond adequately to this place can, sometimes, seem unvaried, perhaps like the repetitive labour of the tree planter herself.

In *Nightmarkers*, Meredith Quartermain's wanderings through place, if less visionary than Klar's, are more measured and layered. Quartermain combines numerous discourses—lyrical, historical, scientific—to construct a multiform and politically-infused portrait of her hometown, Vancouver. Two dominant voices structure this book: one is a *flâneur* who catalogues her experiences among neighbourhoods, monuments, buildings, and people. This voice is not limited to the observation of the immediate present, however: she has a keen sense that the past's exploitations, expropriations, and injustices continue to underpin the contemporary place: "Corner of Hastings (Vancouver mill) and Hawks (John Francis, 1890s stockholder, Coal Harbour land syndicate.) Astoria Hotel parking lot—the Sheway Community Projects trailer-hut. A she, in shiny lo-slung pants, drifts past the door, fingering her spaghetti strap . . ." The second voice, which signs her lyrical epistles 'Geo', offers a more holistic view of the city, situating it in a global and even metaphysical context, sometimes even offering a commentary on the methods of the *flâneur* herself: "the Human can never catalogue all the moving parts let alone figure their levers and linkages." In some instances *Nightmarker*'s particularities can exclude a reader unfamiliar with Vancouver, but overall Quartermain provides an ambitious and compelling model for the poetic exploration of urban space.

Barbara Pelman sketches the floor plan for a somewhat more modest space in *Borrowed Rooms*, her second collection. While the poems often move outside the literal confines of the house, picturesque depictions of blue skies and epiphanies tend to repeat themselves in decorous patterns. "I long for your quick laugh, your youth, / the days of red pomegranates, and the willow / bending her green hair into the water." Vivid metaphors sometimes enliven the lyric formula, but missing is the movement to, or engagement with, a world beyond the walls of the personal.

Women Grappling with Time

Nora Foster Stovel
Divining Margaret Laurence: A Study of Her Complete Writings. McGill-Queen's UP $29.95

Phyllis Sternberg Perrakis, ed.
Adventures of the Spirit: The Older Woman in the Works of Doris Lessing, Margaret Atwood, and Other Contemporary Women Writers. Ohio State UP US $49.95

Reviewed by Cinda Gault

Although Nora Foster Stovel's book is not the first to analyze Margaret Laurence's African and Canadian works together, or to focus on her enduring interest in ancestors and the past, readers will appreciate the opportunity here to survey all her literary contributions together. The range of Laurence's writing is marked—life writing, poetry, children's fiction, juvenilia, travel essay, memoir—in addition to the more famous Manawaka works. Laurence is presented as a writer who learned and developed while wrestling with ancestors. She expected understandings of the past to clarify a path to the future. The main argument of this book is that Laurence's experience in Africa sparked two important insights—often characterized in her works as quests for identity—that would inform her writing for the rest of her career. Laurence saw Canada as a nation fighting against its colonial past, and women as fighting against patriarchy.

Especially insightful are connections drawn between Laurence's challenges as a translator of Somali poetry and her later storytelling craft. Stovel makes a convincing argument that Laurence's signature command of language, metaphor, music, voice, and character in her better known Canadian works emerged from respectful attention to the details of Somali literature. Similarly, Laurence's Nigerian work signals the development of her conception of the past and future haunting the present. Claiming that Laurence's feminist and postmodern trajectories achieve their apotheosis in *The Diviners*, Stovel suggests that editors misunderstood the metafictional importance of Morag's stories within the story, and therefore may have excised more than was warranted.

While Stovel's view of Laurence's entire oeuvre allows for a panoramic survey of patterns over a lifetime, it leaves less room for nuanced discussions of controversies raised by particular theoretical assumptions. For example, quests for national and female independence are presented here as mostly parallel enterprises, leaving out the intersections of such quests that might undermine mutual independence. Some of the textual analysis seems to sidestep controversies of interpretation. Regarding *The Fire-Dwellers*, the assumption is made that "[u]ltimately, Stacey and Mac are reconciled and truly make love for the first time in the narrative." This conclusion renders the ending more optimistic than might be the case for this housewife's resignation in staying with her husband. Similarly, Pique's double inheritance of white and Native ancestry in *The Diviners* seems to be taken at face value rather than as a possibly irreconcilable dilemma. There is also an unexplained emphasis on repackaging Laurence as a postcolonial writer, despite Laurence's self-

admitted awareness of her own complicity with 1950s imperialism.

If anyone wants to know where the Second-Wave Feminist Movement went, it seems to have grown old along with Betty Friedan. Many familiar issues are recycled in *Adventures of the Spirit*, a series of articles about aging women: exploding myths, demanding more social and psychic space, refusing stereotypic roles, even an insistence on exuberant sex. Overall, we are reminded that most old people are female, everyone dies despite gender, race, orientation, and ethnicity, and the lucky ones are those who lasted until they were old. This book explores the social dominance of older women, which makes appropriate editor Phyllis Sternberg Perrakis' choice of Doris Lessing and Margaret Atwood—two dominant writers—as the focus for the majority of the analysis.

Adventures undertaken by older women involve "picking up dropped threads," or revisioning the past to enrich the present and lead to a meaningful future. In the first section, the focus is on Lessing's Bahá'í-inspired tip of the spiritual scale toward the divine. *Memoirs of a Survivor*, in particular, envisions past unresolved conflicts on both individual and collective planes, with spiritual development seen as the "attunement" of the individual to the "divine spark within" as the "face of God." Although it is unclear why this view of the spiritual would be credited specifically to female writers, Lessing's *Shikasta* intensifies the religious cast of the spiritual beyond: one needs not only to recognize the divine but also to serve the divine. The story embodies familiar Christian tropes of hardship as the catalyst for spiritual growth, dignity in suffering, and salvation in words. Atwood's work in the second section is characterized as placing less faith in the divine and more in the story. Retrospective evaluation leads to inner adventures of atonement, reconstruction, and triumph. Although old age does not guarantee wisdom, art can transform life, and the argument here is that Atwood's stories often do so by updating myths.

The final section posits arguments about the works of myriad other women writers. Fay Weldon's focus on love and romance among the elderly dovetails with Aritha Van Herk's portrait of gender and age as social constructions that can mask potentially overwhelming sexual desire. Suzette Mayr's use of magic realism to wash three senior *picaras* over Niagara Falls traces a (characteristically Canadian?) road story to claim new social space. Rebecca Wells' novels based on the Ya-Ya Sisterhood take the risk of portraying mother-as-abuser, with the spin-off of real-life chat rooms by readers, perhaps an electronic update of consciousness-raising groups. Native elder and storyteller Angela Sidney redefines the sacred as a way of living that can combine tribal traditions with Christian and Bahá'í faiths to tap the appearance of myth in everyday circumstances. Finally, Shani Mootoo is seen as insisting that individual experience not be lost in the context of broader social injustices. The book ends with a decidedly un-divine representation of spirituality, since Mootoo portrays the cure for abuse as the expression of one's story to another human being.

Rebellious Causes

Vern Thiessen
Vimy. Playwrights Canada $17.95

Vittorio Rossi
Carmela's Table. Talonbooks $17.95

Stephen Massicotte
The Oxford Roof Climber's Rebellion. Playwright's Canada $16.95

Reviewed by Jan Lermitte

As the tragic death of one more Canadian soldier in Afghanistan hits the news, the relevance of war-themed dramas, such as these reviewed, is accentuated, regardless of one's personal politics.

Vimy brings to life Thiessen's view of the nation-building event of the battle of Vimy Ridge through his theatrical, non-realist approach. Opening and closing with the memories of a World War I nurse, Clare, the play shifts between the reality of the camp hospital and short re-enactments of the personal memories of four wounded soldiers. Three other men appear as spirits whose stories intersect with the others. Speaking French, English, and First Nations languages, the characters represent a small part of the Canadian mosaic. Through their interactions, Thiessen effectively explores themes of race and ethnicity, love and sexuality, the morality of war-time actions, and the constructed nature of historical accounts.

The simple set consists of four beds that form the shape of a cross, while a barrage of artillery sounds blend with flashes of light and colour to provide a visual and sensorial spectacle. As a drama, the play provides plenty of action: the re-enactment of aspects of the battle on Vimy Ridge, including depictions of historically relevant details such as the effects of gas on soldiers, "going over the top" of the trenches, and the practice drills General Currie used successfully in the final attack on Vimy. At the same time, the lyrical and metaphorical language of the script provides a stunning counterpoint to the devastating effects of war and trauma on the lives of the individual soldiers. Fast-paced dialogue in the action scenes is a vivid contrast to the slower-paced reflections of the dream-like memory scenes. Thiessen's innovative use of language provides an intensity reminiscent of gun-fire. In addition, an extensive set of historical, production, and playwright's notes provide excellent supplementary materials. *Vimy* is an unsentimental depiction of war, but the series of short, moving vignettes promise a powerful production and a meaningful addition to the Canadian canon.

In contrast, *Carmela's Table* is a family drama with a character-driven plot. The play, set in a post-war Montreal suburb, spans two days in the life of an Italian immigrant family. This second autobiographical play in Rossi's *Carpenter Trilogy* returns to the life of Silvio Rosato, a decorated World War II soldier who suffers from nightmares and violent outbursts related to undiagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder. Silvio has been reunited with his wife Carmela and their three children, but conflict with his mother Filomena affects his family and evokes the neighbour's complaints. Feeling frustrated and caught in the middle, Carmela finally "commands the table," and forces mother and son to face the devastating effects of their feuding. As Sylvio crafts a "good" table for Carmela, he symbolically puts his family in their rightful place at the centre of his life.

Rossi's strength is his humourous approach to inter-ethnic misunderstandings. Some of the funniest scenes involve Carmela's rebellion against those who criticize her traditional Italian ways, including breast feeding in public and loud family arguments. However, several long angry speeches by Silvio and Carmela underline the play's emphasis on dialogue rather than action. Although *Carmela's Table* could be considered a war play because of its motifs of trauma and violence, its dominant themes relate more to the treatment of immigrants and the subtleties of racial discrimination. As a passionate story about the loyalty of familial ties, the moral integrity of honest work, and the immigrant's hope for a rewarding future, *Carmela's Table* provides a poignant glimpse into Canada's past.

Stephen Massicotte's play, *The Oxford Roof Climber's Rebellion*, shares themes of memory and trauma with the other two plays, but exhibits a style reminiscent of a Victorian parlour drama. The play centres on the friendship of two famous English literary figures: T.E. Lawrence (Ned) and Robert Graves. Loosely based on their correspondence after World War I, the story

reflects their struggles to adjust to civilian life. Graves' troubled marriage to Nancy is marked by her stubborn refusal to confront the effects of the war, thus silencing Graves who is emotionally crippled by post-traumatic stress disorder. When he meets Ned the two develop an intense friendship based on a mutual desire to rebel against a society that supports slaughter on a horrific scale. Ned resurrects of "the Oxford Roof Climbers, the Benevolent Order of," a childhood secret society to rebel against institutions that fail to acknowledge the shame experienced by battle survivors. When Ned's butler, Jack, loses his only son in the Arab Revolt, this survivor shame is highlighted and the play succeeds in condemning the senseless losses of war.

As a war play, *The Oxford Roof Climber's Rebellion* succeeds in contrasting the desire to remember with the compulsion to forget. "The tragedy is this," Graves declares, "There is wisdom to be found in war that is unfortunately forgotten with all the rest of the pain." Massicotte effectively highlights some key themes related to post-war social change, including sexuality, gender roles, and institutional responsibilities. *The Oxford Roof Climber's Rebellion* captures the emotional tensions of love and politics as well as a compelling dramatic perspective on Lawrence and Graves.

Chevaliers de la mémoire

Rémi Tremblay

Aux chevaliers du noeud coulant. PUL 45,00 $

Compte rendu par Maxime Prévost

Avec cette édition éclairée de poèmes et de chansons de Rémi Tremblay, Jean Levasseur a réussi un triple un exploit : en plus de tirer de l'oubli un auteur méconnu du XIXe siècle québécois, il signe un important ouvrage d'histoire faisant la lumière sur plusieurs aspects de la vie politique et sociale de la dernière partie du siècle, tout en apportant une précieuse contribution à l'histoire culturelle du Canada français. Ce livre réunit plus de soixante-dix textes de Rémi Tremblay (1847-1926), journaliste et écrivain qui, « tant par la quantité que la qualité de son oeuvre, aujourd'hui oubliée, fut, à sa façon, la voix du peuple canadien-français du dernier quart du XIXe siècle », lit-on dans l'« Introduction ». Satiriste politique mais aussi précurseur de la Bolduc et de Jean Narrache, Tremblay excellait dans la chronique du quotidien, dans la poésie à la fois comique et dénonciatrice de certains travers de son époque (corruption politique et malversations, « anglomanie » et « francophobie », voire, dans un registre plus léger, la crainte de la calvitie qui semblait tenir nos ancêtres). Malgré cette propension à la comédie, « quelques pièces de facture classique que l'on pourrait véritablement affubler de l'épithète 'remarquable' » complètent la sélection de Levasseur, notamment « Aux chevaliers du noeud coulant » (poème sur l'exécution de Louis Riel), « À ma femme » (poésie écrite tout juste après la mort de son épouse) et « Je me souviens » (« poème d'une rare beauté et introspection » dont le titre renvoie à l'inscription projetée par Eugène-Étienne Taché pour la façade de l'Hôtel du gouvernement et, vraisemblablement, au poème « Lueur au couchant » de Victor Hugo).

Outre une introduction très bien conçue qui constitue non seulement une excellente présentation de la vie et de l'oeuvre de Rémi Tremblay, mais encore une analyse très pertinente du champ littéraire qui émerge au Canada français dans la dernière partie du siècle, Jean Levasseur insère de riches commentaires et mises en contexte entre les diverses pièces retenues, le tout couvrant près de deux cents pages de l'ouvrage (auxquelles s'ajoutent une centaine de pages de notes à la fin du volume). Cette attention au détail, qui témoigne d'une recherche pour le moins diligente, montre bien que Levasseur s'est donné pour projet de faire revivre toute l'époque dont Tremblay s'était fait le témoin.

Ce volume très dense est aisément maniable et d'une lecture agréable. Seule ombre au tableau : l'absence tant d'un index des noms que d'une bibliographie systématique, deux outils qui auraient facilité l'utilisation d'un ouvrage aussi foisonnant. À la lecture de ce livre remarquable, on se prend à regretter que des auteurs pourtant plus renommés du XIXe siècle québécois, notamment Philippe Aubert de Gaspé fils, Patrice Lacombe, ou même l'incontournable François-Xavier Garneau, n'aient pas encore fait l'objet d'éditions critiques aussi fouillées et méticuleuses.

Mourning the Past, Making the Future

Priscila Uppal

We Are What We Mourn: The Contemporary English Canadian Elegy. McGill-Queen's UP $80.00

Reviewed by Moberley Luger

With this book, Priscila Uppal has made an important contribution to studies of Canadian literature, the elegy, and contemporary mourning practices. As her introduction makes clear, such a contribution has been sorely needed: the elegy is both a prominent form in Canadian poetry—as Uppal notes, almost every Canadian poet has written at least one—and the topic of growing discussion in our discipline (Uppal cites her key predecessors, including Sacks, Ramazani, and Zeiger; the field continues to grow with recent monographs by Max Cavitch and Sandra Gilbert). As Uppal suggests, discussions of the elegy are timely in our "age of atrocity," when cultures of grief and mourning are changing and becoming foregrounded in new ways (marking a shift from Philip Aries' famous description of how death in the twentieth century was perceived as "shameful and forbidden"). Uppal is perfectly suited to make this contribution. A successful poet herself, she is a careful and elegant reader of verse, and a scholar who has obviously read across Canadian literary history, and theories of mourning and the elegy.

Uppal argues that English Canadian poets (after 1967) challenge the traditional model of the work of mourning set up by English elegists. Our national poets, she suggests, refuse to accept a separation from the dead, and aim instead to *recover* what has been lost. These poets wish, Uppal writes, "not only to remember the past, and memorialize it, but also to recover the past and use it to create a future." Uppal divides her study into three categories (and chapters): elegies for parents, elegies for places, and elegies for cultural losses and displacements. Within each category, she reads a handful of poems that exemplify her main argument. In the first chapter, Uppal shows how, in elegies for parents, poets create presence out of absence; for example, Uppal reads Margaret Atwood's paternal elegies (in *Mourning in the Burned House*) as poems that create a landscape within which Atwood can communicate with her late father.

The second chapter is not only a study of elegies for places, but also a valuable turn in the ongoing conversation about the relation between nationalism and Canadian literature. The poets in this chapter mourn a separation from place (and hence, as Uppal writes, from history), and yet, instead of accepting this separation, they work to *recover* what may have created it. Dennis Lee, for example (in *Civil Elegies*) plumbs his grief to establish a sense of community. Aritha van Herk's "Calgary: this growing graveyard" is both a representation of a city in decline and, in Uppal's view, a "recruiting call" to citizens to rebuild the dying city. Uppal's third chapter continues to argue for the relation between elegy and recovery. Here, Uppal reads elegies for cultural losses and displacements as poems that do not simply mourn a cultural loss but engage in the act of cultural survival. She reads Marlene Nourbese Philip's famous "She Tries her Tongue; Her

Silence Softly Breaks," for example, as a poem about the "possible reconnective and inexhaustible power of poetry."

Uppal's argument throughout the book is consistent and persuasive. It is also productive: she sifts through thousands of poems about death and loss in order to discover how they might also be about life and hope, about connection instead of separation. The book is well thought out, and, in particular, Uppal's introduction will deter any pedantic reviewer: she gives convincing reasons for focusing on the poets she has chosen; she delineates what is within and beyond the book's scope (her coda on elegies after 9/11 invites future monographs to pick up where she has left off—a project of my own research, in fact). Still, I'll end with a quibble—not about any weakness in the book's argument, but, in fact, about the strength of it. Uppal is so certain about the redemptive and recovering work these elegies do that I found myself asking if she might ever have cause to revise her thesis, suggest its limitations, or trouble its carefully delineated scope. What if, I wondered, some elegies for parents or places or cultures *fail* at recovery? Is it ever possible for a poet to articulate absence when his/her words insist on being present? Might categories be productively blurred? Anne Simpson's elegies in *Loop* come to mind as brilliant poems—excluded by Uppal for having been written after 9/11—that are at once for a parent (as the Twin Towers, those looming authority figures, have been configured), for a place, and for a culture.

50 ans d'Antonine Maillet

Robert Viau
Antonine Maillet. 50 ans d'écriture. David 29,00 $

Compte rendu par Pénélope Cormier

La Déportation, Évangéline, et Antonine Maillet : dans une sorte de triptyque d'études généralistes sur la littérature acadienne, Robert Viau donne les résultats de son exploration de ces sujets acadiens dont on connaît plus souvent l'aspect mythique que la réalité. Après *Les Grands Dérangements : la déportation des Acadiens en littératures acadienne, québécoise et française* (1997) et *Les visages d'Évangéline : du poème au mythe* (1998), il salue donc en 2008 le 50e anniversaire de la première publication d'Antonine Maillet. Son objectif est double : « [de] rendre hommage à cette auteure et [d']étudier une oeuvre qui, depuis cinquante ans, a renouvelé l'imaginaire acadien. Nous allons suivre [Antonine Maillet], de ses premiers pas en littérature aux succès internationaux et à son oeuvre récente ».

La mission est d'envergure, puisque Antonine Maillet a écrit près d'une vingtaine de romans et une quinzaine de pièces de théâtre. Non seulement Viau les examine-t-il tous, mais il passe aussi en revue ses autres publications : ses traductions et adaptations théâtrales, sa thèse de doctorat et même son « guide historique, touristique et humoristique d'Acadie ». Il en résulte un ouvrage d'une rare exhaustivité sur l'oeuvre de Maillet. Cependant, le parti pris de rendre compte de l'ensemble des publications de l'auteure se fait parfois au détriment de l'unité de l'ouvrage. Les études ponctuelles des oeuvres se succèdent sans qu'un fil directeur ne vienne réellement lier l'ensemble; dans ce contexte, les analyses s'avèrent en définitive principalement descriptives et explicatives.

Si chaque publication de Maillet est abordée séparément, presque mécaniquement, l'ordre de l'ouvrage ne suit quand même pas

une structure chronologique. Pour fournir un semblant de ligne interprétative de la carrière de Maillet, Viau divise ses oeuvres en onze « cycles », chacun regroupant quelques oeuvres à peine, partageant certaines caractéristiques minimales communes. On compte notamment le « cycle des primevères », le « cycle des contes philosophiques », le « cycle historique », ou encore le « cycle des souvenirs ». Cette multiplication des divisions relève manifestement d'un souci de rendre justice à la complexité et la diversité de l'oeuvre de Maillet; elle entraîne malheureusement du même coup la fragmentation et l'éparpillement de l'étude. Dans la perspective de l'ouvrage, il aurait peut-être été plus profitable de fournir seulement quelques catégories générales, quitte à établir des rapports plus recherchés entre certaines oeuvres dans le corps de l'analyse. Ainsi, le « cycle des crasseux », le « cycle des contrebandières », le « cycle historique » et le « cycle du vieil âge », qui se rejoignent tous dans l'exploration d'une matière acadienne, auraient facilement pu être rassemblés dans un commode et universellement identifiable « cycle acadien ». Ce cadre très général aurait permis de mettre en évidence de façon plus radicale la principale rupture dans l'oeuvre de Maillet, le moment où son écriture s'est métamorphosée, suite à la pièce *Garrochés en paradis* (1986), où elle a tué tous les personnages de son monde littéraire acadien créé au fil des oeuvres. Depuis ce texte, l'enjeu de l'oeuvre de Maillet est moins la frontière entre les « gens d'en haut » et les « gens d'en bas » que la frontière entre la vie et la mort, c'est-à-dire entre « l'ici-bas » et « l'en-haut ».

Antonine Maillet. 50 ans d'écriture est par ailleurs un ouvrage extrêmement bien documenté. L'auteur a une érudition tout à fait impressionnante, à la fois savante et anecdotique, sur l'oeuvre de Maillet, fournissant entre autres de très intéressantes indications sur les événements principaux de la carrière de l'auteure : ses débuts littéraires, son passé de religieuse, son obtention du prix Goncourt en 1979, etc. Une excellente bibliographie sélective—indiquant notamment les principaux entretiens, études générales et études sur une oeuvre—figure en clôture de l'ouvrage et en constitue un point d'intérêt indiscutable.

L'enthousiasme manifeste de Viau pour l'oeuvre de Maillet et son oeuvre, si elle peut être communicative, lui fait cependant parfois perdre une certaine contextualisation. Il reste près de la position exprimée de l'auteure, sans relever (ou très peu) les problèmes certains qu'elle pose : par exemple, son essentialisation du « caractère » acadien et son remplacement du mythe de la victimisation acadienne par un mythe triomphaliste. Il reste que la difficulté irrésolue de l'étude demeure la tension entre la tentation de la micro-analyse—c'est-à-dire l'étalage minutieux de détails anecdotiques sur l'oeuvre de Maillet et l'explication complète des oeuvres individuelles, et l'objectif plus général de brosser un portrait global de la plus connue des trajectoires de la littérature acadienne.

Three Directions: One Terrain

Zachariah Wells, ed.
Jailbreaks: 99 Canadian Sonnets. Biblioasis $19.95

Wanda Campbell
Looking for Lucy. Leaf $16.95

Richard Outram; Anne Corkett and Rosemary Kilbourn, eds.; Thoreau MacDonald, illus.
South of North: Images of Canada. Porcupine's Quill $16.95

Reviewed by Karl Jirgens

In her poem "Snow," Margaret Avison observes that "The optic heart must venture: a jailbreak / And re-creation" to rediscover one's terrain. These three collections chart travels of rediscovery through town and

country, through landscape and mindscape. In *Jailbreaks,* ninety-nine poems forward ironic perceptions focused largely but not entirely on night, winter, and death, with accents of anxiety and psychic rupture. Poetry and reviews editor for *Canadian Notes & Queries*, Zachariah Wells assembles what he defines as Canadian sonnets spanning over a century from Charles G.D. Roberts to Don McKay, among many others. A chronological ordering might've better demonstrated the development of this traditional European form and the emergence of more radical sonnet-inspired modes in Canada. Instead, this assembly features clusters of poems on geology, fishing, weather, sexuality, and writing itself, settling predominantly on perceptions of mortality. One could debate the inclusion of some poets and exclusion of others, but that aside, this stylistic assortment is intriguing. Gerry Gilbert's tightly crafted "Bannock," written in five stanzas of varying lengths without fixed rhythm, features internal rhyme, irregular line-endings, and an acute eye for detail. Stuart Ross's Surrealist "The Children of Mary Crawl Back at Night" draws from a narrative tradition while condensing moments in time in startling fashion: "I throw a mirror in the street and try to fly." Conversely, Phyllis Webb's "Poetics Against the Angel of Death" is an anti-sonnet and borrows from alternate forms including haiku, while closing with a penchant for "long lines clean and symbolic as knotted bamboo." In an afterword, Wells provides commentary on the sonnet-based features of each poem. Also, included are handy alphabetical indexes of authors and first lines. *Jailbreaks* features an impressive stylistic range that might not otherwise appear within a single volume, and that makes it well worthwhile for those wishing to investigate developments of sonnet-inspired poetics in Canada.

Wanda Campbell's *Looking for Lucy* is a compendium distinguished by a quest to examine various historically renowned Lucys. This collection begins with meditations on the exhumed body of "Lucy," the best skeleton ever uncovered of an upright walking human ancestor, preserved some 3.6 million years ago. The opening poem alludes to the Beatles' "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" integrating ancient past and recent past with the naming of the prehistoric "Lucy." The first section of the book moves chronologically, offering sometimes whimsical, often terrifying and sobering, but always historically accurate portrayals of numerous Lucys, including martyred saints, authors, movie stars, and visual artists, such as Lucy of Syracuse (283-304), Lucy Maud Montgomery (1874-1942), Lucille Ball (1911-1989), and Lucy Van Pelt (1952-2000), to name several. The second section offers a polyphonic portrayal of Lucy Hurd, wife of William Van Horne, recognized for constructing the CPR. This section depicts the romance between the two, interspersed with historical facts, tracing a movement through topographies of time and psyche. Among numerous textual plays enlivening this edition is the technique of setting text so it appears as a railway track. This biotext captures historical moments leading to the driving of the last spike, integrating disparate events with references to Virginia Woolf's *The Waves,* paintings by A.J. Casson, reactions to the Air India crash, and the discovery of the fossilized skeleton of the "first" Lucy. *Looking for Lucy* is an invigorating quest featuring lucid portrayals rendered with a rare clarity, reconstructing both history and literary form through a feminine perspective via the conduction of a single name.

South of North is punctuated with splendid drawings by Thoreau MacDonald and speaks of the common passions of authors and artists. A year before his death (2005), Richard Outram submitted a manuscript of 115 poems in response to the Toronto Arts and Letters Club's request for a song-cycle

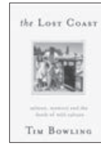
to celebrate the club's ninetieth anniversary. Composer Srul Irving Glick chose eight of fifty-four poems from this manuscript and masterfully set them for baritone/mezzo-soprano and piano. The songs were performed as *South of North: In Honour of Thoreau MacDonald 1901-1989*. Thoreau Macdonald, son of famed Group of Seven painter, J.E.H. MacDonald, has produced thousands of stylized drawings, stencils, prints, water-colours and oils depicting the Canadian landscape. Thoreau MacDonald's sophisticated vision arises from hyper-efficient simplicity. Outram's elegant poetics are complemented by MacDonald's evocative graphics, tastefully selected by Anne Corkett and Rosemary Kilbourn, who also provide an informative introduction plus notes on both author and artist. Poems such as Outram's "Arctic Myth" evoke complexities of being, creation, and psychic movement over a wind-drift landscape. Travelling from Vancouver to Tantramar, across mountain, foothill, lake country, farmland, and wetland, Outram provides a travelogue of sharply focused poetic snapshots charged with immediacy and the breath of a moment, as in "Dawn": "Blinds still down: but thin blue smoke / arrows up from the farmhouse, / Swiftly ribbed light climbs, feral, / up and over the furrowed drumlin. / Beyond the cedars a dog fox coughs. Once. / An axe-blow cracks day-break." The Zen-like precision of these poems extends perceptions of earlier visionaries such as Wallace Stevens. This book is beautifully produced by Tim Inkster's Porcupine's Quill, with stitched binding, select bond, green endpapers, and textured cover stock featuring MacDonald's graceful depiction of two Canada geese, featured on a CNE (Canadian National Exhibition), Art Gallery catalogue in 1954.

Books from Tim Bowling & John Stiles

The Book Collector
poetry

The Lost Coast
Salmon, Memory & the Death of Wild Culture

Taking the Stairs
fiction



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Reviews

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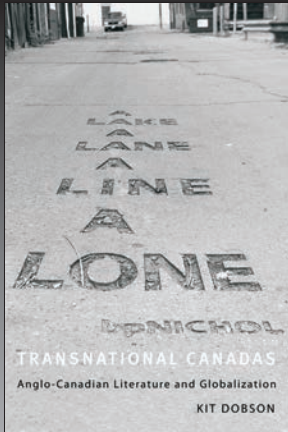

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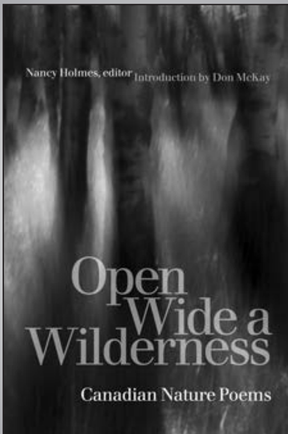

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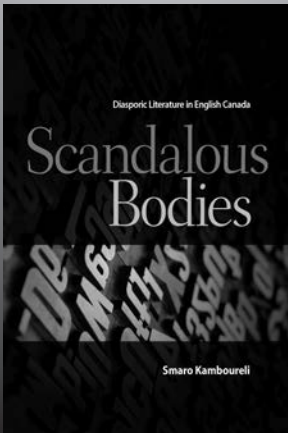

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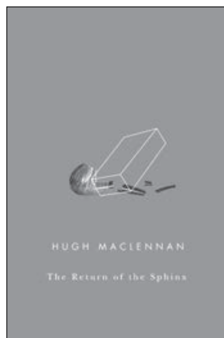

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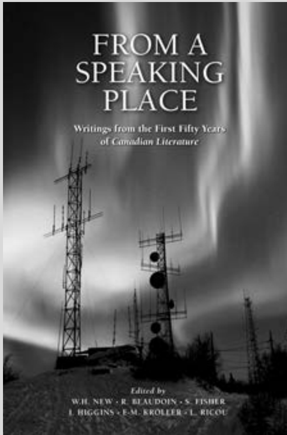

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