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Editorial

Thinking Tremolo and Backflip

Laurie Ricou

I was sitting in the campus cafeteria wondering how to introduce this issue when two Japanese students approached with a questionnaire on health and fitness—part of their English-language training. Question 3 was "What is the greatest benefit of physical activity?" They are probably still puzzling over my ready answer: "It fosters an ability to appreciate poetry." "Oh," they said smiling demurely, "that's a good answer."

Just before the shy questioners appeared, I'd been reading and re-reading Robert Kroetsch's "Listening to the Radio: For Michael Ondaatje." Kroetsch recreates a time when "Hockey Night in Canada" was pure sound, sound only, and the poetry of hockey was only a listening. Listening is an imagining. What we hear when we pause from strenuous physical activity is the power of poetry:

> Morenz makes a breakaway down the ice.
> He fakes to the left; he draws out the goalie.
> He stops. He blushes and says, to all
> of the Montreal Forum: Emily Carr, I love you.

If there's a more amusingly resonant moment in English Canadian writing on sport, I have yet to find it. Of course, Emily ultimately blushes in return, and Carr and Morenz marry in a ceremony that inevitably is "divided into three periods / of twenty minutes each." Hence one of Canada's greatest male athletes—two-time NHL scoring champion—is united with one of Canada's greatest female artists. It could only happen in a poem.

"Play is older," Johan Huizinga tells us in *Homo Ludens* (1944; trans. 1950), "and more original than civilization." Reasoning—a bit playfully

perhaps—that "childplay" is play in "its veriest essence," Huizinga compactly summarizes the essences:

> [Play] is an activity which proceeds within certain limits of time and space, in a visible order, according to rules freely accepted, and outside the sphere of necessity or material utility. The play-mood is one of rapture and enthusiasm, and is sacred or festive in accordance with the occasion.

And then immediately following this description—we might imagine him exulting in Kroetsch's riddling the rules of the ghazal while dreaming an improbable love affair—he asserts the equation essential to literature: "the definition we have just given of play might serve as a definition of poetry." Play and poetry perform a compelling paradox: it is "beyond seriousness," but yet a "vital function," absorbing the seriousness of the sacred and festive.

It surprised me when we first thought of doing this issue to realize that in our fifty years we have not done such an issue before, indeed have seldom touched on the topic. Roy MacGregor's valuable article "Sports Writing" in the *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada* speculates, contrasting American and British examples, as to why "Sport in Canada has so rarely been effectively lifted from the ice and the playing fields and dropped into the pages of Canadian literature." So, this special issue makes a second start, when the lifting has perhaps become more effective, and with essays whose focus will in turn surprise many readers familiar with the works MacGregor discusses. Our writers challenge immediately any easy assumption about the limits of the topic. Political cricket and identity soccer rather than hockey or lacrosse; the challenge to consider bpNichol as a triathlete; the recovery of Mike (later Michelle) Duff from obscurity and the reassessment of autobiography as speed writing; Terry Fox's heroism newly framed and newly interpreted. And still—I couldn't quite help myself—the issue begins and ends with hockey.

Hockey one night a week on the radio has become multiple twenty-four-hour sport channels. In homage we bring you from the *Canadian Literature* Sports Centre, tonight's Top Ten, our sport-in-Can-Lit highlights:

Number 10 Much of the secrecy and bonding inherent in a game rests in its special vocabulary. Pasha Malla's story "Dizzy When You Look Down In," from his first collection *The Withdrawal Method* (2008), bounces and feints with basketball jargon. The unnamed first-person narrator sits in a hospital waiting results of amputation surgery being performed on his diabetic brother Derrek, nickname Dizzy. Across the room is Brad Bettis, enthusiastic former jock, who ten years earlier had played high school basketball against Dizzy and his brother. "Dizzy Calder," Bettis enthuses, "Man, that kid could *play*."

The narrator hesitates to encourage the conversation, to pick up the jock talk or to reveal much about his brother's failed post-high school basketball career. Soon Bettis abandons his attempts at gossip, his talismanic rolled-up copy of *Sports Illustrated* falls to the floor, and he gives completely devoted attention to his wife's recovery from cancer surgery.

At this point, the reader realizes with some surprise that all the basketball jargon we've been immersed in comes not in dialogue, but in the narrator's remembering his relation to his younger brother. Jargon is the crutch on which he rests to avoid thinking amputation. The lingo that used to keep them together now keeps him *from* Dizzy. The dizzying basketball chatter takes over, drugs him, allows him to live an imagined life where he need not confront the gap between Dizzy's politics—Che Guevara is his hero; he does community work in Cuba—and his own career as pharmaceutical salesman. He can only get as far as the door of his brother's recovery room: there he stands dizzy, looking down, imagining the healing visit he cannot bring himself to make.

Number 9 Sadie is a speed swimmer and a lit student in Angie Abdou's novel *The Bone Cage* (2007). The story of her preparation for the Sydney Olympics, and of her love affair with Digger, an Olympic wrestler, draws on Jane Austen, Dickens, *Paradise Lost*, and Ethel Wilson's *Swamp Angel*. Fitzgerald and Browning shape the novel's resolution. The novel is a study in emotional and physical kinesis, patiently attentive to recording the fine details of tedious athletic training. Abdou reaches toward the possibility of self-deception as physical form. Sadie acknowledges the importance of falsehood, which is also to say fiction: "'We athletes are experts at lying to ourselves and believing it. It's the one thing we practice every day.'" Abdou focuses on the politics and perception of the body, turning her story on "the "paradox of the athletic life: listen to your body but don't listen to your body."

Number 8 Paul Tallard, the Canadien who comes to dream in English, is Hugh MacLennan's version of what Canadian uneasily means. MacLennan defines Paul's emerging twelve-year-old citizenship as his enjoying of multiple sports: football (by which MacLennan presumably means European football), boxing, cricket, some clandestine baseball. And, of course, hockey, to which Paul and MacLennan devote by far the most attention. MacLennan's accounts read now a bit awkwardly and predictably, as if in imitation of much tabloid sports journalism, but he's at his best evoking the instant of silence after a whistle, before the face-off—the period when the game *is not being played.*

> Paul loved these moments when the game paused and he was able to get the whole feel of it: the full exhilaration of the air coldly still in the sunshine, the teams poised . . . the sticks twitching nervously and the sweat warming on the face . . .

The magic, as with Morenz halting in mid-breakaway, is in the waiting not the doing, in the wholeness, the sensory alertness, the anticipatory readiness.

Number 7 From "Baseball, a poem in the magic number 9": "In the beginning was the word, & the word was / 'Play Ball!'" That was 1965, just a few years after this journal was founded, and George Bowering, while writing so much about so many worlds, has never stopped writing his baseball poem.

Number 6 Arley McNeney's *Post* (2007), opens on the eve of Nolan Taylor's hip replacement surgery. A member of the Canadian women's wheelchair basketball team, Nolan must now imagine herself into a new life and a new identity with and beyond her sport. *Post*, driven by a sustained teasing of the pun bawdy-body, concerns what comes after. In big wheeling sentences, McNeney turns through the mind's following the body turning; this excerpt is less than half of the single sentence from which it comes:

> Tony continues to play me despite my flailing, my failing and as I push across the court after the play my arms move in their ritual, my fingertips against the smooth push-rims, the movement just another link back through my body and round and around again and everyone is shouting at me different words until they form a scum, a churned foam of noise, dirty as the Fraser, and now the wind has shifted and here is the scent of sewage from the open door, and here is the froth of words building like rapids over me, my arms trying to arc like bridges, and here is another shot scored on me.

Number 5 Cecelia Frey's poem "Running" relies heavily on monosyllables to convey the steady pounding of feet against ground, a version of drumming that transforms running into spirit quest:

> me deer swift free
> . . . . . .
> I leave behind all others
> and you, partner
> where are you

Number 4 The hockey references in Michael Ondaatje's "To A Sad Daughter" feel quite incongruous in a poem that is mostly a love poem delivering fatherly counsel. But it is just such incongruity—"Belligerent goalies are your ideal"—that measures the cultural distance between *like* and *love*, between sweet sixteen and I-wasn't-expecting-this. The poem is high on my highlight list because I've turned to it often to find ways to tell my own children how much they matter:

You step delicately
into the wild world
and your real prize will be
the frantic search.
Want everything. If you break
break going out not in.

I wonder if Kroetsch had this poem in mind when he addressed "Listening to the Radio" to Ondaatje?

Number 3 Roch Carrier's "Le Chandail de hockey" "The Hockey Sweater."

Number 2 Michael Kusugak's *Northern Lights: The Soccer Trails* (1993). The students in my course titled "Literature and Sport" were puzzled by *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*, surprised by the baseball lingo in *The Brothers K*, and passionate about Sherman Alexie. But they were most moved by the story of Kataujag, who reconnects with her dead mother playing on the sea ice with "a soccer ball . . . of caribou skin . . . stuffed full of dry moss and fur" and watching the aurora borealis, "thousands of strands of light looked like they were all running around after each other chasing a soccer ball." They agreed that the one book on the course they would not be looking to sell back to the bookstore at the end of the year was *Northern Lights: The Soccer Trails*.

Number 1 Icarus, as interpreted by Don McKay in "Icarus," is the top athlete in Canadian literature. Icarus makes of his falling—he has rehearsed it in song—an exuberant flight and a diving. No existential angst for this athlete:

Icarus is thinking tremolo and
backflip, is thinking
next time with a half-twist
and a tuck and isn't
sorry.

As Huizinga proposes, "playing is no 'doing' in the ordinary sense." You don't *do* play or *do* a game. You can only *play* at playing. When sport drops into the pages of Canadian literature, it does so most exhilaratingly with a half-twist and a tuck. And isn't sorry.

Susan McCaslin

Underground Olympics

Picnickers recline on the green at the edge of the abyss,
a grassy slope for the fashionable luncheon crowd
whose pineapples slide off toothpicks amidst martini chatter,
where fine-pressed olive oils, and canapés
rotate on trays, a plenum of organics

Beyond the polished green where groupies lounge,
a pit of spikes and pinnacles arises,
heart-tearing terrain over which the athletes,
pumped and psyched, will soon scrabble,
puncturing their adamantine knees on the escarpment.

This is a course they have circuited
marathon after marathon, almost grazing
with their hands the ribbons and the fountains,
accolades coveted from afar with glittering eyes.
And, make no mistake, they will beat

not just their own time, but everyone else's,
for these are the dead, heroes torqued by Furies,
their own relentless nightmares, flicking
flies from their fabulous flesh, surpassing jets
in the need to rip the laurel from someone else's head.

Here at the starting line, they twist and jibe,
while those who raptly view the spectacle,
the ironclad elite, aficionados of perfection,
kneel on the slopes, fresh from hours
in traffic jams or stuffed in Metros, Tubes.

With Stygian tides, dissatisfactions unstemmed,
they fling themselves
again and again
into virtual space,

this brief and heavy catharsis.

By request and with permission from *Persephone Tours the Undeground* (2009)

Michael Buma

Soccer and the City
The Unwieldy National in Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For*

In an interview shortly after the publication of her third novel, *What We All Long For* (2005), Dionne Brand explained her love for Toronto, the city in which the novel is set, by way of an anecdote about a boxing match. The match took place "at a Latvian-Canadian hall" before an audience of "old Latvian-Canadian men . . . Hispanic-Canadians, African-Canadians . . . Anglo-Canadians, [and] even a Russian-Canadian promoter" as a "fundraiser for kids in Latin America" (Bök). Brand reflects on attending this event with her "own small posse of African-Canadian and Portuguese-Canadian women": "We all sat there looking at the fights, urging on our favourites, and there was a moment when I found myself laughing, thinking, 'What the hell is being shared here!' It was fantastic, wild" (Bök). If the appeal of the city is that it "widens your sense of the world" (Bök), Brand's experience of the boxing match suggests sport as one area through which this "widening" occurs. Indeed, sport is an important aspect of culture, a major site through which meanings and identities are produced, transmitted, and expressed. This paper will discuss Brand's representation of another sport, soccer, in *What We All Long For*. Although soccer appears only briefly in *What We All Long For*, it offers significant insight into the tension between global and national categories that has in many ways structured the novel's reception.

Beyond illustrating sport's capacity for cross-cultural sharing and the expression of identity, Brand's anecdote about the boxing match suggests the extent to which, in the words of Donna Bailey Nurse, "being Canadian means having a hyphenated status." When *What We All Long For* was

first published, it was widely hailed in the popular press as a comment on "hyphenated-Canadianness," an expression of the urban, multicultural, and cosmopolitan "new" realities of Canadian society and space. A *Canadian Press* review, for instance, proclaimed the novel as "herald[ing] the arrival of truly 21st-century CanLit, with a blend of races and cultures that reflects the urban realities of Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and other cities across the country." Nurse's *Ottawa Citizen* review billed *What We All Long For* as a "watershed novel: From now on, Canadian writers will be pressed to portray contemporary Toronto in all its multiracial colour and polyphonic sound." Writing in the *Guelph Daily Mercury*, Anne-Marie Tobin punningly proclaimed *What We All Long For* to be "CanLit's New Brand." Another way of putting all this, perhaps, is that the urban and multicultural ethos of *What We All Long For*—"CanLit's New Brand"—represents a turn from the discursive and critical traditions that have situated Canadian identity in nature, survival, and the myth of the wilderness. As one *Toronto Star* review put it, "Canadian literature owes [Brand] a debt of gratitude" for "locat[ing] these places of grace in funky Toronto bars rather than some lake in northern Ontario or windswept prairie in Saskatchewan." "I did not want to write poems / about stacking cords of wood, as if the world / is that simple," Brand asserts in *Land To Light On* (iv), and the reviewers I have cited see *What We All Long For* as the novelistic outgrowing of this mentality.

The problem with reading *What We All Long For* as simply another salvo in Canada's ongoing identity war is that Brand appears less interested in reorienting "Canadianness" than in rendering it obsolete. Rather than reshaping or restructuring "the crumbling ideas of nation and state" (Bök), *What We All Long For* appears to foreclose entirely on the possibility of any homogenous national identity. Brand's protagonists, Tuyen, Carla, Oku, and Jackie, all fall between the cracks of their parents' diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and the official versions of Canadianness they are subjected to in school, where each of these characters realizes at a young age that "nothing there was about them" and you have to wear "a blonde wig . . . [to] fit in" (19). Citizenship and belonging give way to becoming in *What We All Long For*, and Brand's protagonists—like the city in which they live—are constantly being reinvented "under the constant construction of this and that" (183), the mutable flow of emotions, interests, allegiances, traditions, and geographies that they regularly traverse. The city functions as a "crossroads" (3) in *What We All Long For*, a place where "people turn into

other people" (5) and where "you can stand on a simple corner and get taken away in all directions" (154). The city is a place where "lives . . . are doubled, tripled, conjugated—women and men all trying to handle their own chain of events, trying to keep the story straight in their own heads" but in which "the lines of causality [are juggled], and before you know it, it's impossible to tell one thread from another" (5).

Importantly and expressly, the "crossroads" of the city is a multicultural and highly globalized space, a "polyphonic murmuring" (149) in which "there are Italian neighbourhoods and Vietnamese neighbourhoods . . . Chinese ones and Ukrainian ones and Pakistani ones and Korean ones and African ones. Name a region on the planet and there's someone from there, here" (4). The city and its inhabitants, then, are depicted as "borderless" (213) and reflect Brand's sense that "there aren't 'them' and 'us' anymore . . . it's a city of everyone" (qtd. in Walker). Rather than occupying a markedly "Canadian" field, Brand's protagonists appear to exist within a "global city" (Sassen), an urban space whose significance derives not from any particular national distinction but from "its position within the grid of world-class postcard cities" (Davey 266). How, then, are we to understand the readings, which see *What We All Long For* as a meditation on hyphenated-Canadian-ness or political intervention in the ongoing debate about national identity? If *What We All Long For* offers "an alternative to the boundaries of home and the nation-state" (Marlene Goldman, qtd. in Dobson 89), why has it so often been received in terms of national significance?

One possible answer to this question lies in the seemingly unlikely realm of soccer. Soccer is often hailed as "the global game," a label that, as Philip Moore suggests, "possesses the ring of a clever marketing slogan" but contains a good deal of "truth" in that "no other game is played by as many people, and no other sport has the numbers of spectators that [soccer] attracts" (117). Indeed, soccer has become a global game to the point that Richard Giulianotti has coined the term "soccerscape" to "refer to the geo-cultural circulation of [soccer's] constituent parts: players and coaches, fans and officials, goods and services, or information and artefacts" (24). But while "old boundaries between the local, the regional, the national, and the global are routinely penetrated or collapsed," soccer on the international level remains in many ways an "embod[iment] of the modern nation, often literally wrapping itself in the national flag, and beginning matches with a communal singing of the 'national anthem'" (Giulianotti 24; 23). Soccer, then, has been "one of the most significant loci of nationalization and

globalization concurrently" (Hedetoft 77-8), and, as such, provides a suitable "way of thinking about how people . . . identify themselves in this new [globalized] era" (Foer 5).

Soccer appears in *What We All Long For* by way of the 2002 Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup Round of 16 match between Italy and Korea, which brought about both celebration and mourning in multiracial Toronto when Ahn Jung-Hwan scored in extra time to win the game for Korea. In Brand's fictional retelling of this event, Tuyen circulates among the Korea Town celebrations taking pictures and revelling in the pleasure of "being in the middle of whirling people, people spinning on emotion" (204). The daughter of Vietnamese immigrants, Tuyen's allegiance is with Korea: "She wasn't Korean, of course, but the World Cup made her feel that way. No Vietnamese team had made it, so today she was Korean" (204). Despite cheering for one team over the other, however, Tuyen is more interested in the celebration than the soccer. She is described by the narrator as "[feeling] elated, infected by the mood on the street," and the experience is said to "[remind] her of a year ago, when she and Oku went to Quebec to demonstrate against globalization" (204), a detail that refers to another real-life event, the 2001 Summit of the Americas meeting in Quebec City which proposed to extend free trade throughout the entire Western Hemisphere. For both Tuyen and Oku, the World Cup celebrations and the Quebec City protest are opportunities to "find something tingling on the skin, something where their blood rushed to their heads and they felt alive" (204-5). During the World Cup celebrations at least, the same becomes true for the "usually subdued Carla," who surprises Tuyen and Oku by "waving a Korean flag and singing, '*Oh, Pil-seung Korea*'" ("Victory to Korea")(209).

Brand's depiction of the Korea Town celebration is certainly based in reality. After Korea's win over Italy, "thousands of ecstatic fans pounded on traditional Korean drums, chanted the country's name, and sang the national anthem as they danced and waved flags" on Toronto's "Bloor St. between Christie and Bathurst Sts" (Taylor). Although the majority of the celebrants were Korean immigrants or of Korean descent, people of other ethnic and national backgrounds notably took part: according to journalist John Allemang, "the applause doubled for non-Korean flag-wavers who had infiltrated the instant party, an unforced multicultural gesture of both welcome and thanks" (19 June 2002). One particularly noteworthy aspect of Brand's realism is that the Korea Town episode in *What We All Long For* seems to address purposefully

several themes that attended this event in the Toronto newspapers. For instance, one Korean fan, Simon Hong, was quoted in *The Globe and Mail* describing the win as "a good chance to show the people of Toronto that we exist," while another, Chris Choi, suggested that the victory would help overcome the stereotype that [Koreans in Toronto] "own convenience stores" (Smith). Brand's narrative seems to acknowledge these sentiments when Tuyen hears a television announcer exclaim that "I didn't know we had a Korea Town in the city" and thinks to herself—identifying with the Korean community despite her Vietnamese ancestry—"Asshole . . . you wouldn't. You fuckers live as if we don't live here" (204). A similar moment occurs when *What We All Long For* appears to allude to a quotation from Jong Sik Lee, a Korea Town shop owner who told *Toronto Star* journalist Bill Taylor that Korea's win made him "so very happy. This is the first time I've been so happy here [in Toronto]." A version of Lee's comment appears in the novel when Oku mentions hearing "one Korean guy say . . . this was the happiest day he'd ever had in this city" (210). Oku interprets this comment as "visionary," the evidence of "some world shit coming down" without which "this city would burn us all" (210, 211). As with Tuyen's angry response to the television commentator, then, Oku sees the Korean victory not only as a triumph or "coming out" for the Korean community but as a cross-cultural moment that empowers anyone who identifies with its minority ethos.

Several academic articles have specifically commented on the soccer episode in *What We All Long For*. Kit Dobson, for instance, reads the comparison Tuyen draws between the Korea Town celebrations and the Quebec City protests as highlighting the extent to which the characters of *What We All Long For* "live lives that do not adhere to national or racial categories" (100). For Tuyen, Oku, and Carla, Dobson suggests, "the exclusions of the city and global capitalism are not to be reversed through the formation of oppositional counter-movements or a reliance upon nationalist communities" but through "the opportunities that they create to construct urban spaces for themselves" (100). Similarly, Diana Brydon has suggested that "Brand's characters have left behind the colonial desire for a place on the map of the world" and that "they seek . . . a different kind of identification, more a claiming of the moment and the streets than a desire for external recognition" (98-9). For Brydon, the Korea Town celebrations work to "fuse, however briefly, transnational modes of connection in the local now" and illustrate the extent to which "[Brand's] characters no longer find their identities in national belonging" but seek instead the thrill of the moment

and the energy of the crowd (99). Brydon identifies this "rush of collective belonging, across traditional class, racial, and national lines" as an example of "what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have called 'the multitude'" (99), a collection of "singularities that act in common" as opposed to "the undifferentiated unity of the people" on which national belonging is predicated (qtd. in Brydon 99). Both Dobson and Brydon, then, see Brand's representation of the World Cup as moving beyond traditional national categories, a post-national moment of local community and connection inspired by the provisional alignment of people's energies and interests rather than any particular allegiance to nation, origin, or ethnicity.[1] Another way of saying this, perhaps, is that, contra the more popular and journalistic interpretations cited, academic critics have tended to see *What We All Long For* as "anti-national" (Dobson 88) and "transnational" (Brydon 99).

Inasmuch as they derive from Tuyen, Oku, and Carla's particular attitudes toward the World Cup celebrations, Dobson's and Brydon's readings are certainly valid and align with the general thematic of Brand's novel. But soccer also suggests a moment of slippage in *What We All Long For* that betrays the difficulty of moving beyond national categories and the continued efficacy of these categories in an ostensibly post-national world. Brand's narrator specifies that during the World Cup "resurgent identities are lifted and dashed" and "small neighbourhoods that seemed at least slightly reconciled break into sovereign bodies" (203).[2] When soccer enters the narrative, then, the city ceases to be a "crossroads." In fact, the possibility that the city ever was a "crossroads" is called into question by the characterization of Toronto's ethnic neighbourhoods as only "slightly reconciled" in the first place. Either way, soccer breaks the tentative truce, dividing the city back into national and ethnic components. Soccer reimposes borders on the city's "borderless" space, exposing the idea of borderlessness as a fictional construct and suggesting the extent to which old nationalisms remain in effect despite the post-national outlook of Brand's characters. Indeed, the soccer episode is the only moment in *What We All Long For* where traditional national identifications—Korean, Italian—appear effectively intact.

One way to get at the significance of the soccer episode in *What We All Long For* is to consider why Brand chose to depict the FIFA World Cup rather than the other major sporting event that brought Torontonians to the streets in 2002, Canada's men's hockey gold-medal win over the United States at the Salt Lake City Olympics.[3] When Team Canada brought home Olympic gold in men's hockey for the first time in fifty years, "tens of thousands

of delirious hockey fans turned Yonge St. into the world's longest party" (Van Rijn and Teotonio). These "jubilant fans clad in Canadian hockey colours, maple leaves painted on their faces, fervently waved the flag and burst into impassioned renditions of 'O Canada'" (Van Rijn and Teotonio). The Olympic gold-medal victory was described in media outlets across the country as vindicating "our game" (Brunt), expressing "a shared dream and a common purpose" among Canadians ("Editorial"), and as "the win that defines a nation" (Al-Atraqchi). In one particularly noteworthy reaction to Team Canada's gold-medal win, Rick Salutin characterized the victory not simply as a nationalist moment but as a triumph of nationalism over globalization. For Salutin, the victorious Canadian hockey players "out[shone] the vapid heroes of globalization, like the dot-coms and Enrons, who never produced anything real or usable, and then vaporized." For Salutin, apparently, nationalism is tangible, usable, and, therefore valuable, while globalization is insubstantial, not grounded in reality, liable to evaporate or implode at any given moment. Nationalism, Salutin implies, gives us firm ground to stand on (or, in the case of hockey nationalism, ice to skate on), while globalization recedes before us, a momentary sleight of hand that provides nothing lasting or worthwhile.

If the men's hockey gold-medal win represented, at least to some, a triumph of Canadian nationalism over the forces of globalization, it is not difficult to see why Brand chose to depict the Korea Town World Cup celebrations instead. The apparently unifying, homogenizing sense of Canadianness occasioned by the Olympic hockey victory doesn't seem to exist in *What We All Long For*, or, if it does, expresses itself in the intolerant school system that demands conformity and in the racist police who hassle Oku and imprison Carla's brother Jamal. Surely the celebration occasioned by the Olympic hockey victory could have given Brand's characters the "tingling on the skin" they crave, the moment where "blood rushed to their heads and they felt alive." But the putatively definitive Canadianness of these celebrations—"the win that defines a nation"—represents much of what Brand's narrative sets out to render obsolete. Indeed, hockey has often been seen as "Canada's game," an expression of distinctive Canadian identity and unified national consciousness (see Beardsley, Gzowski, Richards, and Kidd and Macfarlane for a few examples of this characterization). Soccer, on the other hand, seems at least in some respects a more fitting choice for the post-national thematic of *What We All Long For*. Beyond being "the global game" and a game in which "national borders and national identities [have

seemingly] been swept into the dustbin . . . of history" (Foer 3), soccer has seldom been seen as an expressly "Canadian" game.

Although soccer doesn't carry the markedly nationalistic overtones of hockey, the game has recently become a battleground in the ongoing culture war over Canadian identity. Simply put, the dilemma is this: should Canada have a unified and homogenous national identity, or is Canadianness best expressed through diversity, tolerance, pluralism, and multiculturalism? In soccer, this debate has centred in recent years on the role of the game in Canadian society and on its status at the national and international levels. Although soccer was widely played in Canada as early as the mid-nineteenth century, "local climate and cultural pressures to invent a national sports tradition ensured ice hockey and US sports became much more established" (Giulianotti 7; Jose and Rannie). As sport moved from the vernacular to the modern in Canada, soccer never acquired the nationalistic overtones of hockey or lacrosse (Morrow, "Lacrosse as the National Game"; Robidoux) and lacked the "stabilizing influence" of American involvement that helped popularize baseball (Morrow, "Baseball"). While Canadian soccer has thrived at the grassroots level during the last fifty or so years, the game has yet to truly catch on at the national level and remains in many ways perceived as "an alien intruder on Canadian soil" (Alan Metcalfe, qtd. in Leung).[4]

Buoyed by the brief success of the now defunct North American Soccer League (NASL), youth soccer exploded in Canada and the United States throughout the 1970s and 80s, mostly among "white, middle-class suburban children" (Giulianotti 36). The parents of these young soccer players were predominantly educated professionals, many of whom saw the game as "a cultural enclave from violent playing ethics or Afro-American domination" (Giulianotti 36). Aside from supplying shorthand for a newly ascendant demographic category, the soccer mom, the turn toward soccer by the suburban middle class seemed to many an abandonment of the national sporting traditions represented by hockey in Canada and baseball, basketball, and football in the United States (Waldstein and Wagg; Markovits and Hellerman). Indeed, soccer's failure to gain significant support at the national level in Canada has frequently been attributed to hockey's hegemony as "Canada's game" (Leung), a point nicely illustrated by the fact that Canadian minor soccer has often been promoted as "a summer training program for . . . ice [hockey] enthusiasts" (Jose and Rannie 137). Furthermore, it was the "nation-building question"—the fact that American and Canadian

audiences wouldn't tolerate reliance on foreign players—that, in conjunction with a policy of overly aggressive expansion, ultimately brought about the end of the NASL in the early 1980s (Giulianotti 36; Waldstein and Wagg). By contrast, the current men's professional premier league in Canada and the United States, Major League Soccer (MLS), was created shortly after America hosted the World Cup in 1994 with a vision of measured expansion and the goal of appealing to ethnic groups with "an established [soccer] interest" (Giulianotti 37). Rather than predicating itself as "a modern mechanism for uniting the nation through sport," then, the MLS "depends upon exploiting post-modern class and ethnic divisions" (Giulianotti 37).

Franklin Foer's insight that the American "anti-soccer lobby really articulates . . . a phobia of globalization" (243-4) can be equally applied to Canada. The perception of soccer as "an alien intruder on Canadian soil" doesn't imply an objection to soccer, per se, but to the blurring of national distinctions that the game appears to represent. As such, a certain segment of Canadian soccer fans have worked in recent years to "patriate" the game, to recast soccer as a marker of unified Canadian nationalism rather than the ethnic niche sport it has often been perceived to be. The drive to "Canadianize" soccer has been nowhere more evident than in the activities of the Voyageurs Canadian soccer fan club. Founded in 1996, the Voyageurs "have been a visible presence at Canadian national team games both in Canada and abroad, at all age levels, for both the men's and women's teams" (The Voyageurs). The stated goal of the Voyageurs is to build support for Canadian soccer at the national level, and to this end the club has been active in attending and distributing tickets to national team games, lobbying (and sometimes protesting) the Canadian Soccer Association, and working in various ways to raise the profile of Canadian soccer among fans and in the media. For instance, the Voyageurs Cup—a trophy funded entirely by member donations—is awarded annually to the winner of the Canadian Championship, a home and away series between the three Canadian MLS and United Soccer Leagues First Division (USL-1) teams (Toronto FC, Montreal Impact, and Vancouver Whitecaps).[5]

One of the major frustrations expressed by the Voyageurs is that Canadian fans often cheer against their country in international matches. Supporters of Canada's national teams frequently complain that "during Canadian [soccer] matches on home soil . . . people living in Canada tend to cheer for the visiting country if they share common ethnic or cultural heritage with the visitors" (*The Kick About*). This has been true to the point that a recent

thread on the Voyageurs online discussion forum condemned the Canadian Soccer Association for booking a men's World Cup qualifying match between Canada and Jamaica at BMO Field in Toronto because of the city's large Jamaican population. Several posts even went so far as to strategize about managing Jamaican-Canadian attendance and mobilizing fans who would support the Canadian side (The Voyageurs, "Canada/Jamaica"). Similar expressions of homogenizing nationalism can be seen in the Voyageurs' attempts to keep Canadian-born players such as Owen Hargreaves and Jonathan de Guzman from joining other national teams, and hence becoming ineligible to play for Canada.[6]

These few brief examples should suffice to illustrate that what the Voyageurs want to achieve through national-level soccer is the expression of a unified and homogenous Canadian identity. This effort is a backlash not only against globalization, but against the idea of multicultural pluralism, which purports to value diversity, tolerance, and heterogeneity rather than insisting on the definitive Canadianness implied by a "national" sport.[7] But while soccer has been mobilized in the service of homogenous nationalism by fans of teams such as the Voyageurs, it has also worked to signify Canadian multiculturalism. One example of this is the extent to which Canadian amateur, semi-professional, and professional play remains organized along old ethnic and national lines. The Canadian Soccer League (CSL), for instance, classifies its teams into two divisions, one of which is composed of teams such as Portugal FC and Toronto Croatia that are formed by members of a particular national or ethnic community. By way of contrast, Australia, another post colonial immigrant nation in which soccer has traditionally been seen as an interloper on local sporting traditions such as rugby and Australian football, attempted during the 1980s to "'Aussify' [soccer] clubs by demanding that they change their ethnic names—hence, for example, Sydney Croatia became Sydney United" (Giulianotti 38). Despite the fact that Australia adopted a policy of official multiculturalism around the same time as Canada in the early 1970s, then, Australian soccer has been, at least nominally, far more homogenous.

Another way in which soccer has appeared to represent Canadian multiculturalism was in Canada's hosting of the 2007 FIFA Men's Under-20 World Cup, which, despite the fact that the Canadian team failed to score even one goal throughout the tournament, managed to set a new event attendance record. This remarkable accomplishment for a traditionally "non-soccer" nation was frequently attributed in the Canadian media to

cultural diversity, or, to put it another way, to the type of fan the Voyageurs protest, those who cheer for the team of their ethnic or national heritage rather than that of the country they currently call "home." Because of its multicultural diversity and because it doesn't require assimilation in the realm of soccer allegiance, Canada is, according to some, "the perfect venue for a World Cup" (Starnes). Furthermore, in conjunction with the U-20 World Cup tournament, the CBC broadcast its first-ever "Soccer Day in Canada," the purpose of which was to "celebrate the beautiful game and provide a snapshot of the sport's growing popularity" ("CBC"). Obviously patterned on the more established "Hockey Day in Canada," an annual documentary-style program that works to mythologize hockey as a marker of Canadian identity, "Soccer Day in Canada" eschewed the homogenizing nationalism of its ectype in order to focus on the diverse range of Canadians who are interested in soccer.

The point of this compact survey is that soccer signifies both multiculturalism and homogenizing nationalism by various turns in Canadian society, and, as such, functions as a subset of the larger debate over national identity I have outlined. Simply by its presence in *What We All Long For*, soccer reveals that national identity remains a going concern in Canadian society and suggests the extent to which this debate continues to be carried out as a back-and-forth between pluralism and diversity on the one hand and unity and assimilation on the other. Hence a focus on soccer helps explain the novel's reception in traditionally national terms: while Brand may be interested in moving beyond the framing category of nation, soccer reveals the extent to which many Canadians on both sides of the identity debate simply are not. In the framework of soccer's complex and often contradictory meanings in Canadian society, of course, Brand's depiction of the game evokes multiculturalism rather than the insular nationalism of the Voyageurs. Given that there are few other countries in which an event such as the Korea Town celebration could achieve critical mass and unfold without, to borrow a phrase from Foer, "unleashing hooligan hell" (248), it certainly isn't unreasonable to read the soccer episode in *What We All Long For* as describing a uniquely "Canadian" multicultural moment.[8] Seen in this light, soccer also helps explain why many readers have interpreted *What We All Long For* as an argument for Canadian multiculturalism rather than the cosmopolitan, urban, post-national, and highly globalized move beyond the "crumbling ideas of nation and state" that Brand seems to have intended.

In fairness to Brand it should be noted that *What We All Long For* "provides a shocking climax near its end that turns the reader back to the rest of the text with a new perspective on its meaning" (Brydon 104). The rereading provoked by the novel's ending suggests that Brand isn't unequivocal in her valorization of the urban, post-national community she presents. Interestingly for the purposes of this paper, it is perhaps possible to see soccer as symbolically participating in Brand's closing equivocation. Well after the Korea Town episode in *What We All Long For*, Tuyen's long-lost brother Quy comments that "Korea beat Italy. You never know, they could beat Germany next. But I doubt it. That Teutonic bunch have no creativity, but they have order" (283). Indeed, Korea's success in the 2002 World Cup was attributed by some to growing cultural individualism and increased allowance for player creativity, represented tangibly by new hairstyles and the supervision of a Dutch coach (see Allemang, 20 June 2002). Quy's prediction, however, ultimately does come true, as Germany went on to defeat Korea in their semifinal match during the actual 2002 World Cup. If order trumps creativity, then, perhaps the old national categories, the forces that seek to incorporate Tuyen and her friends into the structures and strictures of a homogenous Canadian identity, ultimately win out? At the end of the story Quy is beaten, possibly to death, which seems to call into question the prospect of the urban, post-national community that much of the novel appears to endorse, a resolution which Brand herself has described as ambivalent, "neither optimistic or pessimistic" (Bök).

If *What We All Long For* remains to some extent an attempt to "[imagine] possible collective futures not constrained by exclusionary teleological narratives or the ossified social relations such narratives engender," Brand's treatment of soccer testifies that "the 'well worn' paths of these narratives are not easy to abandon" (as Maia Joseph has argued of Brand's memoir *A Map to the Door of No Return*, 76). Beyond proposing what Brydon calls a "transnational" moment that simultaneously betrays the extent to which national categories are still in effect, Brand's inclusion of soccer tacitly testifies to the ongoing-ness of the debate over Canadian identity that *What We All Long For* seeks to move beyond. Both in the novel and in Canadian society in general, soccer suggests the unwieldy persistence of national categories and testifies to the framing power these categories still possess. Although soccer is not "the last acceptable form of nationalism" in Canadian society (as Anne Applebaum has argued of the game's role in Europe), it illustrates that—even in the current historical moment of alleged globalization and

post-nationalism—much continues to be at stake in the cultural consumption and construction of Canadianness.

NOTES

1 The extent to which Brand wanted to underscore the global signification of the soccer episode is perhaps further suggested by a minor discrepancy between the novelistic rendering and the actual World Cup match. Brand's narrator mentions that "Korea is playing Italy in Japan" (203), which was not actually the case in the real-life World Cup competition: although Japan and South Korea co-hosted the tournament, the Korea-Italy match took place in Daejeon, South Korea. While this detail is probably a minor error rather than creative liberty, the effect of proposing Japan as the venue is to contribute to the feeling of internationalism that the soccer episode seems intended to convey.

2 Dobson acknowledges this passage as "demarcat[ing] the city" along "national lines," but tempers this observation with the assertion that Tuyen, Oku, and Carla's participation in the World Cup celebrations rejects "the exclusions of nationalism" (100).

3 Although Canada's women's hockey team won gold as well, the public celebration and much of the media spotlight was reserved for the men's team, a fact which indicates the extent to which "so-called national sports afford men—in general, and certain men in particular—an opportunity to represent the nation in a way not open to women" (Adams 74).

4 It is worth noting that Canada's national women's soccer team has enjoyed far more international success and, arguably, more fan support than the men's team. Canada has been relatively successful in women's soccer, a fact which some attribute to a less competitive field resulting from the prominence of the men's game in many established soccer nations (Wheeler). While some fans believe that "the future of Canadian soccer lies within the women's game" (Leung), others maintain "a strong men's national program would be far better for soccer in this nation than a strong women's program" (Wheeler).

5 USL-1 is the second division of men's professional soccer in Canada and the United States, one tier beneath the MLS. The Vancouver Whitecaps will be promoted to the MLS in 2011 as an expansion franchise.

6 FIFA rules specify that once players take part in a sanctioned international match they cannot change national team allegiances. Owen Hargreaves is an elite-level Canadian-born player whom the Voyageurs repeatedly petitioned to play internationally for Canada during the late 1990s. When Hargreaves chose to play for England instead in 2001, his decision angered many Voyageurs members to the point that Hargreaves was labelled a traitor and nicknamed "Whoregreaves" on the Voyageurs' discussion forum. More recently the Voyageurs made similar efforts to convince another Canadian-born player, Jonathan De Guzman, to play internationally for Canada, only to be disappointed when De Guzman opted for The Netherlands in February 2008.

7 Brand, of course, as well as others such as Eva Mackey and Himani Bannerji, has argued that institutional multiculturalism in Canada actually functions as a policy for managing—rather than encouraging—difference.

8 Probably the closest analogues to the place of soccer in Canadian society are Australia and the United States, both of which have been more successful than Canada in recent international competition, and, as such, more successful in building fan followings for their respective national teams. Australia qualified for the 2006 World Cup (where they

made it past pool play to the Round of 16) and was in the same year admitted to the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), a move which has allowed the Australian national team to face more talented opposition and play more frequently. While Australia's modest move forward as a soccer nation has brought about increased support, the gains of American soccer at the national level have been even more dramatic. According to Richard Giulianotti, America's hosting of the 1994 World Cup "symboliz[ed] a watershed in both the game's American fortunes and in the nation's sense of identity" (36). While soccer has yet to achieve the "national" aura of baseball, football, or basketball in American culture, it is beginning to outgrow its status as a suburban and ethnic niche sport. After qualifying for the 1998 World Cup and making the quarter-finals in the 2002 World Cup, American national teams have achieved not only acceptance but a devoted following of fans. During the 2006 World Cup in Germany, a large contingent of American fans "flocked [into] the streets near the [American] team's hotels, swarmed into viewing areas to watch games on large-screen TVs, and filled sections of the stadiums in which the American team played" (Mahoney). Furthermore, "the U.S. Soccer Federation sold all its available tickets quickly and fielded requests for thousands more before and during the tournament" (Mahoney). On a purely anecdotal level, I was in Germany during the 2006 World Cup and remember being surprised at the large numbers of flag-waving Americans among the screaming crowds of nationally and ethnically diverse fans. By contrast, Canada joined FIFA in 1914 but has succeeded in qualifying for the World Cup only once, a fact which—in addition to the cultural hegemony of hockey—has also been blamed for soccer's failure to achieve recognition as a "Canadian" game.

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Dennis Cooley

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—adapted from James Gleick, *New York Times Service*

Suzanne Zelazo

Sport as Living Language
bpNichol and the Bodily Poetics of the Elite Triathlete

> Good poetry gets the writer's tongue in your ear, breathes into it, & makes the whole body squirm with the pleasure of it.
> —bpNichol, "The Pata of Letter Feet, or, the English Written Character as a Medium for Poetry" in *Meanwhile*

Biopoetics as Performance Theory

Although my title may, at first glance, appear to propose an odd juxtaposition, a deeper consideration of the link between sport and art underscores the profound ways in which two seemingly disparate domains not only illuminate, but are imbricated in one another. Such cross-fertilization, although often obscured, is by no means new. The long tradition of the Cultural Olympiad typically held in conjunction with the Olympic Games, for example, derives from an understanding of their mutual heritage. The charter of the Olympic Museum in Lausanne, Switzerland proclaims: "Sport, art and culture are the traditional pillars of Olympism." The museum highlights the ways in which "Olympism is not merely a matter of sports competition but rather a philosophy of life whose roots are deeply embedded in our history" (International Olympic Committee). Recent scholarship in the areas of cognitive science, evolutionary psychology, and particularly in the relatively new field of biopoetics provides a scientific rationale for the "embodiment of mind" (Lakoff and Johnson 7). In their monumental study *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson propose a phenomenological shift in understandings of the human condition:

> Reason is not disembodied, as the tradition has largely held, but arises from the nature of our brains, bodies, and bodily experience. This is not just the innocuous and obvious claim that we need a body to reason; rather, it is the striking claim that the very structure of reason itself comes from the details of our embodiment. (4)

Such a hypothesis generates new paradigms that assert and capitalize on the ways in which sensory experience is fundamental to conception and

abstraction (Lakoff and Johnson 37-8). Similarly, biopoetics, an aesthetic and philosophical theorization of art as evolutionary, emerged out of an expanding understanding of the transmission of influence within natural selection.[1] In *Biopoetics: Evolutionary Explorations in the Arts*, Brett Cooke explains that biopoetics "intends to study the creative arts, human-made beauty" (6). For Cooke, the making, appreciation, and valuation of art is an "adaptive" function and should therefore be conceived as "one of the products of natural selection" (4). "Art and evolutionary psychology," he continues, "make available to each other an immense array of highly useful data, of lived facts and reactions to them," yielding a fruitful paradigm for understanding how explorations of the body in both sport and art can help us interrogate, deconstruct, and formulate socio-cultural ideologies of gender, genre, and sensing the world (5). Witnessing sport in performance enables spectators to identify with athletes on a visceral level through empathy and the projection and generalization of sensory experience. Art also represents a domain in which fears, dreams, wins, and losses are played out as a result of this same ability to elicit emotional and sensory response. Moreover, the two create opportunities for experimenting with new ways of being and experiencing the world. In this study, a biopoetics approach to understanding sport and art is an apposite lens for expanding the field of performance theory.

Drawing on the poetry of bpNichol, the writings of Gertrude Stein, as well as Judith Butler's theories of gender performativity, I aim to elucidate a long-overlooked corporeal category: the body of the female elite athlete. The female triathlete in particular is a powerful incarnation of gendered embodiment that illustrates the extent to which gender ambiguity deterritorializes hegemonic conceptualizations of both female and male bodies. Mirroring the tripartite nature of triathlon, this study elaborates a new biopoetical triumvirate of performance, that of sport, gender, and poetics. I examine the somatic and experiential conception of poetry espoused by Canadian avant-gardist bpNichol (1944-1988), and his 1968 phonodisc *Motherlove*, to elaborate a framework within which to read the female triathlete's body and athletic performance. I contend that like avant-garde art, the body of the female triathlete is capable of inscribing the permutations of identity construction and being in a processual becoming.

bpNichol's experimental poetics reveal and revel in the sensory aspects of language through performance both on and off the page. Fusing various media, Nichol produced work that he described as "borderblur." Borrowing the term from Dom Sylvester Houédard, Nichol explains that borderblur

is "poetry which arises from the interface, from the point between things, the point in which poetry and painting and prose are all coming together" (*Meanwhile* 134). As poetry of the interstice, Nichol's art is liminal and always on the verge of becoming-other (prose becoming-poetry, becoming-cartoon, becoming-performance), and is ripe with potentiality. From children's books, poetry, and fiction to musical scores, comic strips, and collage, Nichol's oeuvre is expansive and multiple, challenging formal and thematic conventions of all kinds. His collaborations were equally dispersed, particularly as a member of the poetry troupe The Four Horesmen.[2] Nichol's blurring of generic borders calls attention to the surface of the text, to the material and physical properties of language as process-oriented and enlivened. Nichol liberates the word from semantic, grammatical, and syntactical strictures into a felt-sense, a borderblurring performance.

Consider, for example, Nichol's sound poem, "Pleasure Sweets," appearing on *Motherlove*, as an orgiastic poem of bodily *jouissance*, punning explicitly on the multiplicity of the orchestral "suite," as well as the adjective describing taste, and the noun naming that which tastes sweet. Nichol's characteristic use of the pun in poetic resounding is based, according to his essay "The Pata of Letter Feet," on art as perpetuation: "When we pun we make merry, wed letter to letter to spell anew. When we mean our making we make our meaning" (*Meanwhile* 371).The poem begins with an aural/chant-based reciprocal flow between "pleasure" and the French form "plaisir"—the distinction between which Nichol distorts in an acoustic ripple effect through tapping his hand over his mouth as he speaks. The poem is an ode to the pleasure of linguistic play to create new meaning. Not only does the juxtaposition of English and French here underscore Nichol's fascination with translation as the basis for artistic creation, but the sonic distortion in the poem's construction is, of course, part of the poem's meaning and signifies the process of the perceiver's translation. In other words, the ambiguity created by breaking apart words visually, sonically, or otherwise, liberates the reader/listener from the strictures of meaning, allowing his/her role in the making of signification. The French word meaning to read, "lire," can be heard and seen (albeit in approximate transposition) within "plaisir," ripe with its suggestion of reading and writing the body. Appropriately, the verb "hear" and its homonym "here" can also be detected in Nichol's acoustic transliterative repetition of "pleasure/plaisir". The sensuality of this process can be "heard" in the undertoned "please her" contained within Nichol's utterance of "plaisir." The concept of "pleasing her" as it re-sounds through

"pleasURe," in Nichol's assertive pronunciation of the "u" and "r" distorts, and then equates, "please her" with "pleasing your" own body textually and sexually. The result is an orgiastic excess of meaning.[3] Hence, as readers, we are vocalizing the acoustics of sexual climax. By creating an interplay of sensory experiences that connect creator, created, and perceiver, Nichol's aesthetic liberties expand the reading process, reducing the gap between reader and writer. He emphasizes the body itself as a site of meaning and language as a site of sensation, thus generating an embodied poetics. Drawing from principles of cognitive science, Lakoff and Johnson argue that "[b]ecause our conceptual systems grow out of our bodies, meaning is grounded in and through our bodies" (6). In light of such claims, Nichol's art emerges as an instructive aestheticization of the body's ontological role. Like the erotic play that Nichol evinces in his poetry, the female athlete ascertains an "evident pleasure in her own articulate body" (Brubach 4).

Significantly, because it occupies a subjugated position within a sociocultural patriarchy, the body of the female athlete encodes a narrative that contests normative codes of gender. As Judith Butler contends: "The body that one lives in is in many ways a body that becomes livable only through first being cast in a culturally intelligible way. In other words, the cultural framing of the body precedes and enables its lived experience" (4). Through her own bodily performance, the female athlete simultaneously mirrors, resists, and overwrites identity and autonomy in ways that are similar to the representational experimentation of avant-garde art. In so doing, she personifies her own emergent bodily poetics. Like any art that forces us to expand our thinking, the body of the female triathlete can help us "stretch our capabilities . . . [by] prod[ding] our flexibility, thereby enabling us to take advantage of new situations," as Ellen Dissanayake argues in a discussion of the experimental novel. "Indeed," she continues, "it is very likely that we seek out novelty in the arts so as to practice our cognitive abilities to adapt, thereby contributing to our inclusive fitness" (19). As she affirms her presence through her own "sound, figure, rhythmic mobility," the female triathlete effects her own textual-corporeal performance piece in which her being resounds. The body of the female triathlete offers a particularly suitable site for the denunciation, renunciation, and morphology of the gendered body, and has the potential to provoke substantial shifts in how we experience, perceive, and live in our bodies, as well as for illustrating the validity of performativity for understanding the relationship between language, the body, and textuality.

Athletics as Activism

Emphasizing the similarities between men and women, my argument is grounded in a feminist perspective that seeks to dissolve binaries and embraces an anti-essentialist possibility for contradiction and multiplicity. As Leslie Heywood and Shari Dworkin assert, sport is a productive means of supporting feminist ideologies. Although female athletes once needed the help of feminist activists in the US to pass Title IX of the Education Act of 1972, Heywood and Dworkin contend that "[a]t this historical moment, feminists need athletes to help advance agendas such as equal access to institutions, self-esteem for all women and girls, and an expanded possibility and fluidity within gender roles that embraces difference" (51).[4] The athlete, like the artist, enacts a corporeal performance that mandates and produces socio-cultural change. Through such enactment, the body of the female athlete becomes legible as subversive text. Lakoff and Johnson expand on this notion of embodiment:

> The fact that we have muscles and use them to apply force in certain ways leads to the structure of our system of causal concepts. . . . What is important is not just that we have bodies and that thought is somehow embodied. What is important is that the peculiar nature of our bodies shapes our very possibilities for conceptualization and categorization. (19)

As it perpetually reshapes itself through the three disciplines of swimming, cycling, and running, the body of the female triathlete expresses the potential for ideational expansion and flexibility.

As never before, the female athlete is now a viable and recognized role model for both young boys and girls. Over the past decade, and in the wake of Title IX, she has become widely culturally endorsed, having been reclaimed and celebrated for years by feminist theorists and women's rights and sport activists such as Butler, Susan Bordo, Hélène Cixous, Heywood, Dworkin, and Julia Kristeva. Despite a certain degree of recognition, however, the female athlete is not immune to the effects of competing in what continues to be a male-privileged domain, where she is forced to confront often demoralizing, ideological, physical, and practical limitations. Media coverage for male sports, for example, still far exceeds that of women's sports, ultimately resulting in less funding and structural consistency for women's athletics. Given this backdrop, the gender ambiguity symptomatic of the elite triathlete should be seen as liberating, as a cultural and sociological means of resistance to hegemonic gender norms and means of self-expression. Butler aptly notes the enormous potential for sport to yield the "de-gendering of society":

> When we witness muscularity and contour, the corporeal effects of a ritual of athleticism, are we not for the moment seduced by the need to know which gender it is? Is it an especially sleek man? Is it a particularly well-developed woman? And yet, what we also witness here is the very contingency of this categorization, its non-necessity; at that moment, we enter into precisely the kind of epistemic crisis that allows gender categories to change. (7)

In much the same way, the ambiguity resulting from the shifting and blurring of linguistic registers in avant-garde art also posits "the very contingency" of generic categorization as do the biopoetics of the athlete in and of performance.

In Cixous' famous essay, "The Laugh of the Medusa," she urges her reader to embrace the principles of Écriture féminine, a French feminist and gendered form of writing that was further popularized by such thinkers as Kristeva, Monique Wittig and Luce Irigaray. Écriture féminine celebrated the female body as a creative and linguistic site characterized by a plurality and circularity which was antithetical to the phallocentric language system. Illustrating Cixous' mandate to "[w]rite your self. Your body must be heard," the becoming-woman of the female triathlete celebrates multiplicity and multidimensionality (250). Cixous calls for a feminine subjectivity that is rooted in the body—a body that is necessarily abundant and plural and, in so being, configures a multisensual rhizome in its denial of closure. She insists:

> a feminine text goes on and on and at a certain moment the volume comes to an end but the writing continues. . . . These are texts that work on the beginning but not on the origin. . . . Rather it's . . . starting on all sides at once that makes a feminine writing. A feminine text starts on all sides at once, starts twenty, thirty times over. . . . a feminine text can't be predicted, isn't predictable, isn't knowable and is therefore very disturbing. (53)

Reading the body of the female triathlete as text underscores this unpredictability. It hinges, as Cixous argues, on the notion that Écriture féminine lies "very close to the flesh of language," in which flesh actually becomes language. It is precisely this threshold that athletic performance occupies (54).

All bodies contain and enact narrative scripts and yet the body of the female athlete is metalinguistic. Hers tells the story of how phallogocentric language itself functions, how it conditions and fixes meaning and identity in ways that are essentializing. The success of the female athlete is, after all, framed within dominant, masculinist discourse. Athletic success by a woman is often converted into masculine success as the traditionally male characteristics of drive, determination, strength, and power strip the female athlete of her femininity. Or do they? When "she" becomes her own "he," are the decades of resistance work so powerfully carried out by her athletic mothers

and sisters compromised? Is the rise of the female athlete as "cultural icon" a harbinger of a post-gender world, or is she a symbol of unprecedented embodied female agency?

By garnering the very gaze that has historically relegated her sex to the passive stance of "observed," the body of the female athlete calls attention to itself not because it adheres to standards of beauty, but because its ambiguity—its musculature and fitness, for example—work to deflect the gaze. Hers is a body that exceeds normative bounds. Quoting Ann Hollander, Holly Bruback points out that "muscles on women seem to serve a purpose. . . . they are a way for women to take up space, as men do—to add physical substance, which, 'makes everyone take notice and listen to what you have to say and pay attention to your existence'" (3). In much the same way, Nichol's solo performances, as well as those performed as part of the poetry troupe The Four Horsemen, effectively "added brawn" to language, forcing audiences to "take notice" of the physical and material properties of the word. Jerome McGann refers to these properties textually as bibliographic and linguistic codes, but, for the purposes of this study, they might be explained as the musculature of the text. In *The Textual Condition*, McGann argues that a text is necessarily a social construction in which all areas and materials of production have a function beyond their immediate ones, which are fundamentally semiotic. "We must attend," McGann urges, "to textual materials which are not regularly studied by those interested in 'poetry' to typefaces, bindings, book prices, page format, and all those textual phenomena usually regarded as (at best) peripheral to 'poetry' or 'the text as such'" (McGann 13). For McGann, every text (and I would argue every utterance) is a "laced network of linguistic and bibliographical codes" that are its material musculature. (McGann 13).

Moreover, a combined meditation on the physicality of language and sport not only entails a consideration of their co-extensive materiality or "musculature," but also of the erotic. Allen Guttman points out that in ancient Greece, the erotic aspects of sport were endorsed, mobilizing participant and spectator arousal in turn: "In Modern times that same eroticism has been feared, deprecated, and denied" (1). Critics would rightly point out, however, that this tendency is a far cry from the media's continued sexualization of the athlete, and that women's wilful involvement in it (such as Olympic swimmer Dara Torres and synchronized swimmer Heather Olson being featured in the September 2000 issue of *Maxim*, or Anna Kournikova's suggestive cover pose on a bed for the June 2000 issue of *Sports Illustrated*) merely serves to

perpetuate a patriarchal subordination of her body. While I certainly agree that such sexualization is problematic, I also agree with Elizabeth Ben-Ishai who argues that the eroticization of the female athletic body can be used as "a tool of resistance insofar as the muscular woman who commands sexual attention is 'manipulating' the dominant culture to serve her own ends—to render her strong and capable body desirable and acceptable in our society" (Ben-Ishai). Heywood also suggests that such a tendency is not entirely negative, and that such an eroticization of the female athlete merely focuses on but "one dimension of the human experience, as a quality that emerges from the self-possession, autonomy, and strength so evident in the body of a female athlete" ("Athletic" 5). This eroticization of the female athlete, I propose, is not putting the integrity of athletics in jeopardy. Rather, it is contemporary socio-cultural understandings of sexuality, which are premised on a passive concept of women and their bodies rather than promoting gendered subjectivity as a function of active, autonomous self-construction, that are at fault here.

Significantly, the female athlete's building of her body through sport is a manifestation of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari refer to as "becoming-woman." In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987), Deleuze and Guattari elaborate the notion of "becoming-woman" as a minoritarian state of being that enables a transcendence of dualisms: "To become is not to progress or regress along a series . . . . Becoming is a rhizome, not a classificatory or genealogical tree" (239). For Deleuze and Guattari, the rhizomatic model of understanding is based on alliance and inter-connectedness, and is set in contrast to the traditional arboreal model of comprehension based on cause and effect. "A rhizome," they suggest, "has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle from which it grows and which it overspills" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 21). Thus, "becoming-woman" represents a marginalized language which operates ontologically within the dominant discourse, and so is ideally positioned to subvert that very hegemonic foundation. Taking the writing of Virginia Woolf as exemplary of "becoming-woman," Deleuze and Guattari assert:

> When Virginia Woolf was questioned about a specifically women's writing, she was appalled at the idea of writing "as a woman" . . . *The only way to get outside dualisms is to be-between, to pass between, the intermesso*—that is what Virginia Woolf lived with all her energies, in all her work, never ceasing to become. (276-77, emphasis added)

The perpetual nature of sport is a function of goal-setting and competitive drive, and naturally this process translates to the athlete's body. Like Woolf's

writing, which "never ceas[es] to become," an athlete's body " is always in the process of being made, it is never quite the ideal that it seeks to approximate" (Gumbrecht, Leland, Schavone and Schnapp 2).

Correspondingly, Nichol's work is perpetually "becoming-genre" as it distinctly relies on the medium of the body, and therefore similarly integrates different states of being and various sensory perceptions. In Nichol's estimation, "poetry has its physical reality, its metaphysical reality, and its 'pataphysical' reality and, in my experience as a writer, it's at the interface between the eye, the ear and the mouth, that we suddenly see / hear the real 'pata of poetic feet'" (*Meanwhile* 354). His pun, which suggests the mobility of poetry, its ambulatory resonances through multiple senses, signals an indebtedness to Gertrude Stein's conception of a "continuous present" in transformative becoming, an ongoing translation of signification in the creation and appreciation of a work of art.[5] For both Stein and Nichol, thought and language are habitual through learned associations and can therefore be endlessly shaped and reshaped. This organicism is of course consistent with a biopoetics configuration of art as adaptive and the mind as embodied.

The very structure of a triathlon depends upon the body's flexibility and adaptability, its disposition to becoming, for instance, as it crosses thresholds between sports, challenging division through performance. The triathlete must transform herself quickly and with fluidity during each "transition zone," from swimming to cycling, and then from cycling to running. Both transitions must be made with the same athletic prowess employed in each individual discipline. One's entire race may be determined by the efficacy and gracefulness of one's transitions: moments of change possess their own aesthetic dimension. As such, the tripartite structure is fundamentally anti-binary. As Butler argues, "[W]omen's sports . . . not only take place at the *cross-roads* of conflicting ideals, but constitute one of the most dramatic ways in which those conflicts are staged and negotiated in the public sphere" (7, emphasis added). Not surprisingly, the physique of an elite triathlete often mirrors this tendency in a pantomime of gender fusion, an embodied collapse of normative gender roles. Male triathletes typically subject themselves to exhaustive training in order to maintain a low body mass, which is advantageous for biking and running in particular; most elite male triathletes are therefore typically smaller than the average man, their stature more in keeping with the average female's. He practises regular body hair removal and dons a one-piece racing suit (virtually identical in design for both sexes) as well as a unisex helmet, which serve to enhance the androgynous look of the

triathlete. Similarly, the very low body fat, musculature, and even hormonal effects of intense training, as well as the aforementioned sexually ambiguous clothing of the elite female triathlete, constitute a performance equivalent to "becoming-woman" that challenges patriarchal incarnations of femininity and expands the legibility of the female body. In both the artistic and athletic practices, identity is self-constructed and self-interpreted. Similarly, both the triathlete and the artist in performance are capable of inscribing the challenge of their own making and unmaking.

Embodying bpNichol

In an essay on the sound and visually oriented poetics of bill bissett, bpNichol describes an aesthetic of becoming that might just as convincingly have been a description of his own work:

> thru it all he does continue and thru it all the continuing re-examination of language of the forms of being the page as a visual sonic field the poem as an extension of the body the insistence of what is inside you and how it changes from moment to moment thru chant. (*Meanwhile* 70)

For Nichol, too, the poem is an extension of the body and is made perpetually anew. In the same essay, Nichol also notes the heavy reliance in Canadian sound poetry on chant as an extension of a preoccupation with breath introduced by the Black Mountain poets. Under the direction of Charles Olson and his 1950 essay "Projective Verse," Black Mountain poetics conceived of the line as a unit of breath, as Olson writes: "And the line comes (I swear it) from the breath, from the breathing of the man who writes" (616). The space of the page then becomes typographically charged as a terrain on which to map the breath line—what Olson calls "composition by field." The organic shifting of breath, both the Black Mountain poets and Nichol suggest, fuel sonic performance of the poem.

Just as Nichol's art and conception of borderblur is breath-based in its execution on the page and in performance, so is the propulsion of the athlete's body, which hinges on a fundamental regulation of the breath; oxygen uptake is a significant measure of athletic capability.[6] In both Nichol's art and in sport, breath can be seen as the abstraction out of which all potentiality emerges. Another of Nichol's texts, *zygal: a book of mysteries and translations* (1986), opens with a concrete depiction of this very respiratory organicism. The initial pages of the collection feature a sequence of photocopied impressions: the first shows Nichol's own nose and closed mouth, which become nose and parted lips in the next impression, and culminate in an open exhale

and even potential scream in the third, where both teeth and tongue are exposed. The poet, in these preliminary pages, breathes proverbial life into the poems that follow, but also accentuates the omnipresence of the breath, the compositional element of each and every poem and that which yields the voice: "I am this noise / my voice says so" (15).

Nichol's sound poem "Pome Poem," recorded on his collection *Motherlove*, thematizes and enacts the perpetuity of becoming as an intimate relationship to language. The poem is a chant-based exploration of variation and is based on the theoretical premise that all aspects of the writer's being contribute to the process of writing. The poem's title emphasizes the subjectivity of the poet in the poem; the "me" in "Pome" is a sonic embodiment of the poet's body and body of work. Nichol's aesthetic suggests that writing is flexible enough to accommodate being many things at once. It is necessarily expansive. As in the case of the athlete, performance is mobilized by breath, and for Nichol, breath begets chant and phonic transliterations. "[E]very kind of writing has its own texture," Nichol argues, "its own overtones, its 'sound.' If I want access to the full range of what is possible in composition then I cannot exclude any of those sounds from my compositional field" (*Meanwhile* 371). For Nichol, these sounds result in the making of a poetry that is organic, kinetic, and, as Gertrude Stein would say, "lively." As in her still life portraits, Stein's plays address the tension between performance, or the processual, and stasis. Whereas in the former, Stein seeks to make the fixed come alive, in her plays, she renders "continuous movement" "placid as a landscape" ("Plays" 81). Stein affirms, "In the poetry of plays words are more *lively* words than in any other kind of poetry and if one naturally liked *lively* words and I naturally did one likes to read plays in poetry" ("Plays" 69, emphasis added). Fundamentally, Stein's plays and Nichol's poetics are an aesthetics of instantiation.

"Pome Poem" begins with Nichol chanting: "What is a poem is inside of your body, body, body. What is a poem is inside of your head, inside your head, inside your head."[7] In this apparent dialectic of mind and body, Nichol locates the poem in continuous movement from body part to body part sequentially, and yet simultaneously suggests that the poem, as embodied conceptualization, exists and is created in all parts of the body at once. Moving through the poem in a Steinian repetition with difference, Nichol draws awareness to the body part echoed in chant and inserted in the line "What is a poem is inside of your—," repeated four times (and in four-four time) for insistence. Articulating the principles of repetition as insistence, Stein claims: "The question of repetition is very important. It is important

because there is no such thing as repetition. Everybody tells every story in about the same way. . . . But if you listen carefully, you will see that not all the story is the same. There is always a slight variation" (*How Writing is Written* 494). For both Stein and Nichol, this variation is a function of insistence that, in the continuous present, is never the same. In his own essay on Stein, Nichol explains, "[i]t is this very difference in each moment that must be conveyed if one is to have a complete description" (*Meanwhile* 201). In the work of both artists, such insistence and variation demonstrates how consciousness functions experientially.

The poetic transliteration in "Pome Poem" moves in a lively echo from body to head, fingers to toes, belly to heart, eyes to nose, ears to mouth, and finally from voice back to the body to create a full circle. Nichol's pleasure in the textual body is evident in the proliferation of meaning and levels of signification that arise from his linguistic play. For example, he locates poetry in the body, rendering it inextricable from the sensorial and the corporeal. Poetry is therefore equivalent to that which is inside the "heart," inside the "eyes," and then the "nose." As Marjorie Perloff has noted, Stein anticipates Jacques Derrida's notion of "différance," and so is consistent as a line of influence for Nichol, but certainly Nichol's experimentation can be explained by Derrida's testifying to the power of the written word and his theorization of perpetual difference and deferral.[8] Moreover, Nichol's famous emphasis on the letter "H," which is illustrated by his forceful pronunciation of "heart" (significantly, a word which contains the verb "hear"), enables him to play with the zygal structure of the letter which, when turned on its side, becomes the subjective pronoun "I" of "eyes," marking the insertion of the poet himself in the poem. The movement from "H" to "I" foregrounds the perfect narrative sequentiality of the alphabet:

> The alphabet is a narrative—that movement thru your ABC. And any word you write is a displacement of that primary narrative. So that all writing always deconstructs some given even as it notes another given down. (392)

As in the becoming-other genre that characterizes his conception of "borderblur," the perpetual becoming of language as described by Nichol is analogous to the triathlete's progression from discipline to discipline within her sport. She blurs the borders between swimming, running, and cycling, but she also continually reshapes the textuality of her own body through a drive for improvement and goal-setting in a commitment to her own becoming.

The fourth body part in Nichol's poem's sequence is the "nose," and its pun on "knows" underscores the body's epistemological power. As the itemization

moves in succession from "nose" to "ears," with its playful punning on "here/hear," Nichol summons consciousness in a Steinian "continuous present," to an awareness of the poet's own body and that of the reader/listener in perpetually being "here" now. This emphatic present moment is reinforced by the progression from "ear" to "mouth"; Nichol pronounces the latter by stressing the "ow" of "mouth," which resonates fully with the suggestive "ow" of "now." From the line "What is a poem is inside of your mouth" Nichol moves logically to "What is a poem is inside your voice." With anatomical veracity, "voice" emerges or "becomes" as a culmination of "ears," "nose," and "mouth"; it is living force inseparable from the sensory organs that produce it. In this instance, of course, "voice" refers to Nichol's individual style as well as to the poet's literal speaking voice. Nichol's bodily classification comes full circle when the line following the four-time repetition of "voice" becomes a repetition of the opening line of the poem, insisting: "what is a poem is inside of your body." At this point, Nichol shifts the poem's attention from the body to emotions. Again in a quadruple repetition, Nichol moves from "What is a poem is inside of your happy," to "inside your woe," and, finally, to "inside your loving." Nichol's linking of body and emotion reinforces his earlier characterization of the epistemological powers of the body—to feel is, after all, a certain kind of knowing, one that may be intuitive, but one that knows nonetheless. Significantly, the poem ends in breath: "What is a poem is inside of your breathing." The culmination of the final chanting of the word "breathing" is hypnogogic, and progressively breaks down until it becomes the thing itself in a profound example of the erasure of distance between experience and representation through the medium of the body. The word "breathing" disintegrates until it eventually becomes panting—the rise and fall of inhalation and exhalation itself depicted as a narrative sequence trailing off into silence. Similarly, the breath of the triathlete in performance contains the narrative of her aerobic fitness, her ease and her struggle. As in the eventual silence of Nichol's poem, even the soundless breath of the athlete is loaded with meaning, and persists in Derridean "différance."

"Pome Poem" forces the reader to see, taste, smell, hear and breathe the poem across perceptual boundaries, merging a theorization and practice of generic borderblur with synaesthesia, allowing the reader/listener to experience and internalize a rationale for Nichol's artistic practice. Such experimentation forces us to speak, read, write, and think in expanded ways. With the same propulsion against confinement, the embodied female triathlete, with her elasticity among three competing sports in one, inscribes

its perpetual becoming, the in-between of her own making. With strong shoulders and biceps from swimming, overly developed quadriceps from the bike, and a contradictory leanness from running, the elite female triathlete performs an androgynous contradiction. More precisely, she embodies and stages a contestation of the borders of gender, not just physically, but also linguistically by destabilizing what it means to be "strong," "powerful," "fast," and "competitive." Understood traditionally as masculine qualities, strength, power, speed, and competitive drive become "de-gendered" by the female triathlete who "outperforms" language, as it were. Heywood and Dworkin's conception of gender characteristics is anti-essentialist:

> [M]asculinity is not at all the property of men. It's a quality, spirit, bright within that shines and shines and shines. Why can't we own that spirit, fire, shining grace that is and always has been with us? When and where will individuality, cockiness, wills to power be seen as part of us, our blood our teeth our bones? (*Built to Win* 98)

Through the multiplicity of her sport, the female triathlete's perpetual becoming-swimmer, becoming-cyclist, becoming-runner enacts the Deleuzian and Guattarian becoming-woman, and exposes "the very contingency" of her categorization. Butler celebrates the problematizing of gender that tennis great Martina Navratilova heralded; her athletic accomplishments resulted, in part, from her "assuming a muscularity and strength that were, for women, quite anomalous" (6). Our cultural appreciation of Navratilova's athleticism, Butler proposes, "allows the category of 'women' to become a limit to be surpassed, and establishes sports as a distinctively public way in which to enact and witness that dramatic transformation" (7). Through the muscular medium of her body, Navratilova offers an alternative to the dichotomy of gender.

Enduring Experientially, Engendering Triathlon

To recognize, celebrate, and marshal the complexity of the contradictions that characterize the female triathlete is also to acknowledge how she is, in part, a product of the very hegemony that oppresses her. Sport, like literature and other artistic media, is but one arena in which a contestation of the codes that hinder sociocultural and humanitarian progress occurs regularly. Through the creative act—whether that be the building of a body or the writing of a poem—the power of the ambiguous, the blurred border, comes into focus in a proliferation of meaning. Both Nichol's poems and the female triathlete's performance exhibit a borderblur, a dynamic and overlapping

relationship between the text and the body that foregrounds ambiguous materiality or morphology as a site of organic becoming. In much the same way that Nichol liberates the word, the image, and the sound byte, the morphology of the androgynous female triathlete is rife with prospects that necessarily destabilize normative dichotomies of gender. In this in-between space or "borderblur," the aesthetic legibility of a woman's body expands as do conceptions of masculinity. What it means to *look* like a man or woman must also change. Such "gender parity," according to Deleuze and Guattari's theorization, can only occur by passing *between* the dualism of gender (276).

Always eluding representation, the athlete's body perpetually recounts its making and unmaking, its winning and losing, its breakdown as well as its execution. The athlete's body encodes the dramas of the playing field, the connected detachment of performance, the intimate distance between the creator, the created, and the spectator, and the shifting in and between these seemingly disparate categories. The body of the female triathlete, which is embodied by her sport, is somewhere *between* densely muscular and rigorously pared down. Unlike most endurance athletes who spend hours at aerobic threshold to ensure his or her welterweight, the female triathlete benefits from a certain amount of mass, strength, and power, assets on the bike and during the swim. The body of the female triathlete depicts the elements she faces at every turn. Hers is a story of shouldering the current, triceps burning in backward extension while armfuls of water disappear behind her. Hers is the narrative of an uphill grind, hip-flexors hammering against asphalt, the gears of her bike echoing her heart beat. Hers is a body that soars, hitting the ground only between strides. To many male triathletes, however, her body is a symbol of his own shortcomings—as she seeks to pass him, he refuses to move over as the rules dictate. His pride tied to her wheel, the curve of her calves a testament to his own lack. Seeking to overtake him as she knows she can, she gets disqualified for drafting: he continues to confine her. The body of the female triathlete is a living, breathing contestation to normative definitions of gender—a beautiful fortress of alliance and liminality. Like Nichol's borderblur poetics and the conceptual and theoretical indices it fragments, the embodied female triathlete is a liberating insistence of becoming-woman.

Furthermore, the processual transition of the female triathlete at the thresholds that join this trinity of sports effects a metaphor for evolution in which she gives birth to herself. Emerging from the water, she struggles to strip off her wetsuit, the thick amphibious skin giving way to her sleek

musculature, enabling her to reshape the mechanics of her flight to glide, now avian and aerodynamic on her bike. When, from its whirring momentum, she unclips her pedals and racks her bike, the triathlete finally touches down, bipedal and erect in the continuous forward motion of her run. Lakoff and Johnson remind us that "Our sense of what is real begins with and depends crucially upon our bodies, especially our sensorimotor apparatus, which enables us to perceive, move, and manipulate, and the detailed structure of our brains, which have been shaped by both evolution and experience" (17). By increasing the range and flexibility of our thinking and embodiment, the female triathlete enacts a biopoetics that is legible by way of bpNichol's performative art of becoming.

Deleuze and Guattari's minoritarian state of "becoming-woman" enables a transcendence of dualisms that emphasizes the potential for a more complete conception of self, regardless of gender. Nichol articulates this very "becoming-woman" in his nine-volume poem *The Martyrology*:

> what comes forth from my mouth
> born from the woman in me
> handed down thru my grandma, ma & lea
> is what marks me most a man
> . . . . . .
> w's omen
> it turns over & reverses itself
> the mirrors cannot trick us
> (*The Alphabet Game* 8)

Nichol's art is an art of beginnings, where "becoming itself becomes" (Deleuze and Guattari 249). "Becoming," Deleuze and Guattari affirm, "is a verb with a consistency all its own. . . . It must be said that all becomings begin with and pass through becoming woman" (239, 277). Similarly, the female triathlete is a becoming in duration, a kaleidoscope of her own making, exhibiting and performing her interaction with the world through her own bodily poetics.

NOTES

1 Additionally, the contributions of sociobiologist Edward O. Wilson, in particular his 1975 publication of *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*, are crucial to the emergence of biopoetics.

2 The three other members of the Four Horsemen are Steve McCaffery, Paul Dutton, and Rafael Barreto-Rivera.

3 "Pleasure Suites" gestures to Gertrude Stein's poem "Sacred Emily" in which, through estrangement, there is a recognition of the materiality of textuality—the sounds, the

shapes, the very feeling of pronunciation in one's mouth are all aspects of the same sense of linguistic play with which Nichol is engaged.

4 Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a United States law that banned sexual discrimination from any education program or activity receiving federal funding.

5 Stein's configuration of contemporaneity is derived from her interpretation of William James, particularly his conception "of time as a continual flow of present moments" ("How Writing" 482). This becomes Stein's own notion of "continuous present" as coined in her 1926 essay "Composition as Explanation." ("Plays" 5)

6 An athlete's fitness can be measured by quantifying his/her VO^2 max, which is the volume of oxygen (in milliliters) he or she can consume while exercising at maximum capacity.

7 A complete audio recording of this poem can be heard on line at the UbuWeb archives. My transcription is taken from this recording.

8 Marjorie Perloff notes: "Long before Jacques Derrida defined *différance* as both difference and deferral of meaning, Stein had expressed this profound recognition." (http:www2.english.uiuc.edu/Finnegan/English%20256/tender_buttons.htm) Accessed April 26, 2009. See Derrida's essay "Différance" in *The Margins of Philosophy* for a detailed explanation of the term.

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Dennis Cooley

hog line 4

in to the house *hurryinhurryin* ears ringing
we could do a little
house-keeping
right there right there
a low thunder i like
to think over the sheet headed for

so they will not catch something
will not orbit heavily past & enter
the cold outer regions of space
past the orbits of the known world

you know you can count
on that /the key ping that is
i know we can
score big
if only we
put our selves to it

hell we could put up
an 8-ender /no question
8 would fit us to a T

once we got a feel
for it i mean

if you don't go
& get cold feet we could

bed down together
)) curling
((our toes
between the sheets
i mean this would fit us to a T eh

here at the Scots Tour
nament of Hearts
the lamentations & gnashings of

the line i mean
i mean do you like my line

in no time at all
you calling line & weight
calling them in to a place
in rings & tangents
hauling the frozen planets in
from interplanetary parabolas
to the palace of your sweeping

we would be lying
two we two could be one
up and heading home
you in plaid & paisley
knowing how the game is played
in ply & ploy imp loring

that is why
when you find me

between a rock & a hard place
when you take me
in)i got to hand it to you
lady you should have
good draw weight
you should have it
down pat
in the end
you could be
hogging
all the attention

Joel Baetz

Cricket Matters
The English Game and Rohinton Mistry's *Tales from Firozsha Baag*

> Sports, to my mind, are destined very appreciably to solve that really intricate problem—the social relations existing all over the world between the White and Black man.
> — J.M. Framjee Patel, *Stray Thoughts on Indian Cricket*

Patel is wrong—at least according to Rohinton Mistry's *Tales from Firozsha Baag*. Sport (in this case, cricket) does not solve problems of race or masculinity; it creates them. On rare occasions in Mistry's collection of short stories, cricket brings the momentary joy that comes with physical accomplishment and camaraderie or brief relief from the pressures of daily life in the Baag. But for the most part, cricket remains a doomed enterprise in *Firozsha Baag*, and shows none of the potential that Patel (and other historians of the sport) imagines. It is, instead, an activity full of failure and frustration. Mistry's characters discover that the sport is nothing less than a forum for the maintenance of singular and impossible ideals about race and masculinity. The cricket bat is as much a weapon designed to enforce racial boundaries as it is a figurative phallus and a sign of hegemonic masculinity; and the difficulties that Mistry's characters have with cricket remind us of his early fiction's desire to acknowledge and disturb imperial fantasies and offer flexible and pluralized renditions of race and gender.

Firozsha Baag offers a very particular version of cricket, one that amplifies the sport's imperial roots and ignores more common, contemporary, and flexible renditions of the sport that recognize its potential for postcolonial negotiation and national expression or its newfound commercial or global character. Since the early 1960s (inspired by C.L.R. James' seminal *Beyond a Boundary*), sports historians and sociologists have read the game as a forum for the imposition, resolution, and resistance of racial and masculine ideals. In countries in South Asia and the West Indies, cricket began as a sport with civilizing function, but was quickly repurposed as a complicated national expression, rife with the tensions of assimilation and indigenization,

colonial performance and postcolonial challenge. More recently, cricket is understood in terms of its ties to global corporations, which make it a slick and stylized commodity that overwrites local or national investments in the game and turns the players into salesmen eager to pitch the next product from Adidas or workers ready to score the biggest contract. But the cricket in Mistry's *Firozsha Baag* is markedly different from either of these interpretations: the collection focuses on the sport as an invention of the British empire and its fantasies and anxieties about race and gender.

The singularity of Mistry's version of cricket is remarkable. Any sport—including cricket—carries with it a host of cultural meanings that are almost endlessly articulated, challenged, and ignored by its reporters, fans, players, and historians. American football, for instance, is as much an allegory for Taylorized scientific management as players perform repetitive and specific tasks and labour under the constraints of an ever-present clock (an interpretation that Walter Camp offered in the 1880s and Michael Oriard repeated in the 1990s) as it is a metaphor for war with its emphasis on training, discipline, strategies, and violence (something we can see in Don DeLillo's *End Zone*), or one of our "intricate rituals" that allows for a public display of masculine physical intimacy otherwise unperformed or unrecognized (as Barabar Kruger might see it). So, too, with baseball; it is just as often thought of as staged nostalgia for a pastoral national life (so frequently, in fact, that David McGimpsey calls this idea "old news" [1]) as it is thought of as an expression of American individualism and personal responsibility, where every achievement can be recorded and compared and every error is duly noted (as Michael Mandelbaum reminds). Sport is a text, ready to be assembled and analyzed, its meanings discovered, debated, and denied—and cricket is no different. As we can tell from the appearances of cricket in his later fiction, Mistry understands the range of available meanings that the sport offers; but in *Firozsha Baag* he has selected carefully and offers a very specific interpretation of the sport.

The cricket in *Firozsha Baag* shows remarkable political and polemic character—attributes that contradict Mistry's recent and widespread reputation. Ever since *A Fine Balance*, Mistry's writing has been reviewed and praised for its realism. When heavyweight reviewers in heavyweight publications celebrate his novels as latter-day, India-centric incarnations of work by Balzac (Pico Iyer in *Time*), Tolstoy (John Updike in *The New Yorker*), and Dickens (Jamie James in *Atlantic Monthly*), they suggest that Mistry's writings are valuable only because they read as sweeping, moving, and—above

all else—plausible documents of Indian life. They "evok[e] every distinctive smell and sound of Bombay's streets" or bring to life "a full social picture" with the "old-fashioned mimetic virtues" of "[l]iveliness, precision, weight." A full (and necessary) discussion of the consequences that this reputation has for Mistry's work lurks beyond the scope of this essay;[1] but it is enough to say that a realist-oriented reading of Mistry's stories and novels limits recognition and understanding of its explicitly political and postcolonial claims about assimilation and appropriation, its emphasis on storytelling and the limits of representation, and its fascination with gender's demanding and flexible identities. More to the point, such a reputation might keep us from understanding Mistry's frequent descriptions of cricket in *Firzosha Baag* as something more than believable accounts of a popular pastime.

So far, the attention paid to *Firozsha Baag* has zeroed in on its scatological imagery or emphasis on storytelling—and for good reason. It's impossible to get through one of *Firozsha Baag*'s stories without stumbling upon a spit stain, slipping on a puddle of urine, picking up an ominous rumbling in a stomach, or coming across a character's filthy thoughts. And it's equally impossible to avoid the telling of or thinking about stories—from Jaakaylee's private memories to Nariman's play yard allegories to Kersi's parents' thoughts about the contents of his letters. Cricket might not be as prevalent as images of garbage, scat, and general excess, or curious declarations about the necessity and difficulty of telling or listening to stories, but the sport turns up with surprising frequency. Cricket is a crucial part of life in the Baag. It is the game that the boys play outside Rustomji's door in "Auspicious Occasion." A cricket bat is Kersi's weapon of choice when he goes chasing after Frances in Tar Gully in "One Sunday," and cricket figures prominently in his nostalgia for his carefree childhood in "Of White Hairs and Cricket." Finally, cricket is the topic of Nariman's oft-overlooked first tale to boys in "Squatter," the one that precedes his tale about Sid-Sarosh's presence in the stalls of Canada. What follows is an account of the meaning of cricket in Mistry's collection. By looking at Mistry's renditions of the sport and noticing the longstanding ideas that they give voice to, we can better see the collection's careful negotiation of the perils of essentialized and singular racial and gendered identities.

An Indian Game Discovered by the English

Read almost any scholarly history of cricket in India written in the past thirty years or so, and you are bound to encounter a postcolonial narrative, one that establishes the sport's imperial origins—as a game brought over

from England—and ends with an account of India's passion for cricket, its enthusiasm for its own leagues, teams, and players. In Ramchandra Guha's *A Corner of a Foreign Field*, Boria Majumdar's *Twenty-Two Yards to Freedom*, Mihir Bose's *A History of Indian Cricket*, for instance, the story of cricket is a story of postcolonial triumph and national entry into a globalized marketplace. The colonized nation wrests control and expertise from the ruling country to become a dominant player on the world stage. Guha points out that the sport that was the invention of the world's "games-master" has become "successfully indigenized" and a key factor in producing, soothing, and repeating India's globalized tensions (xi, 432); Majumdar writes in his prologue that cricket has gone from an imported game to "India's only crack at world domination" (2); Bose begins his history with an account of India's 1971 victory over England, after which the team was "hailed . . . as world champions" and England was forced to acknowledge a "new India" (14). Each tells a now familiar story: that India has beaten England at their own game and, because of its triumph, has assumed new global significance. By adapting the British game, practising their bowls, swings, and catches, and by making and celebrating its own superstars and villains, Indians have rejected old expectations about who they were and what they could do. They took away a tool of the empire, these histories tells us, and made it their own. Or as Ashis Nandy puts it in *The Tao of Cricket*: "Cricket is an Indian game accidentally discovered by the English" (1).

As popular as this historical narrative is, it is not the version that turns up in *Firozsha Baag*. For sure, Mistry's stories recognize cricket's colonial history, but they refuse to acknowledge the sport as an opportunity for resistance. Cricket is neither a forum in which mimicry gives rise to a meaningful ambivalence (as Homi Bhabha might understand the game) or an opportunity for subaltern groups to challenge "the domination imposed on them" (as Michael Messner puts it) (13). Indeed, no mimicry in *Firozsha Baag* disturbs colonial authority, no appropriation overwrites or obscures imperial origins. Instead cricket is solely a product of the British Empire, as fantastic and as foreign as the fantasies imagined on the pages of Kersi's Enid Blyton books.

That interpretation is, admittedly, a little surprising, especially in light of Ajay Heble's definitive and perceptive article about the collection's emphasis on hybridity; and especially in light of the sport's figurative potential. After all, cricket has travelled (like many of Mistry's characters, from Nariman Hansotia to Minocher Mirza) widely; its past and present lends itself to renditions of cultural pluralism (it was a game first picked up by the Parsis and

whose roots were thought to be both British and [vaguely] Persian[2]); and one of the goals of the sport is to hit the ball to or past the suggestively named boundary. But Mistry's cricket is only a forum for racial purity or cultural hygiene, a sign of often violent colonial authority, one that blocks out, wipes away, or refuses to acknowledge any meaningful or strengthening difference.

Some of the earliest appearances of cricket in *Firozsha Baag* have to do with Kersi's cricket bat, an obvious figurative phallus—the significance of which I'll return to in the next section. But what also becomes clear in the first two stories about Kersi's development ("One Sunday" and "Of White Hairs and Cricket") is that cricket is a British sport. The boys play it in the compound, but it is treated like some of the other artifacts from British rule that surround Kersi, his friends, and his family: part of a distant and idealized past, one which he longs for at the conclusion of "Of White Hairs and Cricket." Cricket is part of Kersi's life that is no longer meaningful, the product (or creator) of a "silly and childish fantasy" like the Blyton books, reliant on images and values associated with "a small English village, where he would play with dogs, ride horses in the meadows, climb hills, hike through the countryside, or, if the season was right, build a snowman and have a snowball fight" (35).

The acknowledgement of cricket's history as an English sport is almost always in full view in Mistry's descriptions of the game and its equipment. Take, for instance, the long passage that proceeds the admission that Kersi now uses the bat "mainly for killing rats":

> The first time that Kersi successfully used his bat against a rat, it had been quite messy. Perhaps it was the thrill of the chase, or the rage against the invader, or just an ignorance about the fragility of that creature of fur and bone. The bat had come down with such vehemence that the rat was badly squashed. A dark red stain had oozed across the floor, almost making him sick. (34-35)

This passage is one of Mistry's reminders that the bat is a metaphoric phallus for a pubescent boy—an instrument that he uses for the first time and ends up making a mess. But there are other figurative possibilities, too. It is also metaphor for imperialism. It makes a mess of things, is often ignorant of the beings that surround it, and is inexplicably violent towards the "dark" animal-like inhabitants that appear to threaten their way of life. Bat in hand, Kersi easily and readily defends his empire against unwanted invaders.

This connection between cricket and the British empire is readily apparent in Mistry's descriptions and in some of the earliest writings about the sport in India at the turn of the twentieth century. What they make clear

again and again is that cricket was eventually seen as a way to impose British values, to train the Indians (especially the Parsis, who took up cricket first) to be like any other Englishman on the pitch. Commentary, for example, on a Parsi cricket team's tour of England reads: cricket "can tend to promote an assimilation of tastes and habits between the English and native subjects of our Empress-Queen [and] cannot fail to conduce the solidity of the British Empire" (qtd. in Williams 28). For its part, J.M. Framjee Patel's *Stray Thoughts on Indian Cricket*, first published in 1905, is particularly insistent about cricket's colonizing function. The game has "educational value" (60), makes "the task of governing an alien people . . . easy and profitable" (71), and has proved to be a "great social reformer," "refining" the Indians' "dress, manners, and much else besides" (60). The cricket field is where the Englishman "drops all social distinctions for a time, and begins to like any man" and where it is possible to imagine some sort of newly "invented chemical preparation, or some such thing, which would convert a black face into a fair one" (68).

One of the more compelling features of these and other accounts of cricket's civilizing function is their use of the language of hygiene. David Spurr in *The Rhetoric of Empire* points out that colonial discourse is heavily invested in tropes of debasement, as a way of expressing its difference from and longing for colonized bodies. They are something that can be worked on, polished, cleaned up. The empire is healthy, strong, and able. That imperial discourse appears with particular force in Patel's *Stray Thoughts*. In Patel's account, cricket is responsible for the refinement of the Indians (as if they were coarse or unpolished or impure). It is a "healthy" game with "healthy" contact with the "race of rulers" (62) and a chance "to strengthen" the Parsis' physical and moral qualities (70). It is the closest thing to some magical sanitizer or racial purifier (the chemical that Patel hopes for) to wipe away the dirtiness of his race.

In part, these historical descriptions of cricket help explain the game's function in *Firozsha Baag*, Kersi's distaste for it, and its intimate relation with tropes of debasement, images of scat, garbage, and general excess.[3] When Savukshaw waves his bat "as if to say, come on, you blighters, play some polished cricket" (154), or when Kersi's Sunday mornings are defined by the two activities of helping out with his father's Sunday morning hygiene routine and playing cricket, and when Kersi carefully repairs his cricket bat and gets rid of the excess cord that "had come unwound and had gathered in a black cluster at its base" (33), they are invoking longstanding ideas about cricket:

that it was a game that swept away difference, sanitized unsightly messes, and strengthened the empire into a solid and healthy body. That alone helps explain Kersi's reactions to the game and Mistry's rejection of it. When Kersi returns from Tar Gully, he "retched without success . . . ripped off the rubber grips and slowly, meditatively, started to tear the freshly glued cord from around the handle . . . , then smashed his foot down upon [the bat]. There was a loud crack as the handle snapped" (45). Kersi's dismantling of the clean and bound cricket bat is a metaphor for his dismantling or his disruption (literally its unwinding and his cracking) of the imperial fantasy that it represents. When he cracks (showing its crack or just putting one in it?) that bat, he is rejecting the apparent solidity and purity of the empire because it is unsatisfying, disappointing, or—for Kersi—wretched.[4]

This fracturing of imperial fantasy brings me to "Squatter." "Squatter" is the most popular story in the collection, if we measure by the number of times it has been written about or anthologized. The story itself has three main parts: one, the tale of Savukshaw, the "greatest cricketer of . . . all" (152); two, the tale of Sid-Sarosh and his trials and failures in Canada and his eventual return to India; and, three, the telling of these two tales. Mostly, the latter two parts receive attention—and the former is left alone, despite the fact that cricket is a crucial portion of the story. It is the subject of the first tale that Nariman tells the boys; and Nariman himself shares a name and a (make-believe) scar with one of India's most famous cricketers, Nariman Jamshedji Contractor.[5] When John Eustace, in his otherwise helpful "Deregulating the Evacuated Body," reads the story, however, he arrives at a curious conclusion. It is, in his words, a story that "not only affirms national identity, but hinges its success on Parsi intervention. Through his example, Savukshaw signifies how the marginalized Parsis could ensure India's success were they to resume their central place on the national scheme/team" (32). For Eustace, then, it is the successful version of Sid-Sarosh's story, where he happily and successfully finds a home away from home.

That reading is a tempting one, but it has its limits, mostly because it does not account for cricket's imperial roots and does not recognize just how little Savukshaw actually accomplishes. Savukshaw's tale is not only about success (where he successfully beats the English at their own game) but also recounts ample frustration and mitigated failure. In other words, the tale is a lesson about the limits of successful racial and/or cultural integration and the attendant dissatisfaction. There is good reason to think that Savukshaw's story is a story of successful integration, one that sees him seamlessly adapt

to a game on the ruling country's home turf. In the allegorical battle between England and India, Savukshaw, to some extent, plays the role of the hero, taunting the opposition, bringing the team back from certain defeat, and (nearly) slaying the English giant with the "bullet-like shot" that he "purposely aimed . . . right at him" (155). Moreover, the description of the effect of Savukshaw's bloody shot suggests that his play effectively disturbs or overthrows the empire. The ball "startl[es] the chap inside preparing tea and scones who spilled boiling water all over himself and was severely hurt" and its stitches "had ripped, and some of the insides had spilled out" (156-57). So, it seems that Savukshaw has beaten the empire at its own game, and won this epic battle. In fact, we even have a repetition of the language of disruption and dismantlement that appears at the end of "One Sunday"; things are startled, spilled, and ripped out.

There is a crucial difference, however, between Kersi's disruption of the imperial fantasy and the disruption that Savukshaw initiates. Kersi's disruption puts an end to the game, signals his refusal to participate. Savukshaw's disruption happens within the context of the game, one that he keeps playing and keeps trying to win. But here is the catch, and here is where we can start to realize Savukshaw's limits and his frustration. It's a game he does not win, and it's a game he does not play for very long. Nariman highlights the only lasting consequences of Savukshaw's performance. The game ends in a tie and the "annual ball budget was thrown badly out of balance" (156). That's it. He is not one of Bhabha's (or Naipaul's, for that matter) mimic men that disturb imperial authority as they mimic or mock its actions. Nor is he one of James' cricketers, repurposing a Victorian game for the staging of racial and class tensions. Try as Savukshaw might, he does not overthrow the empire or disturb its dominance. He only overthrows their ball budget. So, to borrow a phrase from Eustace, if Sid-Sarosh "cannot see beyond the dominant conventions . . . to read the signs of success" (37), then Savukshaw cannot see beyond the conventions of cricket to read the signs of failure. Savukshaw adapts seamlessly to his new environment. His language and his play suggest that he is just like the Englishmen on the cricket pitch—something also alluded to by the final score. They are equals; he has been assimilated.

Assimilation is, for Savukshaw, ultimately unsatisfying and risky, a conclusion indicated by the dénouement of Nariman's tale about cricket. Savukshaw's post-cricket life is marked by two details: one, his departure from cricket for more mobile activities (as a champion bicyclist where he becomes "the fastest man on two wheels," and as a pole vaulter where he becomes

"a bird in flight" [157]); and two, his adventures as a hunter, in which he confronts a tiger just before the tale ends abruptly. The first account suggests Savukshaw's own dissatisfaction with cricket because it does not hold his attention for long and indicates his desire for (social) mobility—something which cricket fails to offer him. As Nariman confirms, the correct interpretation of the tale is that Savukshaw "was a man searching for happiness, by trying all different kinds of things"; even though he was (mildly) successful, "it did not bring him happiness" (160). The second detail is more complex. Nariman ends his tale of Savukshaw this way: "[A]s soon as he lifted the first morsel to his lips, a tiger's eyes flashed in the bushes! Not twelve feet from him! He emerged licking his chops! What do you think happened then, boys?" (158). Nariman never tells them what happens to Savukshaw. He only invites them to speculate about the conclusion. But what remains clear (to us, if not the boys) is that the terms of Savukshaw's confrontation have changed. He is no longer in a figurative and literal contest with England; he is, instead, in a contest of sorts with India. The tiger is India's national symbol, and Savukshaw's surprise meeting with the tiger suggests that the source of his difficulty is no longer the imperial ruler, but the colonized country, the home country that he seems to have left behind. He ends, then, in a similar position as Sid-Sarosh, caught between two worlds, never finding a place of comfort, always at risk or in danger. After all, even if Savukshaw isn't scared, it is a situation that is "[t]errifying for us, of course" (157).

A Man's Game

So far, I have examined cricket as a forum for the production and maintenance of imperial fantasies about race and culture. In ways that recall some of the earliest writings about the cultural value of the sport, Mistry's stories in *Firozsha Baag* imagine cricket as a game that sustains visions of racial and cultural hygiene, one that wipes away meaningful differences—as if everyone were English and every open field in Bombay or near the Baag was flat meadow in rural England. Kersi's and Savukshaw's eventual rejection of cricket, then, signals their general dissatisfaction with the game's colonizing function. As we know from his repeated recognition of his humility in the face of "the ambiguities and dichotomies confronting me" (201), Kersi discovers a life more messy, more diverse, more ambivalent, and more satisfying than what cricket allows.

Cricket is very much a fantasy of the British empire but it is also an arena for the construction and maintenance of, to use a term defined by R.W.

Connell, "hegemonic masculinity," a "configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees . . . the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (77). We find in Mistry's *Firozsha Baag* that cricket is a game for men who are robust and energetic, who are impervious to pain, who govern the actions of themselves and others. We also find, however, that some of the central characters—especially Jehangir, Kersi, and his father—have distinct trouble living up to this idealized version of masculinity. The collection is, in its developing the contrast, a refusal of the ideals of masculinity that cricket offers, and the recognition of alternative ways of being a man.

In its earliest incarnations, the cricket pitch was a site on which to demonstrate a version of idealized and idolized masculinity defined by youthful exuberance, stoicism, and physical strength and agility. A number of the same tracts that imagine cricket as a tool of the empire also imagine cricket as an instance of hegemonic masculinity. On his travels through India, F. St. J. Gore discovers cricket in a remote and rural village, and he is reminded that this game is a manly one. "It is pleasant," he writes, to notice the care that is given to stimulate such rational amusements for young India. In no country in the world do the boys stand more in need of the open manliness that is fostered by honourable competition in outdoor games" (qtd. in Guha 50). In Patel's *Stray Thoughts*, cricket is as much a sign of the empire as it is a sign of vigorous masculinity. Cricket is one of the "manly, healthy games" the Parsis play (62), provides them with "excellent physical preparation for military service" (70), and produces men of "real grit" joined together in "the 'Brotherhood of the Bat'" (75). Elsewhere, the absence of masculinity marks the Indians that refuse to take cricket seriously. At the end of the nineteenth century, one newspaper correspondent makes the following claim about Hindu cricket: "I amused myself a long time ago with watching the progress of a Hindu cricket club. The members were elegant youths of the Prabhu caste and promised very well at first, but their kilted garments rather interfered with running, and they threw the ball when fielding in the same fashion as boarding school girls. . . . I fear the club is extinct" (qtd. in Majumdar 79).

The overlap of race, gender, and sport that appears in these renditions is well-known. Sport has been imagined elsewhere as a colonizing force that imposes hegemonic masculinity on dominated subjects or as a forum for the achievement of racial acceptance by way of masculine achievement—two

distinct but related understandings of gender performance and racial identity. What we see in *Firozsha Baag*, however, is neither the imposition nor the negotiation of the features of masculinity; we see the complete rejection of cricket because of its investment in masculine ideals that can never be achieved or maintained.

Cricket's longstanding masculine ideals are recognized and rejected in *Firozsha Baag*—usually by Kersi. His bat reminds us that cricket is a masculine enterprise. He caresses and cares for it in his own room, it is "naked," its tape looks like "pubic hair" (33), its grip has the potential to look like "uncircumcised foreskin," putting on the rubber grip is much like putting on a condom (40), and its use results in a sticky end (like the one it gets after killing the rat [35] and the one he "barely rescue[s]" [35] himself from when looking through the girls' underwear drawer). Moreover, this bat helps him obtain—momentarily—some particular characteristics. It helps him protect his home turf and supplies him with the necessary confidence to step into the foreign territory of Tar Gully without betraying his own anxieties. "Of White Hairs and Cricket" reinforces features of the sport's masculine ideals. In a few short passages, we are reminded of the manliness of the game, and its investment in stoicism and youth. In a description that foreshadows the English giant's fate in Savukshaw's tale, Kersi's father brags about his son's manly heroics on the field:

> "Today my son did a brave thing, as I would have done. A powerful shot was going to the boundary, like a cannonball, and he blocked it with his bare shin." Those were his exact words. The ball's shiny red fury, and the audible crack—at least, I think it was audible—had sent pain racing through me that nearly made my eyes overflow. Daddy had clapped and said, "Well-fielded, sir, well-fielded." So I waited to rub the agonized bone until attention was no longer upon me. (114)

The father's overly formal praise—"[w]ell-fielded, sir, well-fielded"—draws attention to the intersection of the empire and masculinity. At the same time that his praise is a sign of English propriety, it is a celebration of his stoic (and heroic) masculinity, one that remains stalwart and reserved in the face of obvious challenge. Also apparent here (and elsewhere in the collection, for that matter) is that Kersi has trouble maintaining this vision of admired and authoritative masculinity. Notably (and recalling the language of excess that runs throughout the collection, perhaps especially the unsuccessful retching when Kersi cracks his cricket bat), Kersi's eyes "nearly . . . overflow." Even as he manages to contain his emotions, there are already signs that such control is either impossible or unwanted. Its boundaries are being tested.

In fact, almost everything about cricket's masculine code is unachievable or unsustainable. Kersi's own father is unable to maintain his youthful exuberance on the field. When he takes a break and sits "on the grass a little distance away, he seemed much older than when he was batting or bowling leg breaks. He watched us with a faraway expression on his face. Sadly, as if he had just realized something and wished he hadn't" (124). In effect, he realizes that he is old, that he cannot maintain the youthful masculine appearance he wants. His physical distance is a metaphor, then, for his distance from the vital masculine world to which he clings so desperately.

In *Firozsha Baag*, Kersi's and his father's rejection of and distance from cricket in "One Sunday" and "Of White Hairs and Cricket" is a rejection of the sport's masculine ideals. The remaining stories stage the negotiation of more complex, more varied masculinities. There are many different ways to be a man in *Firozsha Baag*, and the characters are asked almost endlessly to recognize, emulate, or reject competing versions of manliness. For instance, in "Exercisers," Jehangir encounters a range of masculine identities: his own solitary bookish identity, the virile camaraderie of the boys at St. Xavier's, the open sexuality of the man on the bench with his girlfriend, and the lewd and crude behaviours of the men who are "flushing out twosomes in their sanctuaries" (224). Jehangir might long for the sort of masculinity performed by the men on the playground—their confidence, their community, their physical prowess—or he might be rightfully put off by the men who interrupt the surreptitious meetings of lovers. But, like so many other characters, he is reminded that masculinity comes in many forms: from Nariman's confidence to Dr. Mody's cultivation to Rustomji's grumpiness to Pesi's brutishness to Kersi's thoughtfulness. As we encounter these different versions of masculinity, as we see their varying degrees of happiness and success, as we notice how impossible or how frustrating youthful stoicism is to achieve or maintain, we are reminded of the limiting and limited quality of cricket's version of manliness and what other possibilities there are to choose from and perform.[6]

Not surprisingly, then, we can see Kersi's journey not only as the discovery of a hybrid cultural identity, one that throbs between two cultural lives (as the final stories put it), India and Toronto, Chaupatty Beach and the Don Mills swimming pool; but also the discovery of a hybridized gendered identity.[7] After all, Kersi repeats his allegiance to Tiresias—who appears in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Eliot's *The Waste Land* as both man and woman—and the Parsi immigrant arrives at an identity that is framed in overtly gendered

terms and is distinctly not hegemonic masculinity. His little bathtub, where he lies naked and sees one wavering hair trapped between the hole and the plug, is both reminder of the water at Chaupatty Beach with the guttersnipes and "their little buoyant penises" (243) and the pool in Don Mills where the water laps the "curly bits" of hair straying from the woman's spandex swimsuit (247). His bathtub is a hybrid territory, marked by signs of different cultures and genders; his nakedness is a reminder of the fish, the hair a reminder of the woman. Furthermore, outside of his bathtub, Kersi cultivates a masculine identity that can only be thought of as a mixture of the men from the Baag. As he admits, Kersi is perhaps most like Nariman (the emblem of heterogeneity in the Baag), but he leers at women like Rustomji, tries to maintain his athleticism like his father, and collects and stores things—in this case memories, not stamps—like Dr. Mody. This final story, then, is a reminder that gendered identity is more complex, more accessible, and more satisfactory than the impossible version that is played out on the cricket pitch.

In Mistry's most recent novel, *Family Matters*, cricket appears again.[8] "[C]ricket itself is not cricket," says Vilas; "[it's] just another crooked business, with bookies and bribes and match-fixers who break the cricket-loving hearts of us subcontinentals" (196). Vilas is right—but not only because the sport's reputation as a bastion of "fair play and integrity" (ideals, he remarks earlier, brought to the game by the British) has suffered because of scandal. Vilas is also right because "cricket itself is not cricket"—not in *Family Matters*, not in *Firozsha Baag*, not in any sports historian's description of it. Cricket is always more than itself, always more than a few simple rules, a handful of players, and a couple of wickets. "Cricket" designates a wide but well-defined range of cultural meanings, articulated and performed by its players, fans, haters, writers, and historians, and Mistry's *Tales from Firozsha Baag* chooses carefully from these overheated opinions and thoughtful analyses. His rendition of cricket is unfailingly particular, but it is also a valuable reminder that our cultural practices always have meaning; the game itself is never just a game.

NOTES

1 The consequences are many; here are two. When Mistry's fiction is understood only for its true-to-life portrayals, it is left open to the sort of "asinine" evaluations by the likes of Germaine Greer, who incredibly and famously expressed her hatred for *A Fine Balance* because it didn't confirm her own impressions of India. But I also suspect that when North American audiences read his literature only as realism (as evidenced by his appearance on *Oprah*), his novels or stories function as tourist literature that introduces North

American audiences to other people that they have not met and places they have not been to. As noble as that sounds, it has the potential to dovetail with a pseudo-cosmopolitanism that substitutes the reading of a single novel for diligent and careful understanding of a nation and its cultures.

2 In his "Stray Thoughts," Patel notes the Parsis' hybrid cultural background—"[h]e is a fine product of Persian pluck and English culture—a strong combination, indeed" (61)—and on the possible hybrid background of cricket. It is a game, Patel notes, that was invented by the British, but ancient Persian kingdoms played games "with a bat and ball, nearly allied to cricket" (61).

3 The relationship between scat and general excess and cricket appears in the collection's first story, "Auspicious Occasion." The flakes of plaster from the ceiling, caused by the neighbour's dripping toilet, drip into the copper bathtub and they remind Rustomji of the boys who play cricket. The plaster, Rustomji thinks, "floated on the surface, little motes of white. Like the little motes that danced before Rustomji's eyes when he was very tired, after a long day in the hot, dusty courthouse, or when he was very angry, after shouting at the boys of Firozsha Baag for making a nuisance with their cricket in the playground" (11-12). That relationship appears again in "Squatter"; Nariman's first story is about cricket, the second about defecation and constipation.

4 Much of the collection proves the impossibility or the folly of maintaining a pristine life. Despite his best efforts, Rustomji's sparkling white *dugli* is spoiled by a splash of tobacco and betel nut juice. In "The Collectors," the Bombay police's attempt to keep the streets clean is a Sisyphean task. Note the language of hygiene and excess: "[t]he Bombay police, in a misinterpretation of the nation's mandate: *garibi hatao*—eradicate poverty, conducted periodic round-ups of pavement dwellers, sweeping into their vans beggars and street-vendors, cripples and alcoholics, the homeless and the hungry, and dumped them somewhere outside the city limits; when the human detritus made its way back into the city, another clean-up was scheduled" (106). Further examples include the returning white hairs on Kersi's father's head, Kashmira's repeated clean-up of her balcony, and the obvious inability of Jamshed's "very neat missive[s]" to speak with authority about the excess and excitement of Bombay (188).

5 The test cricket career of Nariman Contractor, a captain of the national team, was ended when he was hit in the head by an errant pitch when touring Barbados. As Mihir Bose tells it, Contractor had emergency surgery and an iron plate placed in his head. When Mistry's Nariman is talking about the cricket players, he is sure to point out the place "on his furrowed brow" where "a vicious bumper opened a gash" (153).

6 And gender is a performance in this collection—something that we can see in the continual parade of phalluses (which some of the Baag's inhabitants locate as the source of masculinity), both real and fake: from Kersi's cricket bat to the re-attached penis in China (78) to the plantain used in Jehangir's fantasy about the *kayrawalli* (215) to the "very large, very masculine lump" produced in the folds of Gajra's sari (17). All of these faux phalluses are signs of the performance of gender identity, that masculinity can be staged, faked, removed, and re-attached.

7 Homi Bhabha still has the best explanation of the now well-worn term "hybrid," but for a thorough rendition of its challenges and a convincing defence of its relevance, see Marwan M. Kraidy, *Hybridity, Or the Cultural Logic of Globalization*.

8 Cricket also appears in Mistry's first published story. As a child, Mistry wrote a story called "Autobiography of a Cricket Bat" which won first place in a writing contest sponsored by a sporting goods store in Bombay (Gibson).

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Priscila Uppal

Figure Skates Love Poem

Foot corset, you get leaner
the longer I tug.

But once we tie
the knot, you show me,
at every opportunity,
your sharp little teeth.

Katherine Sutherland

Girl Power/Grand Prix
Sex, Speed, and the Motorcycle Racer

Few Canadians know the name of Mike Duff, one of the most remarkable athletes this country has ever produced. In most of Canada, riding a motorcycle is only possible for two-thirds of the year, yet Mike Duff became the first North American and *only* Canadian World Champion Grand Prix motorcycle racer. He won the Belgian Grand Prix 250 in 1964 and both the Dutch Grand Prix 125 and Finnish Grand Prix 250 in 1965. And then, between 1984 and 1988, he became a woman, Michelle Duff.

The 1966 film *Ride for Your Life*, produced by the National Film Board of Canada, documents Duff's 1966 Grand Prix season, a season in which his hip was shattered in a horrendous crash in Japan. In this brief documentary, Duff says, "When the kids get to school age, I'm gonna pack it all in and settle down . . . [My wife] would like to see Mike Duff settle down. She wants a home. She worries all season. Every season, three or four of our friends get killed." These comments reveal Duff's ambivalence toward his sport, but they also remove motorcycle racing from the traditional feminine sphere of domesticity ("home," "kids," and "school"); the dream of settling down might be understood to imply that motorcycle racing is essentially masculine. However, Duff's story undermines such simplistic binary and oppositional positioning of male and female, and Duff's ambivalence toward motorcycle racing is inextricably linked in her narrative to her ambivalent sexual subjectivity. In a 2004 interview with Hana Gartner on CBC News, Gartner refers to an earlier 1987 interview between the two right after Duff's transitional surgery, and says, "You were dreaming that one day you would have someone in your life." Duff wistfully replies, "Yeah, that was important.

It still hasn't happened." Later in the 2004 interview, Duff notes, "I've often thought if I could go back to being a guy, I could probably live my life more comfortably . . . uh . . . I won't say more comfortably than I am now but more comfortably than I was before as a guy." Duff elaborates: "My recommendation is . . . to think very carefully that if you can live the way you are, do so, if you can deal with it, do so, because the change is not something that is taken lightly. A person should be very, very careful before they do something irreversible." These comments, coming from a retired Grand Prix racer, are remarkable. Surely every race that Duff rode, though "careful" in the mind of the motorcycle racer, had potentially "irreversible" physical outcomes? As Duff writes in her 1999 autobiography, *Make Haste, Slowly*, "Motorcycle racing is unquestionably a dangerous sport. It is not without its personal rewards that can fully justify the act, but the risks are so costly when families are involved" (121). As Duff's comments to Gartner imply, she might say the very same thing about sexual reassignment.

Duff's poignant life story calls into question cultural values and assumptions associated with the athlete's body, particularly the relation between that body and gender, injury, and machines. I propose that each of these bodily dialectics—by which I mean the often oppositional subjective oscillation between the body and gender, injury, machines—is, in the context of speed, blurred, perhaps accelerated. My argument has two sides: placing the body in the context of speed reifies simplistic gender categories, as speed has a highly gendered cultural history, which I will briefly trace. But contradictorily, placing the body in the category of speed undoes gender, perhaps even sex, in profound ways because speed in some senses undoes the body. Duff's story limns at least two bodies: one that is encased in stereotyped gender distinctions as immobilizing as the cast that encased Duff's leg after the 1966 accident; but also one that transcends itself, through speed, to disembodiment, beyond the cultural imperatives of gender. How is it possible for the body to perform both physical delimitation and physical transcendence simultaneously? In the context of motorcycle racing, one might say that one form of speed ends in a crash, a certain descent into the body's limitations. Another form of speed leads to disembodiment or the defiance of the body's limitations, a physical (or metaphysical) state that Japanese Bosozoku (street-racing gangs, known in English as "Speed Tribes") have described as "*kaanibal* [carnival]" (Sato 19) or "wandering" (Sato 58) or "liquidity" (Sato 58). Duff speaks of motorcycle racing in similar terms of cultural dissolution, describing the Grand Prix race circuit as "The Continental Circus" ("The End" 1). She also notes that

the RD56, a two-stroke 250 cc Yamaha Grand Prix bike, ridden by Duff in the 1964 season, "required a state of schizophrenia to ride properly" ("The End" 2). Alternatively, the contradictions of the racing body might be seen to parallel the contradictions of the racing bike: at speed, in a full lean into a corner, a racing motorcycle floats on the miniscule piece of rubber that is the portion of tire in contact with the track at any given moment; a portion of tire touches the track for an incomprehensibly short period of time before revolving away under the rider, who is suspended between air and very hard ground by this liquid, motion-full miracle of speed. In other words, the motorcycle at full speed is, in some ways, performing beyond physical limitations—and so is the racer's body, for certainly a person could not run so fast, balanced on so little. But take that same motorcycle, cut the engine, and ask the racer to step away: without a stand, a crutch, it falls over; it falls with certainty and drama into the mundane imperatives of gravity and its own materiality.

A very brief history of speed, specifically of the equation between speed and masculinity, provides illuminating context. In describing her life as a Grand Prix motorcycle racer (as Mike, before she became Michelle), Michelle Duff acknowledges her aversion to a conventional career and life:

> The 1961 Belgian G.P. had introduced me to the lifestyle of European racing at its best. I wanted more, not just the partying and celebrations, but the entire package of the racing, the traveling, the food, the culture, the freedom of spirit and expression, the carefree labours of racing success, and the ultimate reward of personal achievement. I deplored the life-long endeavour of punching a time-clock, working from nine to five in an endless battle against the pressures of a society bent on social destruction. I have never been afraid of work, but so many people end their day in tired depression. I needed the freedom of expression, I mean real freedom, to answer to no one, to have no bigger brother constantly feeding an insatiable machine information and data about me through an impersonal number. Grand Prix racing gave me this freedom; I answered to no one. (98)

A conflicted attitude toward technology and, by extension, speed pervades this passage, reflected in the oxymoron "carefree labours." Duff describes a dread of the "life-long endeavour of punching a time-clock," which implies repetition and slowness; ironically, though, it is hard to imagine a career oriented more rigidly around a time clock than motorcycle racing, where each circuit of the racetrack is timed and signaled to the rider. It is also ironic that Duff resists a life which reduces an individual to "an impersonal number," because racers are often known and referred to by their racing numbers—ultimately the number of a racer becomes a metonym for the racer, imbued with a particular racing history. The point is not that Duff is self-contradictory,

but rather that placing bodies in the context of speed reveals the contradictions of embodiment itself and all that embodiment entails, including gender. For instance, the anxiety in Duff's celebration of the "carefree" is associated not only with technology and the "time-clock," and the restrictions they impose on a body, but also with "the pressures of a society bent on social destruction." That is, Duff conflates social pressure with conformity and gender ("bigger brother") and then contrasts this complex with "the freedom of spirit and expression" of motorcycle racing, a somewhat more gender-neutral constellation of values. For Duff, the strongest value associated with racing is "freedom," particularly "freedom of expression." Just as embodiment is not a fixed state but rather a fluid subjective dialectic, freedom as Duff conceives it is not a state to be finally inhabited but rather a way of being, or a form of subjectivity ("expression"), which emerges through speed.

This modern understanding of speed as both fixed within cultural biases (especially masculinity) but also highly mutable is perhaps first clearly articulated in Thomas De Quincey's 1849 panegyric to speed, "The English Mail-Coach, or the Glory of Motion." In this essay, De Quincey describes the novel and thrilling high-speed experience of riding on an English mail-coach:

> seated on the old mail coach, we needed no evidence out of ourselves to indicate the velocity. On this system the word was—*Non magna loquimur*, as upon the railways, but *magna vivimus.* The vital experience of the glad animal sensibilities made doubts impossible on the question of our speed; we heard our speed, we saw it, we felt it as a thrilling; and this speed was not the product of blind, insensate agencies, that had no sympathy to give, but was incarnated in the fiery eyeballs of an animal, in his dilated nostril, spasmodic muscles, and echoing hoofs. This speed was incarnated in the *visible* contagion amongst brutes of some impulse, that, radiating into *their* natures, had yet its centre and beginning in man. The sensibility of the horse uttering itself in the maniac light of his eye, might be the last vibration in such a movement; the glory of Salamanca might be the first—but the intervening link that connected them, that spread the earthquake of the battle into the eyeball of the horse, was the heart of man. (194)

This description of the sensual pleasures of speed builds toward the Battle of Salamanca, which occurred in July of 1812 during the Napoleonic Wars. At a glance, De Quincey seems to present an explicitly masculine experience of speed, as the coach passenger (and narrator) almost inhabit the muscular frame of the horse. But as much as this passage equates speed with masculinity and a panoply of masculine values, including war, muscles, and "the Glory of Salamanca," and locates its "centre and beginning in man," De Quincey also undoes this equation with simultaneous descriptions of speed as mutable, as "radiating," "maniac," and a "vibration in . . . movement."

Linking masculinity, speed, and violence occurs in many texts after De Quincey's "English Mail-Coach," perhaps nowhere more notoriously than in the Futurist Manifesto penned in 1909 by F. T. Marinetti, prominent member of the Italian Futurists, later associated with the Italian Fascist movement. As his fourth point in the "Manifesto of Futurism," Marinetti writes: "We affirm that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath—a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace*" (n. pag.). The "great pipes" and "serpents of explosive death" might represent masculinity, while the reference to "grapeshot"—small balls shot from a cannon—again conflates speed, masculinity, and military violence. However, these extremely masculine descriptions of speed are also oddly feminine: the word "beauty" is repeated throughout, the hood of the racing car is "adorned," and the propositions ends with, and hence emphasizes, the winged female form of the *Victory of Samothrace*. Surprisingly—or perhaps not surprisingly at all—this most notoriously misogynistic text is ambiguous on the subject of masculinity, largely because masculinity is described here in the context of speed.

This uneasy equation of speed, violence, and masculinity has survived the transition from flesh to metal, as horses have given way to machines. And arguably the machine which makes this effect of speed on gender most visible is the motorcycle, perhaps partly because the driver is not hidden but almost merges with the surfaces (and certainly with the physics) of the machine.

As a boy reaching puberty, Mike Duff first learned to ride a motorcycle to defend (or define) his masculinity to a group of peers, admitting that his "popularity amongst [his] peers . . . stood somewhere near average," a status he decides to improve with the following boast: "I ride my brother's motorcycle." Duff tells not his peers but his readers that

> What I meant and what my classmates understood me to say were totally different, their interpretation was that I rode on the front, mine was that I rode on the back as a passenger. . . . Obviously no one believed that at 13 I actually rode a motorcycle. A victim of my own big-mouth I was ridiculed throughout all the grade eight classes and even down into two of the lowly grade seven classes. As time passed and the situation had not been forgotten, I became increasingly more embarrassed and was even reluctant to go to school. (19)

Duff arrives at a solution, one that only a future Grand Prix champion would choose: he teaches himself to ride his brother's BSA motorcycle, a bike made by the Birmingham Small Arms company, manufacturer of firearms and military equipment, in addition to being the largest motorcycle manufacturer

in the world in the 1950s (one of many instances where motorcycles and military history are linked). Duff rode the bike in front of his school at lunchtime after which, in his words, he "became a local hero, admired by all [his] friends" (20). Thus, the implicit violence of bullying and the status of victim is supplanted by the masculine role of "local hero"—though at the cost of further violence, for Duff must submit to his "brother's wrath" when the brother uses "physical means to express his displeasure" (20). So again, on one level masculinity is reified in this anecdote, but recall the passage already cited: "I needed the freedom of expression, I mean real freedom, to answer to no one, *to have no bigger brother* constantly feeding an insatiable machine information and data about me through an impersonal number" (emphasis added, 98). A "bigger brother" is a source of social coercion and gender typing, but he is also someone who can be escaped through motorcycles, later through motorcycle racing, through speed. It is as though Duff is racing away from the "bigger brother"—or perhaps from a strictly masculine identity. The motorcycle brings masculine "hero" status followed by the emasculating "brother's wrath."

Even the traditionally masculine category of the "hero" is deconstructed at high speeds. For example, it has been argued that motorcycle leathers invoke hero narratives. In his book *The Black Leather Jacket,* Mick Farrer suggests that leathers are styled in the tradition of armour:

> The parallels between the leather jacket and the armour of the middle ages is neither so far-fetched nor romantically fanciful as it might at first appear. . . . For a start, a leather jacket does afford a good measure of physical protection. Any motorcyclist sliding along the abrasive surface of the highway having just dropped his bike will attest to this, as will the experienced barroom brawler, who is well aware that leather is a great deal better protection against knives, brass knuckles, broken bottles, chains and straight-edge razors than seersucker. . . . [Likewise,] at the sight of a man in armour, the patched and threadbare peasant was well advised to make himself scarce . . . until the human tank had gone by. (18)

In *All About Motorcycles*, Australian author Pedr Davis describes modern full-face motorcycle helmets, first made by Bertone, as having "a futuristic shape styled after the visor set up worn during the Middle Ages by Knights in armour," which he sees as "fitting gear for modern Knights of the road" (33). The phrase "Knights of the road" suggests a historical contradiction, but the supposed toughness implied by leathers is also contradictory, for surely leathers foreground nothing more clearly than the soft vulnerability of the flesh beneath? They are practical, of course; Michelle Duff recalls her early use of leathers, describing a crash in which she "suffer[s] nothing more

than a scraped elbow" in her heavy leathers, while Jack Ahearn, who falls in the same spot, finds that "his lightweight leathers [are] torn to shreds" (231). Also following a heroic tradition, Bosozoku riders often wear gear which intentionally invokes cultural memories of Kamikaze pilots. According to Sato, the characteristics most associated with these Japanese riders are "ultra-masculinity, bravado, defiance and an emphasis on violence" (69), much like the values advocated in *The Futurist Manifesto*. But of course, it is a cliché to point out that contours of ultra-masculinity often emerge from a profound sexual ambiguity.

Like gender, injury is a category of embodiment that is often rendered ambiguous by speed. Most obviously, a rider's body seems superhuman and powerful in a race but also extremely vulnerable to injury. How does the rider reconcile the contradictions inherent in the training and caring for his or her athlete's body (along with the bike) and then engaging in a sport that poses such a high level of risk to that body? As Canadian extreme sport rider Guy Perrett once told me in an interview, having just listed his many serious riding injuries, "If my body was bike, I would have sold it a long, long time ago." In her autobiography, Duff describes the strength required to heave the bike through the race in her first Grand Prix win: "Because of the machine's bulk, it became necessary to allow extra time negotiating various sections. It took more physical effort to virtually throw the bike from side to side and considerable muscle to lift and drop down on the other side through esses and over jumps" (181). This athletic effort is exhausting. Duff describes changing gears during a race, "I calculated that I made a gear change, on the average, once every three seconds for two hours and a few minutes" (179), making over 2400 gear changes a race, a number that is even more impressive to anyone who has ever squeezed the highly muscular clutch of a 1960s high performance motorcycle. So why would an athlete risk his or her body, if strength and endurance are requisite for victory? How do athletes reconcile—or drive themselves through—the contradiction? The answer is simply put by countless riders: they are addicted to speed. Over and over again in rider accounts, the attraction to speed is described as being like an addiction to a drug that suspends the rider beyond embodiment. Speed generates contradiction in the context of embodiment.

The compression of speed with thrills, strength, and risk but also with drugs, addiction, and physical craving occurs for the riders today as it did over one hundred years ago for De Quincey. Duff describes racing as a "need" and a "compulsion" (12). In a reference to the beginning of her career,

she writes that "At this stage of my racing career I was still unable to answer that indeterminate 'why' I needed to race motorcycles, but I was sure that this intangible urgency to go fast was real" (14). Perhaps it is unsurprising that speed in the form of drugs and speed in the form of acceleration may, like motorcycles themselves, be linked to military history. In *Speed Tribes: Days and Nights with Japan's Next Generation*, Karl Taro Greenfeld describes the injection of "Philopan . . . pharmaceutical amphetamine, the kind of speed Japanese soldiers used to shoot during World War II and that Japanese factory workers and taxi drivers still [prefer] over smokable speed" (17).

Indeed, there is a long historical association between the altered mental states produced by both drugs and velocity. De Quincey was a notorious opium addict who described his addiction as acceleration: "these dreadful symptoms were moving forward for ever, by a pace steadily, solemnly, and equably increasing" (90). In a more modern context, Ward writes that "Speed is a form of ecstatic experience that is comparable to other forms of ecstasy, such as sexual or religious experience, or the use of psychotropic drugs" (par. 12).

The film *Faster*, a documentary about Grand Prix motorcycle racers, begins with a voice-over that states "We all are just junkies, speed junkies"; and Wayne Rainey says of racing at one point "It was just something that I was addicted to." But, of course, with addiction comes risk. Between 1990 and 1992, Wayne Rainey won three consecutive 500cc Grand Prix titles; in 1993, he was leading the Grand Prix series when he crashed at the Italian Grand Prix and broke his spine. His career (and his addiction) did not end, however; today he races high performance go-carts at alarming speeds. So what does it mean to be "addicted" in the context of speed?

Compare the observations of motorcycle racers to those of the Bosozoku, or "Speed Tribes." As Karl Taro Greenfeld notes, the Bosozoku often act as couriers for the Yakuza, carrying "methamphetamine, the drug of choice for Japan's half-million speed addicts" (22). Greenfield also describes the *Boso* youth both shooting up and smoking methamphetamine; Ikuya Sato also describes the use of amphetamines in *Kamikaze Biker*. With unintentional irony, the Boso youth repeatedly comment to Sato "we get high on speed" (13), referring to the rush of acceleration, not chemicals, but in this phrase the close association between the two becomes clear. Canadian philosopher Mark Kingwell bluntly states that

> Speed is a drug, and not in just the old-time hepcat high of Dexedrine or bennies, those ingested, on-the-road amphetamines; or even in the newer, hi-tech crystal meth to be found, probably, in some corner of a schoolyard near you. The

> experience of speed itself releases into the electrochemical soup of our heads a cascade of naturally occurring drugs, not the least of which are epinephrine and nonepinephrine, the hormones that course through the brain in the bone-melting, stomach-clenching high of sexual attraction. ("Fast Forward" 37)

But if the attraction of speed is sexual, is it also gendered? It doesn't really seem to be. If anything, racers seem to imagine themselves to be unified with the machine, not another person. Furthermore, in Duff's work, it seems at times that when unification of machine and body is imagined, the body is transcended, leaving physical imperatives such as fear, desire, and even gender behind. Duff writes that "Grand Prix racing is a state of self-expression that joins into a single act of aesthetic union between rider and machine" (299). Perhaps the motorcycle racer is the perfect example of the millennial athlete, a kind of cyborg in whom technology and the body merge, ultimately transcending both, as Donna Haraway has argued in "A Cyborg Manifesto": "the possibilities for our reconstitution include the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender" (181). I would argue, though, that not all cyborgs are beyond gender: nothing is more gendered than the fetus embodied through the ultrasound, for example. Rather, I would suggest, the machine-made body is not the one that inhabits a "world without gender": rather, it is a body moving at very high speeds that moves beyond gender. Granted, it often reaches those speeds through the use of machines and thus encourages the temptation to imagine every cyborg as beyond gender—yet robot imagery is full of gender stereotypes, from the highly masculine Terminator to the ultra-feminine Rosie, the robot maid from *The Jetsons*. In contrast to these oddly essentialist cyborg or robot figures, motorcycle racers imagine and describe the race as though they have been altered or left behind entirely at high speeds. One Bosozoku describes his subjectivity at speed as unconscious: "My body moves instinctively. It moves without any thought. I forget myself" (24). The Bosozoku also "frequently use *moetekuru* [burning like fire]" to describe high speed driving, recalling De Quincey's description of speed as "incarnated in the fiery eyeballs of an animal" or Marinetti's "racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath"—all images of bodies dissolving into flames.

In practical terms, of course, riders remain in the flesh, all too often reminded of their bodies when crashing. In 1960, Duff experiences a crash and immediately is returned by the physicality of the experience to the body and to desire—specifically, desire to return home:

> When I came into contact with the road surface the protective leather covering my leg ripped open and I dragged this exposed member momentarily along the abrasive tarmac. The ensuing donation of precious skin to the emery smooth surface became my final performance in Europe for 1960, and even before I stopped rolling I knew I wanted to go home. I was homesick and needed the comfort and reassurance of loved ones. (69)

Not only does injury return subjectivity to the body, the body longs to be returned or resituated at "home." This reaction might be related to Heidegger's notion of the *unheimlich*, or the "uncanny," which also translates as "unhomelike" (233): this is a state of anxiety of being, a crisis of being. As Heidegger puts it, "in anxiety one feels 'uncanny.' . . . But here 'uncanniness' also means 'not-being-at-home'" (233). One might argue that gender is a way of "being-at-home" and speed is *unheimlich*, accelerating subjectivity away from history and toward the unknown. Heidegger regards the "uncanny" and "not-being-at-home" as existentially ideal, as preferable to the "tranquilized self-assurance" of "'Being-at-home,' with all its obviousness" (233). One imagines that the motorcycle racer is anywhere but "at home" and that there is nothing "tranquilized" about the race. It is the crash, the lapse into flesh (and gender) that returns the racer to the longing for the "average everydayness" of being-at-home. And these phrases of Heidegger's also seem to recall Duff's fear of the mundane, of the time-clock, of the day ending in "tired depression" (98). But speed is not entirely virtuous or benign, certainly not in its potential to damage or destroy bodies.

Perhaps speed is even inherently violent, adversarial, or, as Paul Virilio writes, "The violence of speed has become both the location and the law, the world's destiny and its destination" (151). Hence another ambiguity around speed: as much as we love speed and may be culturally addicted to it, we also often feel cultural hostility toward speed and the deployment of speed as a tool of violence. However, it may well be that speed is not the problem—it is simply a physical force. Any cultural values associated with speed—associations between speed and masculinity, speed and violence—may ultimately be arbitrary. That is, maleness, war, and thus harm to bodies are associated post hoc with what is actually a neutral, physical force. "Speed Kills," we are told, but in itself speed does not kill: the brutal and thoughtless deployment of speed by people kills, whether in a street race or a smart bomb. Likewise, speed is not male or female; it is indeterminate. When speed is deployed as an indeterminate force, it may deconstruct gender, it may disembody the subject who is propelled by it; when speed is determined, or overdetermined, it does kill. But what is speed when it is recuperated in indeterminate discursive contexts, when it forms an uncanny context of subjective realization; what is speed, reconsidered

as a neutral phenomenon, without sex or nation to defend? What kind of force is it then? Perhaps speed itself, like the subjectivities that may inhabit it, paradoxically becomes indeterminate, or slows down, as it accelerates.

Virginia Woolf wrote an article in 1932 about De Quincey's autobiographical writing, which includes "The English Mail-Coach." She argues that somehow the story of a life needs to record the way in which speed and slowness are enfolded in the same moment of lived experience:

> To tell the whole story of a life the autobiographer must devise some means by which the two levels of existence can be recorded—the rapid passage of events and actions; the slow opening up of single and solemn moments of concentrated emotion. It is the fascination of De Quincey's pages that the two levels are beautifully, if unequally combined. (n. pag.)

Further, Woolf argues that in the midst of De Quincey's leisurely description of events, speed is born impetuously from the middle of the narrative, and at its peak of acceleration, speed is simultaneously stillness: "suddenly the smooth narrative parts asunder, arch opens beyond arch, the vision of something for ever flying, forever escaping, is revealed, and time stands still" (n. pag.). For Woolf, speed seems to emerge from a middle; her reading intriguingly anticipates philosophers Deleuze and Guattari in their 1983 essay *On the Line*:

> The middle is not at all an average—far from it—but a place where things take on speed. *Between* things does not designate a localizable relation going from one to the other and reciprocally, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement carrying away the one *and* the other, a stream without beginning or end, gnawing away at its two banks and picking up speed in the middle. (58)

Their point is that lines are rules, restrictions, and prisons, and the middle, often seen as mediocrity, is really the locus of change. Woolf, Deleuze, and Guattari all seem to say that life and the autobiographies it produces create speed and change from the very centre of being.

Michelle Duff writes of change and speed at the end of her autobiography, the story of being a man from the perspective of being a woman, which means that it is written from somewhere in the middle, the place where speed and change are born and gender is suspended: "Riding a motorcycle fast, with mastery of man (or woman) over machine and singularity of purpose, the joining of two species, one human, one mechanical, working together, enters a realm of art no one experiences doing anything else" (355). Though I cannot agree with Duff that the reunification of speed and subjectivity can only be achieved on a motorcycle, this much seems clear: when gender is removed from the narrative, speed begins to be emptied of violence to become, in Duff's words, "a realm of art."

Of course, this claim is touched with utopian fantasy. In life, bikes fail, racers crash, racing narratives end badly. On a personal level, Duff's journey traces a line laid down on a cultural circuit marked by thousands of repetitions by thousands of riders who understand that success often demands conformity. Follow the right line, the fastest line, and follow it on better rubber. But then again, to be really fast, to be faster than everyone else, the rider must risk deviation from the line: deviating from the path of the other riders is ultimately the only way to win—and to be the fastest motorcycle racer in the world is to achieve a form of utopia.

There is an apocryphal story about legendary English motorcycle racer "Mike the Bike" Hailwood: while racing in the Isle of Man Tourist Trophy one year, he suddenly began to clock better times than anyone else. When asked the secret for this increased speed, he simply said that at a certain point, he cocked his head away from a roadside pole so that he didn't have to come out of his corner lean. That slight movement was all it took. And, as Duff discovers when training for the Isle of Man TT races in 1960, sometimes leaving the line is both inevitable and dangerous:

> For fast approaches to slow corners, like Brandish, it is of primary importance to establish easily recognizable braking points. I had chosen a bright yellow bush that stood out in contrast to the lush green of shrubs and grass bank at the right side of the road. . . . All through practice, this yellow bush served me well, until this final practice period. I had not accounted for the large influx of spectators on the Saturday of this last practice period. A great many seemed to have a magnetic attraction to my yellow bush and chose to sit on or near it in great numbers obscuring it totally from my view. I sailed on in complete confidence that my yellow bush still lay between me and the corner until the sight of the rather slow left turn at Brandish threatened with a rapidity that left me breathless. On this lap I had learned just how fast it was possible to get around Brandish corner. (51)

In this instance the rider is almost passive—the crowd obscures the self-selected landmark—and, indeed, we are all subject to the imperatives of the crowd. However, "complete confidence" and acceleration also emerge unexpectedly from a loss of bearings, the loss of the relation between landscape and comprehension. The result: the fastest time around the corner ever, the racer's utopia. So, speed demands conformity, that is, following the fastest line; however, the acceleration beyond speed, toward higher speed, toward speed as yet unimagined, demands that we pull away from our leanings, that we cock our heads to the side for just one, small second, after which the right line might be changed forever. And if people like Duff never risked crashing, none of us would ever get anywhere quickly enough.

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Fred Wah

What I Mean

I never knew writing was this easy. All I have to do is do what I'm doing right now, like saying "I never knew writing was this easy"—just saying it. That means a lot to me 'cause it means I can say just about anything I want as long as it's what I want to say. I guess it's the utter truth or honesty that is so attractive in language. The *virtu*, some say. It, for example, could go something like this:

I've thought and I've felt for a long time now that the title "Hockey Night in Canada" would make an excellent title for a book of writing. There's something to it that proposes all sorts of interesting possibilities of what to say. At first it was a long poem, epic perhaps, containing all the music of a hockey game, the movement over the surface of the ice, the satisfying accuracy of the puck slapped into a corner of the net, any of the action going on. Then it was to be a story of my own story, a spiritual biography containing images of my life, my father standing against the boards of the arena, both of us, watching the Swift Current Indians practice, my first skates, my first wound, anything, I felt, that could be a part of the blood. I still think it's a great title but today I just say it and you know right away that that's what I mean.

By request and with permission from dustjacket of *Among* (1972)

Sally Chivers

Ordinary People
Reading the TransCanadian Terry Fox

> In 1980 Canada's economy and political future were both on rocky courses. Never before had Canadians been so cynical and jaded about society. And suddenly, there was this young guy in front of a microphone who was everything you wanted the world to be.
> —Douglas Coupland, *Terry*

In late September each year, Canadians across the country and people around the world[1] gather to run, walk, ride and/or roll in memory of Terry Fox. When asked what motivates people to participate, most refer to Terry Fox as a contemporary Canadian hero. In 2006, Maureen Koziel told *Toronto Star* reporters, "Canadians really need a modern day hero . . . He was an *ordinary* Canadian who did an *extraordinary* thing" (qtd. in Wilkes). In 2005, Terry Fox became the first Canadian ever featured on a circulating coin. Speaking on the occasion of the coin's introduction, David C. Dingwall, President and CEO of the Royal Canadian Mint, conveys indecision about whether Fox is ordinary or extraordinary:

> His achievements are a testament to the belief that *ordinary* Canadians, armed with courage, conviction, and a dream, can accomplish truly *extraordinary* things . . . In that spirit, the one dollar coin will help us all remember how an *extraordinary* man came to embody the Canadian spirit. (qtd. in "Royal Canadian")

This quintessential Canadian hero is revered for many reasons and particularly because he appears to be an everyman attempting an exceptional feat. His accomplishment—to run partway across Canada on one prosthetic and one flesh leg—becomes synonymous with what people want to believe are *Canadian* values of reason, generosity, grit in the face of adversity, and noble independence: in other words, everything Canadians are supposed to want Canada to be.

Whether they witnessed the original run, learned about it in school, participated in a local annual Terry Fox run, saw coverage of the latter, or more

recently heard of the return of the restored support van,[2] most Canadians are familiar with the story: Terry Fox was a remarkably athletic eighteen-year-old when his leg was amputated fifteen centimetres above the knee after it had been ravaged by cancer (osteogenic sarcoma). About two years later, he embarked on what came to be known as the Marathon of Hope—a run across Canada—in order to raise money for a cure for cancer. He made it from St. John's to Thunder Bay where medical tests revealed a recurrence of cancer—this time in his lungs—that forced him to stop. In addition to footage of his swaying gait, what Douglas Coupland calls his "strange hop click thunk step," across Ontario (the press paid little attention before he reached that province), the Canadian public is familiar with unquestionably touching images of Fox on a stretcher admitting defeat as he leaves his run in an ambulance, but not before openly handing over the torch saying, "I hope that what I've done will be an inspiration and I hope I'll see it now that people will take off and continue where I left off here" (146; "End of the Road").[3] His invocation has led to these ongoing commemorative fundraising events that not only procure money for cancer research, but also include Canadians across generations in what has turned out to be a figurative relay race.

The typical story of Fox focuses on his illness rather than on his disability, and so I examine in this paper how, in order to build up the myth of his heroism, the widely circulated various forms of the Terry Fox story elide his prosthesis, except to illustrate it as something to be overcome. I place the lionization of Terry Fox in the context of disability studies, a field that seeks to make prostheses highly visible and to refigure the role of disabled people in contemporary society. With disability as a frame, I compile representations of Fox in newspapers and commemorative sites, as well as his appearances in Maxine Trottier's children's picture book *Terry Fox: A Story of Hope* and Douglas Coupland's coffee table book *Terry*. In doing so, I illuminate the ways Fox has been celebrated in Canadian culture and highlight some very clear gaps by revealing what Fox is *not* credited for. This critical perspective also allows for analysis of how the Terry Fox story invites spectators—ordinary Canadians—to feel like participants in his quest, regardless of what theorist of nationalism Benedict Anderson calls "actual inequality and exploitation" (7). That is, through their joint interpretation of this narrative of hope, Canadians feel more tied to an ideal Canadianness even though, in fact, disabled Canadians face innumerable barriers to social inclusion.

Similar to women's studies work on gender, disability studies takes as a basic premise that disabled people share a culture and history of oppression,

resistance, contribution, and creativity. Disability scholars working in humanities disciplines turn to the cultural record to track, record, analyze, and resist pervasive patterns depicting disability as the domain of medical and other helping professions, as a personal deficit, and as an individual problem. Within disability discourse, Terry Fox is a clear though not often cited example of a phenomenon called super-crip.[4] That is, he takes on the super-human qualities of impressive athletic achievements—and it would be very difficult to deny that a sequence of daily marathons registers as impressive. Further, he is figured not simply as a remarkable athlete, but as remarkable because he ran on one biological leg. There is little mention of his prosthesis; instead he is most frequently referred to as a "one-legged" runner as though the synthetic limb did not exist.

Super-crip representation, while inspiring, causes harm to circulating conceptions of lived disability in that it reinforces the idea that disabled people can only achieve *despite* their differences and also in that it sets an unreasonably high standard for usual activity on the part of disabled people. In order to win the Terry Fox Humanitarian award (available to secondary and post-secondary students in Canada) one must have

> demonstrated the highest ideals and qualities of citizenship and humanitarian service while in pursuit of excellence in academic, amateur sport, fitness, health and voluntary community service [and] reflected those ideals of courage, humanitarianism, service and compassion, which Terry Fox embodied. ("About the Program")

According to this official description, the award is not given to someone who lacks Fox's athleticism but faces the barriers he conquered and so requires some humanitarian support. Instead, the recipient must be (super)-normative and beneficent to receive recognition. They do not have to be disabled, but if they are, they need to be a super-crip.

Anderson explains that nationalism arose in part after the decline of religions that had provided "imaginative responses" to questions such as "Why was I born blind? Why is my best friend paralyzed? Why is my daughter retarded?" He argues that the "progressive styles of thought" taking the place of religious belief answer such questions with "impatient silence" (10). Intriguingly, all of his examples entail disability, and characterize disability as an unquestionable negative. By providing what Anderson might call a "secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning," the Fox story—in particular its consistent mode of address—gathers people together through an understanding of what the nation Canada can do and be, in part by offering an imaginative response to the questions that gawkers impose on

disabled bodies (11). Fox's disability, ignored though it is, gains purpose as his story is repeated. His sidelined prosthesis signifies a united Canada.

By reading the Terry Fox legend from the perspective of disability, I do not intend to undermine Fox himself nor his prodigious athleticism, made more poignant by his youth and his early death. Rather than single out Fox, I interrogate a narrative that has latched on to his quest and call into question the ways of reading it as though it is inclusive, when it in fact deliberately excludes most relevant aspects of disability. In particular, I draw attention to the ways in which the super-crip narrative includes a device—asking for a dollar from each Canadian—that invites people to feel like participants in Terry's journey. Terry *was* an ordinary nondisabled (or more accurately, "temporarily-able-bodied" or TAB, as the disability movement puts it) young man, but when he became disabled, he had to become extraordinary. The appeal of the story is Terry's extraordinariness masked by a discourse of ordinariness, and this strategy ironically sidesteps ordinary disabled people. Gathered together into what Anderson would call "horizontal comradeship," "ordinary people" join forces by collectively cheering Fox on, donating to his charity, and participating in the annual run held in his honour (7). At least once a year, countless Canadians "meet" by re-reading the Fox story, fundraising, running, and/or discovering another book version of his tale and, at least for a time, set aside the "actual inequality and exploitation" that disabled people in Canada ordinarily experience. In doing so, they imagine their part in something extraordinary: namely, fighting illness.

The few book-length accounts of Fox's quest work together to further draw Canadians into a sense of participation, inviting readers to cheer for Terry and collectively feel hope. I will focus here on two picture books about his quest, Maxine Trottier's children's book *Terry Fox: A Story of Hope* (also available in French as *Le courage de Terry Fox*) and Douglas Coupland's adult book *Terry*. By purchasing the books, readers donate to the Terry Fox Foundation, adding to their modest dollar contribution. These books both rely on scrapbook-style images with minimal narrative. This form serves readers who already know the basic story: these readers are invited to make a more intimate connection to the event by flipping through the family photo album. Trottier offers an inspiring narrative that stitches together the pastiche of maps, quotations, and photographs that elaborate on Fox's story. Coupland similarly weaves together photographs but only to convey, support, and flesh out the official story of Fox's run. Readers join the Fox family on a nostalgic journey to the making of a Canadian hero. The works hold

Fox up as the quintessential Canadian, suffering and victorious before adversity, working tirelessly for a cure, and born with the traits that motivated his run. They endorse Terry Fox as the ultimate citizen.

Both Coupland's and Trottier's books are sanctioned and introduced by Terry's brother Darrell Fox who, since 1990, has carefully managed Terry's legacy, limiting access to archival material to those who he feels will do it justice. He has maintained Terry's vision by ensuring that fundraising efforts benefit cancer research rather than offer meagre rewards to those who participate. There are no pink ribbons for Terry Fox. Canadians do not need a lapel pin to connect them because they are united in their joint understanding of a desire to be an everyday Canadian making a difference.

After the prefaces, each book begins by setting up Fox's normative family and childhood. Trottier includes the requisite family photos, a 1964 letter to Santa Claus in which Fox also makes a request for his brother (a detail that the photo caption also notes), team photos from peewee soccer and high school basketball, Fox with a little league trophy, and references to Fox's childhood food preferences (bread and jam). In sum, Fox's childhood is set up as "ordinary": it includes a work-at-home mother who later takes on part-time work outside the home while his father takes on the primary burden of providing for the family. Fox is characterized as generous in his thinking of his brother when compiling his wish list. He is established as having always been athletic. He is recognized as a typical child over whom one's parents shake their heads wondering whether they'll be able to get him to eat a reasonable dinner tonight.

Like Trottier's, Coupland's book portrays the Fox family as a "typical Canadian family of the era" (8) and Fox as "this guy from a typical Canadian suburb" (125). Cancer interrupts the "quiet Canadian middle-class dream, the sort of calm good life that makes us homesick when we're far away" (8). Coupland's book is longer and has more time to refer to Fox as "just an ordinary Canadian guy" (15). Although there is less focus on his childhood, Coupland pushes readers to identify through ordinariness with Fox's extraordinariness. With multiple marketing references to "never-before-seen" photographs, such as the date book in which Terry's mother recorded his medical appointments and amputation surgery, readers are led to believe that they receive an inside view of Terry, a view that helps them to continue investing in his Marathon of Hope. Coupland continually talks about the emotional impact the materials for the book had on him: "I thought that after I'd spent a few hours of sifting [through get-well cards] I'd

become immune to the sentiments expressed inside them, but no, I never did and I doubt I ever will," and readers are coerced to be equally moved or feel hard-hearted (3).

Coupland captures the sense of Terry's story as vital to energizing the ordinary citizen and imaginarily uniting the nation, speaking of

> names and names and names of everyday Canadians, walls of them—all of them yearning to count, to mean something . . . Collectively, those names testify to something divine—our nation, our home and our soul. (3)

His picture book is aimed at those Canadians who want to reminisce about times of high nationalism, youthful vigour, and bell-bottoms. As the passage demonstrates, Coupland brings the reader into a collectivity of "everyday Canadians," evoking Fox's strategy of inviting Canadians to feel like participants by donating a dollar each. Coupland draws on a shared sense of Terry's united Canada by directly addressing the reading audience as unified in their sentiment, joined through the first person plural possessive "our" as well as the second person and the first person singular. He tells the reader, "there are cards to Terry from *your* mother—*my* mother—so many mothers wrote to Terry" (3, emphasis added).

Trottier and Coupland's books differ most in the ways in which they fail to capture the disability narrative of Fox's life. Trottier's book includes a few details that often stay out of mainstream press coverage and that, only if a reader looks closely enough, hint at the transformation that becoming disabled brings about within family life. She mentions that Fox had to *learn* to walk with the prosthesis. In this throwaway line, knowledgeable readers will recognize what they already had assumed: that rather than miraculously taking up a new physicality, Fox had to struggle through the rehabilitation familiar to the disability community in a process that may separate him from everyday Canadians but distinguishes him as an extraordinary athlete, given what he went on to accomplish. Trottier also notes that he took up a new sport after his amputation: wheelchair basketball. Again, this detail nods to the fact that Fox had to learn a new way of being in the world, having, prior to his cancer, worked hard at improving himself from a mediocre temporarily-able-bodied basketball player to one who was chosen to play on his school team. While she does at least mention the transformations imposed upon newly disabled people, these narrative details are set up as mere "steps" on the way from walking again to running, and especially running across Canada. As a photo caption emphasizes, Fox's reliance on the tools of rehabilitation was fleeting: "He wouldn't need those crutches for long" (10).

Coupland ups the ante, speaking of Terry's first foray into road racing post operation:

> It's important to remember that in 1979, people with disabilities—or people who were merely different in some way—didn't participate in the everyday world the way they do now. For someone with one leg to enter a race of this length was quite shocking. (29)

Coupland's optimism about the present-day situation of disabled Canadians adds a stress for those contemporary amputees who may still be prevented from participating in the "everyday world," let alone registering for a local fun run. These books that barely call Fox disabled in passing still manage to set up a super-crip normativity that leaves little room for a person who takes more than a month to return home post-amputation and even longer to walk on crutches, and/or does not "progress" to walking without the crutches. They celebrate the contradictory ordinary extraordinariness that makes Terry Fox the ideal Canadian hero in his modesty, determination, and "normal" beginnings.

Fox has not quite achieved the status of "the Greatest Canadian Hero" in that he placed second to Tommy Douglas in the CBC's Greatest Canadian Hero contest, which weakly attempted to fill the gap left by the NHL strike in 2004-05. However, Fox is widely commemorated: notably, in a postmodern reconstruction of Roman arches in Vancouver at BC Place Stadium, which includes a map of Canada and Terry Fox's full-body image etched into polished steel; in a statue at his alma mater, Simon Fraser University; in another statue in quartz and feldspar at the Port Coquitlam Terry Fox library; in a recently vandalized statue in Prince George; in a statue at a Thunder Bay memorial accompanied by a plaque connecting him to stereotypical Canadian symbolism; in a statue on the *Path of Heroes* in Ottawa; and to mark the 25th anniversary of the beginning of the run, in St. John's, a monument made of local slate resembling sails. The youngest recipient of the Companion of the Order of Canada, Fox received British Columbia's highest civilian award, The Order of the Dogwood, the American Cancer Society's highest honour, The Sword of Hope, and was inducted into the Canadian Sports Hall of Fame. Voted by the Canadian Press Canadian of the Year in 1980 and 1981 and by the Dominion Institute and the Council for Canadian Unity Canada's Greatest Hero in 1999, Fox also appears in *Time* magazine's "Canada's Best." A mountain and a large section of the TransCanada highway are named after him, and he appears on two stamps and two coins. Fox has also had twelve schools named after him.

The commemoration of Terry Fox as a hero in part recreates the very normative ideal that made his disability a problem. Close to the spot where Fox had to stop his run, the statue of Fox in Thunder Bay on the "Terry Fox Courage Highway" depicts a ten-foot tall young runner gazing up to the sky, sweat running down his face, very much an active athletic young man making great strides *in spite of* his disability. This pattern of representation, also displayed on the commemorative coin, puts pressure on disabled people who can rarely convince the general public that their achievements might occur *because of* or even *regardless of* their disabilities. Fox's accomplishments were monumental as athletic feats, and they were possible *because of* his disability.

Fox explains that he set out to run across Canada motivated by the image of an amputee runner given to him by his coach:

> The night before my amputation, my former basketball coach brought me a magazine with an article on an amputee who ran in the New York Marathon. It was then I decided to meet this new challenge head on and not only overcome my disability, but conquer it in such a way that I could never look back and say it disabled me. (Fox)

His quest astonished many because he, like the athlete in the magazine article, was an amputee. While fundraising to eradicate disease became the outcome of his efforts, he claims to have dreamed up the run in order to "conquer" disability, using the language of "overcoming" that disability rights activists resist. He was motivated both by becoming an amputee and also by what he understood disability to mean socially. That is, he wanted to accomplish an unusual physical task in order to show that despite his newfound reliance on a prosthesis, he was not physically hampered and therefore not, in his terms, disabled by his disability. Indeed, it was not his disability but his illness, in his lungs, that stopped his run.

While stories of Fox emphasize his athleticism, his illness, his courage, his youth, and his heroism, they typically only mention his prosthetic leg in passing as part of the cancer that stopped his journey. Fox himself was clear about his goals and that he did not want to be perceived as disabled. He said, "I was not going to let myself be used. There was only one thing I wanted to publicize and that was fundraising for cancer research" (qtd. in "Foundation Policies"). In his own insistent language, his leg functions as a mark of disease more than as a mark of disability; and when it does function as a mark of disability, it is mentioned as a material obstacle to overcome—no different symbolically from the thousands of miles Fox meant to cover (or overcome) in his Marathon of Hope. Even if Fox had succeeded, not just

in crossing Canada but in finding a cure for cancer, he would have lived his life a disabled man, yet this identity is oddly missing from—or abbreviated within—the cultural record.

Instead, in his widespread appearances, Fox is repeatedly hailed as an exemplar of the whole nation and often of the Canadian commitment to a questionable unity. His image is superimposed on maps of the country; assertions of the young man's relationship to a broader polity abound. For example, the St. John's memorial reads, "This slate marks the spot where one man's dream began and where a nation's hope lives on." In this inscription, Fox's idea becomes the nation's salvation. In Thunder Bay, the dedication reads, "Terry Fox inspired an entire generation of Canadians with his determination and devotion, and it was through his strength and commitment that they were united as they had never been united before." Importantly, Fox assumes the role of the inspiring cripple who manages against all odds to take on temporarily the physical attribute of "strength" in order to make Canada whole. Fox is figured as overcoming all odds to fulfill normative ideals of citizenship. The Terry Fox Visitor Centre write-up continues: "It is for such a reason, this monument was designed, joining east with west, depicting all provincial and territorial coats-of-arms and the Canadian emblems of the maple leaf and beaver." Although Fox's journey did not reach the so-called west, that is he had to stop in Ontario, it is significant that his disrupted path symbolizes unity (mentioned twice) and the "joining" of east and west. Most Canadians are so committed to national unity that what could have become a symbol of schism—a clear border between "eastern" and "western" Canada—instead becomes a symbol of national unity. This confirms the power of Fox's own vision of Canada, the degree to which many Canadians want to participate in it, and the necessity to avoid other narratives of Canada as exclusionary and divided.

The same commemoration and patriotism do not cling to the legacy of the most notable figure to take up Terry's torch. In fact, few honour Steve Fonyo, who completed his east- to west-coast Journey for Lives relying on one prosthetic leg. Those who do remember him do not claim him as their hero, and those who did not witness his run are unlikely to learn of it.[5] Not the golden boy that Fox managed to remain, Fonyo is rarely cited and certainly no longer claimed as symbolic of Canadian values. Whereas Fox first received national attention when he reached Ontario, Fonyo was largely ignored in that province, but his run provoked attention once he crossed into Manitoba. It took his successful navigation of the formidable Rogers Pass

to win genuine respect from the Canadian public. The mayor of Revelstoke, Tony Coeuffin, was particularly excited when he exclaimed upon Fonyo's appearance, "This is the greatest day for Canada and Revelstoke since man first walked on the moon" (qtd. in Tierney B5). This presumably exaggerated excitement was soon to fade.

A couple of beaches and running tracks are named after Fonyo, but his impressive run was immediately followed by a number of equally impressive run-ins with the law, including theft, drunk driving, and failing to stop for police. These violations remove him from the pedestal next to Terry Fox and call into question his claim to the "strength and commitment" through which Fox united Canadians. An article in *Maclean's* does compare Fonyo to Fox, but not favourably. The piece describes Fox as "a gifted athlete, university-educated and articulate man of easy charm" while describing young Fonyo as a grade ten dropout who has difficulty expressing himself (qtd. in Tierney B5).

When Fonyo overtook Fox, he unfortunately was quick to make the comparison, providing an example of his difficulties in expressing himself. He began generously, "I just want to say I don't want to beat anybody. I'm just sorry he only got this far." But he concluded with neither Fox's grace nor his eloquence, saying bombastically, "I did a lot of work to get this far. I did a lot of suffering. The other half of the country is mine. Now I'm really making my own path from here." Fonyo's father tries to play down this imperious language, instead pointing out similarities between his son and Fox, using the rhetoric mentioned in my introduction of normalcy tied to achievement, saying, "Steve is just a common boy doing an uncommon thing" (qtd. in Tierney B5). However, the Canadian public focuses more on Fonyo's ordinariness, especially his mundane criminal convictions and middling speaking skills, than on his extraordinary ability to run across the country. To them, no part of the country is Fonyo's, regardless of his accomplishments.

This rejection of Fonyo as extraordinary, despite his achievement of a feat similar to Fox's, highlights what Canadians value most or what values are most commonly associated with being a good Canadian. That is, Canadians forget or set aside Fonyo not because he came second, not because he did not die young, but because as he ages he demonstrates that he is an ordinary guy rather than an ideal citizen. Fox's super-crip image is more readily co-opted into that of an ideal citizen than Fonyo's imperfect crip image. In *Discourses of Denial*, Yasmin Jiwani explains one ideal type of Canadian citizen:

> As a *reasonable person*, especially within the context of law, the ideal typical Canadian is the law-abiding, rational, White, middle-class person who speaks the dominant language and embodies national mythologies that are then performed accordingly. (emphasis added xiii)

Terry Fox, especially in contrast with Fonyo, projects an untarnished image of a law-abiding, rational, White, English-speaking and particularly eloquent citizen who, because of his prostheticization, embodied Canadian fantasies of struggle against adversity and pluck under pressure, as well as national mythologies of unity and strength. As journalist Leslie Scrivener puts it, "Wrapped up in one young man were the qualities of nationhood we [Canadians] love: decency, hardiness, modesty and care for others" (A3). Rather than his athleticism, which Fonyo also clearly had in spades, Fox is admired for his generosity and politeness. Lloyd Robertson also comments upon the connection between Fox and Canadians' desired sense of self:

> What was it that made Terry Fox so very important to us? Well to me, he embodied the best of the Canadian spirit. We are a generous people, fair-minded, not stridently patriotic, but deeply proud of our country. And we're courageous, when we have to be—just like him. (CTV News)

To Robertson, Fox's appeal lies in his measured accomplishment; that is, he was not excessive: his nationalism was contained and so was his bravery. Further, Fox's request, "one dollar for every Canadian," was perfectly reasonable. By asking each person to donate one dollar, and thereby to participate moderately, Fox created a means by which each citizen could join in what he was attempting to accomplish. As Fox put it, "If you've given a dollar, you are part of the Marathon of Hope" (qtd in Trottier 21).

Despite strong pressure, including numerous K-12 lesson plans designed around Fox's heroism,[6] some Canadians resist the awe Fox's legacy often inspires and go beyond refusing to participate. A number of the impressive Fox monuments have been vandalized and defaced, including his gravesite in Port Coquitlam. Intriguingly, this backlash often consists of vandals attempting to remove a part of Fox's graven body, but not his replicated prosthetic leg. In 1996, vandals sawed off the hand of the Thunder Bay Fox memorial and tried to decapitate the statue ("Terry Fox Monument" A2). Despite restricted access implemented in 1996 to protect what Mayor David Hamilton described as "an international shrine," in the first three years of the site's public presence, vandals inflicted damages amounting to $20,000, including littering the site with hypodermic needles, empty liquor bottles, and a cigarette artfully draped in Fox's sculpted mouth ("Vandals force" A3).

Some vandalism seems motivated by assumed value: stealing the amethyst pieces from the Thunder Bay monument's stone base and removing the back of Fox's plastic and fibreglass head in Prince George, mistakenly believing it to be pure bronze, a metal that was worth an impressive amount of money at that time. This damage also included adding swastikas and a moustache to Fox's figure, so robbery was likely not the only motive ("Terry Fox statue"). Other vandalism involves clear malice, especially the desecration of Fox's grave. Intriguingly, Fox's father who discovered it, and others who helped in unsuccessful attempts to erase it, will not reveal what the graffiti written at the site said besides the word "acid" ("They'll pay" A1). As a result, it is difficult to determine whether this backlash relates directly to Fox's legacy or is an expected consequence of public exposure.

While some may view my work here as in the same vein as these disrespectful acts, I maintain that these attacks do injustice to Terry Fox who deserves admiration for his determined athleticism, his youthful resolve, and his dogged dedication. As one journalist explains, "it's impossible to look at those grainy images of Fox running through wind and rain and sleet and sun without being moved by his selfless determination" (Menon H2). His commitment has benefited countless Canadians, not to mention cancer survivors worldwide. However, Fox's image and the influence of his story have a flipside. Iconoclastic as it may be, it is necessary—without vandalizing monuments or desecrating graves—to articulate the significance of that flipside, particularly in its implications for understanding disability.

As James K. Bartleman, former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, put it in his 2004 Terry Fox Hall of Fame Induction speech, "Although he was unable to complete his marathon, he ran straight into the history books, and into the hearts and minds of Canadians." Fair enough, but we need to consider the reasons why such stature was possible for this particular figure, and not for others. Curiously, this "strange hop click thunk" stepping figure remains the iconographic image of a "whole" Canada (Coupland 146). Despite Coupland's optimism about the political situation of disabled people today, Laura Bonnet explains, "substantive citizenship has not yet been realized for people with disabilities; rather, they are still struggling to maintain the existing hard-won rights, state support, and resources necessary to live a full life" (159). Fox, read as an ailing hero rather than as a disabled athlete, reflects qualities of an ideal citizen, particularly in Mark Kingwell's sense of "a way of meeting one of our deepest needs, the need to belong; [giving] voice and structure to the yearning to be part of something larger than ourselves" (5).

However, there is little room for a Fox minus his fundraising marathons, let alone an aging Fox, in the current economic structure, within the institution of health care, in Canadian classrooms, or in children's books.

In order to dominate the Canadian imagination, Fox had to start out as seemingly ordinary—in the "before" picture he had to appear as a "normal" healthy young man—but become extraordinary in his courage, goals, and athletic ability. As Shawn Ashmore, who plays Fox in the fiction film *Terry*, puts it,

> I didn't approach it like I had to play somebody who was heroic," he says. "I think the really amazing thing about Terry—and why people connected with him—was that he was a really normal guy. He was a regular young guy who happened to be more driven than most people can ever imagine. (qtd. in Menon H02)

Fox equals Canada precisely because he fits this disquieting image of Canadian normalcy—he could be young Joe in the "I am Canadian" beer ads—but because of his rarely mentioned disability he had to be grittier than others. That is, he becomes a representative of the ultimate Canadian good *because of* his disability. What Fox has come to represent does little to reflect the lived experience of disability in contemporary Canada and has everything to do with uniting Canadians around a little-engine-that-could motivation to be the ordinary nation capable of extraordinary good. Ashmore—in keeping with how Canadians represent Terry Fox—attributes Fox's athletic ability to the cancer patient being "driven," rather than accomplished. The actor describes the athlete as "a really normal guy," and implies that any "normal" person could have made such a run, as long as the person had the "drive." That Fox had it, that he was a phenomenal athlete, that he kept at his goal, even when his cancer returned, even when his prosthesis didn't fit, *that* is worth celebrating, as long as his disability is part of the celebration. Fox was extraordinary, and his disability created the conditions for his extraordinariness to become a matter of public concern and commemoration. Indeed, it is because of his disability that Fox "was everything you wanted the world to be" (Coupland 62).

NOTES

1 Including Australia, Zimbabwe, Singapore, Ho Chi Minh City, the Czech Republic, Cuba, Shanghai, Southern India, and more.

2 In 2008, the Terry Fox Foundation took the restored E250 Econoline on a commemorative fundraising "Tour of Hope" across Canada, following a route similar to, but longer than, Terry's.

3 By choosing the term "torch," I invoke here a line from the emblematic Canadian war poem, "In Flanders Fields": "To you from failing hands we throw / The torch; be yours to hold it high." The line was displayed in the Montreal Canadiens dressing room in the Forum, indicating its importance for Canadian sports heroism and its evocation of the responsibility team members take on when donning the mantle of those who have come before.

4 Gerard Goggin and Christopher Newell explain this term in reference to Christopher Reeve saying, "In many Western cultures, disability is predominantly understood as a tragedy, something that comes from the defects and lack of our bodies, whether through accidents of birth or life. Those 'suffering' with disability, according to this cultural myth, need to come to terms with this bitter tragedy, and show courage in heroically overcoming their lot while they bide their time for the cure that will come. The protagonist for this script is typically the 'brave' person with disability; or, as this figure is colloquially known in critical disability studies and the disability movement—the super-crip (par. 9)." In *The Body Silent*, Robert F. Murphy explains the term: "Just as 'super-moms' supposedly go off to work every morning, cook Cordon Bleu dinners at night, play with the kids, and then become red-hot lovers after the children are put to bed, the super-crip works harder than other people, travels extensively, goes to everything, and takes part in anything that comes along. This is how he shows the world that he is just like everyone else, only better (95)."

5 When I teach about these two Canadian athletes in my first year Canadian Studies course, it is remarkable how many students have been socialized to understand Terry Fox as a hero and how few (usually none who were not alive when he ran) even know of Fonyo.

6 The CBC online archives provide a set of examples of such plans for students from K-12, teaching them to commemorate, mourn, write to, write the life of, celebrate, and get to know Terry Fox. Fox is also part of the British Columbia grade 2-3 social studies curriculum in which students learn what a hero is.

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Renee Rodin

Home Team

what made my father's death real
was to give away the lazy boy chair
upon which he would have sat
to watch the Alouettes win
the Grey Cup that year
and to cancel the long distance plan
I would have used to hear him cheer

Asylum: Prison or Home

Andre Alexis
Asylum. McClelland and Stewart $34.99

Reviewed by Barbara Pell

I liked this second Alexis novel more than his first, *Childhood,* which was shortlisted for the Giller Prize in 1998. This book is dedicated to Harry Mathews (the New York novelist who published an "autobiographical novel" about working undercover for the C.I.A.). The epigraph for *Asylum* is "What can I do with this endless longing?" Alexis is obsessed with both false identities and true homes; here Ottawa represents the former, and the Tuscan monastery of Santa Maddalena the latter. Mark Ford, the omniscient narrator, recounts a time fourteen years before with a group of Ottawa friends whose longings for meaning and belonging seem constantly frustrated by a postmodern society in which it is no longer true that "Truth was God and God was Truth."

In this relativistic world, further exacerbated by political games, the characters search for barely conceived ideals of "success" and "self-consciousness" to rescue their "souls" from "confusion." The apparently successful Minister of Prisons and Reforms, Albert Rundstedt, longing for a legacy, inspires his assistant, Franklin Dupuis, to join him in a quixotic project to build an ideal prison that will serve as a home for reforming inmates: "to civilise those who had been cast aside, to find or create a building that would inspire in its inmates not fear or disdain, as most prisons did, but nobility, civility, and awe before the creations of man and God." Consequently, Franklin involves his friends, Reinhart (an artist-architect who designs an absurdly impractical prison of Greek marble columns) and Edward, who tries "to *believe* in Bowell penitentiary the way he'd come to *believe* in Art." It seems inevitable that a stone jail in the Gatineaus will not be able to embody all these ideals of "home."

In at least two more main story lines, four main characters in the novel search for meaningful asylum. Paul Dylan jealously tries to kill Walter Barnes, a gentle professor having an affair with his wife, Louise, whom Paul then tries to kill (also unsuccessfully). Walter tries (unsuccessfully) to commit suicide, and finally unites with Louise while Paul finds a home—and "mercy and . . . forgiveness" in the same Tuscan monastery as Mark. In addition, we have an inherently honest secretary, Mary Stanley, whose secret inheritance alienates her from her family and makes them "exiles," but finally results in a "home" where she finds peace.

In all these complicated plots, few of the characters are admirable or even likeable—although Rundstedt (whose career is destroyed by a melodramatic Soviet plot involving a prostitute) acts with integrity and is rewarded by losing his prison home/ideal but reclaiming his marriage/family home. Ultimately, Alexis seems to equate morality and integrity with "home" in this morally indeterminate world of "obvious

and public untruth[s]"—both political and personal. By the end, despite the rupture of most of the relationships that begin this novel, "home" means relationships, trust, and loyalty: "Home was now . . . each other." For a novel so precisely described and thematically rooted in "place," it is a poignant but appropriate ending to quote Rilke: "he who has no house will not build one now / He who is alone will be alone for some time."

Alexis' writing style is clear and sophisticated. There are probably too many characters and plots for clarity (and too many coincidences connecting them). However, the theme that guides the book and the moral focus that sustains it are refreshing in this relativistic personal/political tale.

Tour d'horizon de la chanson

Lise Bizzoni et Cécile Prévost-Thomas, dirs.
La Chanson francophone engagée. Triptyque 20,00 $

Compte rendu par Maurice Lamothe

Les éditions Triptyque enrichissent les études sur la chanson francophone contemporaine d'un ouvrage sur la chanson francophone engagée, fruit d'un colloque tenu à l'UQÀM les 17 et 18 mars 2005. Le reproche généralement adressé aux actes de colloque ne s'applique guère ici. Plutôt que de publier sans distinctions de priorité et de pertinence les communications présentées, Lise Bizzoni et Cécile Prévost-Thomas ont, de toute évidence, pu procéder à une sélection d'articles. Elles n'en ont conservé que sept—huit en incluant l'introduction—ce qui prédispose certes à la lecture.

Bonne idée aussi de présenter en introduction une définition suffisamment large de « l'engagement » en chanson, définition que moduleront autant les espaces politiques abordés (la France et le Québec) que la diversité disciplinaire des auteurs retenus : sociologie, musicologie, littérature, et histoire.

Soulignons enfin, à ce chapitre, une démythification nécessaire à cet élargissement de la définition : « la frontière entre "chanson engagée" synonyme de "chanson à texte" et "variétés" devient de plus en plus floue ». Selon cette acceptation, la chanson engagée ne serait alors pas l'exclusivité du champ de production restreint; elle varierait aussi selon les contextes et les époques.

Ainsi, l'engagement qu'examine Sandria P. Bouliane est celui que l'on doit situer dans un contexte historique qui appelle moins le texte que le contexte, soit celui de l'émergence d'une chanson phonographique francophone au Canada. Mme Bouliane montre de quelle manière la chanson francophone au Canada a pu passer d'un stade folklorique à un niveau phonographique grâce à une industrie qui a pu collaborer à l'émergence d'un répertoire phonographique canadien-français axé sur le sentiment d'appartenance, grâce à une traduction efficace des attentes du public.

L'approche musicologique de Luc Bellemare, cette fois, examine les produits réputés engagés des groupes Loco Locass, Mes Aïeux, et les Cowboys Fringants pour montrer que la récupération de thèmes folkloriques musicaux, datant d'avant et d'après la révolution tranquille, a pu contribuer à moderniser le discours politique et social engagé au Québec pour l'amener à un niveau de large consommation, un niveau que l'auteur décrit comme étant celui de « l'arme de persuasion » des masses.

Si le mérite de l'étude de M. Bellemare est d'avoir pu souligner la puissance symbolique d'un fonds musical folklorique dans la transmission d'un discours engagé, en revanche, l'article d'Andrée Descheneaux montre qu'en présence de structures musicales modernes, le produit engagé peut aussi atteindre un niveau de grande consommation. Pour fin d'analyse, Mme Descheneaux étudie le lien privilégié de ce qui constitue les éléments de base de toute

chanson : paroles et musique. À partir d'une comparaison entre deux chansons réputées engagées, « Capital » et « Pauvres riches » respectivement de Vulgaires machins et de Thomàs Jensen & Faux-monnayeurs, Mme Descheneaux montre dans un premier temps, qu'en dépit des différences entre les structures musicales des deux chansons, les deux compositions favorisent la transmission d'un discours engagé et, dans un deuxième temps, sur un plan plus large, que la proximité d'une structure musicale et d'un texte chanté peut créer une adhésion spontanée chez l'auditeur et ainsi contribuer au renouvellement des normes sociales et esthétiques.

L'article de Dany Saint-Laurent examine la manière dont le groupe Loco Locass « inscrit son oeuvre dans le champ de production culturelle », une inscription dont l'analyse se fera à partir du péritexte des trois pochettes d'albums du groupe, que l'auteur décrit comme « un pacte avec le public ». L'étude en profondeur des trois pochettes comprend celle des avatars du nom du groupe, des titres et des couvertures de chaque album. S'il devient clair, en fin d'analyse, que la « rapoésie » que connotent les pochettes de Loco Locass, reflète un engagement davantage tourné vers le champ littéraire que vers un produit chansonnier « rap », ajusté aux normes en vigueur, par contre, on peut s'interroger sur certaines interprétations suggérées. Cette variante du nom « Locass », entre autres, dont M. Saint-Laurent fait passer la connotation de « lock ass » à « kick ass » paraît abusive. Pour autant, le souffle interprétatif du texte n'est pas sans intérêt et rappelle l'importance de l'intuition face à la complexité sémantique d'un produit chansonnier. Enfin, notons que le texte de M. Saint-Laurent aurait grandement gagné en clarté s'il s'était accompagné des illustrations des pochettes étudiées.

Pour mieux comprendre le phénomène de la politisation de la chanson québécoise entre 1960 et 1980, Caroline Durand, de son côté, jette un coup d'oeil d'historienne aux opinions émises dans les réceptions critiques d'artistes tels que Gilles Vigneault, Félix Leclerc, Pauline Julien, Raymond Lévesque, Claude Dubois, Robert Charlebois, Ginette Reno et Diane Dufresne. Mme Durand remarque que c'est le courant nationaliste qui a dominé l'engagement politique de la période étudiée, reléguant en arrière plan d'autres causes, comme le féminisme par exemple. Particulièrement bien réussies, les comparaisons entre les réceptions critiques des fêtes nationales du Canada et du Québec rappellent l'importance de la sanction médiatique dans le processus de reconduction des idéologies. Le chansonnier est-il initiateur ou réflecteur de causes, libre ou opportuniste (authenticité remise en cause)? C'est ce procès des carrières entourant la nature de l'engagement que Mme Durand a pu retracer. Un commentaire pourtant. La chanson étant l'objet d'étude multidisciplinaire que l'on sait, un recours à la sociologie de l'art aurait permis ici d'éviter de traiter sur un même plan les valeurs symboliques d'une critique publiée dans *Échos Vedettes*, davantage liée à la grande production, et celles publiées au *Devoir*, par exemple, plutôt tournées vers une production de profil restreint.

Du côté de la France cette fois, Cécile Prévost-Thomas s'insurge, d'entrée de jeu, contre une dénégation de la réalité qui conduirait à faire croire que la chanson engagée n'existerait plus; qu'elle aurait plutôt cédé le pas à un courant individualiste axé sur des considérations quotidiennes. Bien au contraire, nous dit l'auteur, la chanson contestataire existe et « explore des voies collectives toujours plus innovantes et socialement influentes ». Mme Prévost-Thomas avance cependant que la multiplicité des étiquettes—chanson contestataire, chanson engagée, chanson à texte, nouvelle chanson française—renvoie à un indice de compréhension mis au point par « les arcanes du pouvoir médiatique et

politique », un classement qui non seulement occulte l'unité d'exploration des voies collectives, mais qui souligne l'aspect variétés d'un genre dès lors banalisé. On ne dira donc pas « la chanson française » comme on dit « la chanson québécoise », explique l'auteur. Voilà donc qui pose problème lorsque, précisément, il est question d'établir que l'une des voies importantes de l'engagement chansonnier des dernières années, en France, concerne l'identité et plus spécifiquement la question des sans papiers, des thèmes abordés dans les chansons « L'identité » et « Tekitoi », respectivement des Têtes raïdes & Noir désir et Rachid Taha, des produits qui, bien sûr, tranchent avec la « Douce France » de Charles Trenet.

Toujours du côté français de la chanson, l'article de Lise Bizzoni, « L'énonciation de la violence et la violence énonciative », situe l'engagement dans une perspective agonistique (notion d'*agun* : sentiment d'angoisse et de deuil ressenti par un sujet devant ce qu'il considère être le démembrement d'un état de société), une approche dont l'auteur prend bien soin de définir le schéma actanciel des forces en présence : sujet, anti-sujet, victime, public (témoin). Les produits de Zebda. Takticollectif, Tryo sont tour à tour abordés. Après avoir expliqué que « les textes dénonçant la violence par un langage impétueux sont peut-être le symptôme d'un ras-le-bol », Mme Bizzoni conclut son article en citant Richard Desjardins : « c'est la goûte d'eau qui met le feu aux poudres ».

La chanson francophone engagée arrive à établir un tour d'horizon diversifié d'une pratique qui, de toute évidence, se devait d'être abordée à partir de plusieurs compétences disciplinaires. Il nous semble que l'ouvrage de Mmes Lise Bizzoni et Cécile Prévost-Thomas apporte une contribution précieuse à la chanson francophone en abordant un thème qui, à première vue, apparaissait à contre-courant des tendances lourdes des sociétés modernes. En plus de contribuer à souligner l'importance de l'étude d'un genre souvent considéré, à tort, comme mineur, l'ensemble des articles arrive à donner un portrait bien vivant du rôle social de la chanson française au Québec et en France.

Unfinished Business

Marie-Claire Blais
Naissance de Rebecca à l'ère des tourments. Boréal $25.95

Reviewed by Ralph Sarkonak

In 1995 Marie-Claire Blais published *Soifs*, the first volume of a novel cycle intended as a trilogy. The second volume, *Dans la foudre et la lumière*, followed in 2001, and the third, *Augustino et le choeur de la destruction,* came out in 2005. Now thirteen years after the first, Blais has written another novel that is part of the same cycle. As in the many volumes of Balzac's *La Comédie humaine*, Blais' *Naissance de Rebecca à l'ère des tourments* includes reappearing characters as well as new ones, but it can be read and appreciated in and of itself.

To call this novel a *tour de force* would be an understatement. There are no chapters, no paragraphs, and not that many sentences—about twenty—the average length of which is fifteen pages, but some extend for over forty. Commas are the most frequent form of punctuation, and the ubiquitous *et* joins the various narrative threads as we follow this cast of over one hundred characters, some of whom we only learn of *en passant*, but most of whom we get to know quite well as they simultaneously live their lives during a period of just a few hours before one Christmas Day. The novel is situated in the present of the twenty-first century as iPods, cellular telephones, body piercings, and a hurricane that devastates an American city make their appearance. Neither Quebec nor Canada is

ever mentioned; this is a novel of the south, for most of the action takes place in a place not dissimilar to one where Blais has lived, Key West, although one narrative series is located in Guatemala. The writing is also "southern" if by that I can refer to the stylistic influences of two novelists associated with the south of their respective countries, William Faulkner and Claude Simon, but Blais' writing also reminds one of two northern writers: James Joyce and Thomas Bernhard.

Although bits of text can be attributed only to a narrator, for the most part we gain direct access to the thoughts and musings of the main characters in a seamless stream-of-consciousness flow to which are added stretches of dialogue, letters, and dreams. The point of view changes frequently as in a choir of mixed voices singing a postmodern litany of the sorrows of the world that usually go unarticulated: *"ce même univers mat, de douleur qui ne sait pas s'exprimer."* Blais' novel is to a certain extent a rewriting of Voltaire's *Candide,* for both are based on *"cette conscience du mal,"* both moral and natural, except that nowadays that distinction is less clear than in the eighteenth century since man's inhumanity to the planet and its species, *"ce spectacle de la terre se désagrégeant,"* is a prominent theme, not that cruelty to fellow human beings is forgotten. Timo, a male stripper in a gay bar, robs a client and escapes in a drug-laden car; a priest is relocated north to replace another one who is guilty of child molestation; another rape of a child is recalled by the victim; and a young man marked with AIDS rides a bus with other young people going to parties he isn't. World War II and the Holocaust are present in the writings of Daniel, a middle-aged historian, while Olivier, a retired politician plagued with depression, is writing his memories of the civil rights struggle of the 1960s and what preceded it—the Ku Klux Klan's lynchings of African Americans and, before that, the journeys of slaves across the Atlantic. With Lazaro, we get inside the mind of an Islamist who hates the West, women, and his more affluent masters, in whose house he once worked as a servant: *"la ronde des ténèbres usurpant notre terre"* is not an astronomical reference, and the reader too remains *"si attentif au pouls de la terreur,"* a terror which waits just outside the house where so many of the characters gather to celebrate Christmas.

But there is also much love, such as Petites Cendres' affection for a fellow denizen of the bar where he hangs out, a minister's tender but strict concern for him, and the wise thoughts of Esther—the diary-writing matriarch of a three-generation family so often referred to simply as Mère—for all her family but especially her dearest grandson who has just published a book with a telling title, *Lettre à des jeunes sans avenir*. To be sure, a child is born (to another child aged sixteen), but it isn't the Rebecca of the title whose birth is symbolic, and it is still another "child" we remember, *"le symbolique enfant, le livre encore inachevé, imparfait."* Like so many literary works, this book is imperfect—there are some facile generalizations about female senators and governors—but this volume of Blais' novel cycle is itself a work of operatic scope for our troubling times, an extraordinary achievement of writing whose verve carries us along despite all *"la douleur, la mienne, la nôtre, celle de nos enfants."* To be sure, from time to time, we may get lost in the process, since the telling is no simpler than the tale. It could not be otherwise, for *"l'immensité du temps semblait tout emmêler et tout confondre."*

« LIBARTÉ, STIE! »

Yves Boisvert
Quelques sujets de Sa Majesté. XYZ 22,00 $

Compte rendu par Kinga Zawada

Qualifié par son auteur de « radioroman d'hyperréalisme sémantique », *Quelques sujets de Sa Majesté* est un poème réparti en trois actes et présenté sous forme de dialogue à trois voix. Les trois personnages, Homme, Femme, et Indifférent, s'adonnent à des joutes verbales où chaque mot est pris au pied de la lettre pour former un discours de dénonciation politique et sociale.

L'étrange échange commence avec des accusations adressées aux ministères de la Culture, de l'Agriculture, du Revenu, de la Santé mentale ou des Vraies Affaires pour se dissoudre dans une réflexion sur les règles qui conditionnent le langage, la ponctuation et l'attribution de sens. Passant du registre soutenu au vulgaire, de tournures poétiques aux clichés et stéréotypes, Boisvert place le langage au centre de sa création et plonge le destinataire dans un embarras de mots et de définitions.

Comme un slogan, l'expression « LIBARTÉ, STIE! » ponctue régulièrement ce texte de révolte contre le Comte d'Hydro et Bill the Bell : « Mais dites-nous : qu'est-ce qui pourrait justifier l'unité federale [sic] canadienne? . . . L'argent. Rien que l'argent. Tout l'argent. » Boisvert défend et déplore le Québécois ordinaire, désabusé et tanné « qui a renoncé à voter parce que c'est touttt des crosseurs. »

Rien n'échappe à la langue futée, mordante, et souvent grossière du trio, qui discute aussi bien de la corruption politique, du devoir électoral, de l'identité individuelle et collective ou de l'actualité des manchettes que du hockey, des vedettes populaires ou d'étudiants qui « crèvent de faim en Toyota de l'année ».

Si les propos anti-fédéralistes à tendance anarchiste risquent de faire rechigner le lecteur, l'humour iconoclaste d'un auteur qui se défoule grâce au langage réussit à faire passer ses vociférations et à dérider le destinataire le temps de la lecture. Bien que ce singulier dialogue vise à provoquer la réflexion et à brasser les idées, la voix de l'Indifférent annonce à plusieurs reprises la vacuité d'un appel qui ne portera pas à conséquence : « Tout ce qui va être dit ici ne présente aucun intérêt. Dans un mois ça va être oublié. »

Loving Baseball, Whatever the League

George Bowering
Baseball Love. Talonbooks $19.95

Reviewed by Anne L. Kaufman

There is more good writing about baseball than about any other sport, and George Bowering's memoir *Baseball Love* is a worthy shelfmate to any diamond classic you could name. It has the air, throughout, of a book that had to be, a book that might even have willed itself into being. As often noted, Bowering has written some eighty books in a variety of genres, with baseball woven through his life narrative like a recurring melody. In "Hub Fans Bid Kid Adieu," John Updike describes the final relationship of Ted Williams and the Boston fans as a "mellowing hoard of shared memories," and it is this palpable weight of baseball memory shared with teammates, children, former and current partners, and with his readers, that adds resonance to this funny, leisurely, and evocative storytelling enterprise.

The baseball that takes centre stage in *Baseball Love* is not the bloated corporate giant of twenty-first-century Major League Baseball, but rather the essential nature of the sport, with all of its attendant sounds, smells, and trips to the emergency room. Bowering's version of the game is not "pink hat" baseball; it is the baseball of baseball fans, those seekers who travel across

provinces and states from one ballpark (preferably minor league) to another, dreamers who compare the sausages in the Kansas City Royals' stadium to the offerings on Yawkey Way in Boston and bemoan the invention of industrial-carpet varieties of artificial grass.

Over the course of the book, the reader travels with Bowering and his partner Jean Baird to ballparks across the continent, from his early days as a sports reporter to contemporary contemplations of a life as a Red Sox fan, necessarily rethinking the meaning of that identity after the 2004 miracle. The reader who will love this book most will have a plethora of her or his own baseball love and memories to pair with each of Bowering's stories, as if sitting at a bar trading story for story; your inspired bobble-head giveaway for Bowering's Substance-Free Night on the plains, your neighbour on the next barstool and her memory of witnessing a triple play for Bowering's parade of brave but hapless relievers marching to the mound and their doom. Bowering employs a sense of participation very effectively here, both in direct address to the reader and in the way his language evokes powerful sense-memories of similar experiences.

My copy of this book arrived shrink-wrapped, which puzzled me. When I opened it, the reason for the shrink wrap revealed itself, to my absolute delight. No, I won't tell. This is a book you'll have to buy.

Gagner son ciel

Herménégilde Chiasson
Béatitudes. Prise de parole 15,95 $

Compte rendu par Ariane Tremblay

Dans *Béatitudes,* sa dernière oeuvre poétique, l'auteur Herménégilde Chiasson réinvente la poésie acadienne. Certes, le recueil s'inscrit dans une continuité avec les oeuvres théâtrales de l'auteur, celles-ci posant la difficile quête du peuple acadien quant à son possible affranchissement des douleurs passées. Il est aussi question, ici, de ciel à gagner, de Paradis perdu et de rédemption. Cependant, l'oeuvre porte bien davantage la marque des mutations subies par la poésie acadienne : on y découvre une poésie intimiste, profondément lyrique, s'étant presque totalement émancipée des sévices causés par le Grand Dérangement.

Nul doute en effet que l'oeuvre justifie la récente attribution, en avril dernier, du prix Champlain à son auteur. Les *Béatitudes* sont, grâce au lyrisme flamboyant de ses mots, un hymne magnifique aux nombreuses luttes qu'affrontent quotidiennement les hommes. De fait, l'Acadien prend le parti, dans ce recueil, de réécrire les « Béatitudes » bibliques, cette partie du Sermon de la Montagne dans laquelle Jésus décrit les vertus des citoyens du Royaume des Cieux. Chiasson dévoile ainsi ceux qui, par leurs vertus, accéderont au Paradis céleste. À force d'anaphores et de répétitions, l'Acadien en vient à démontrer que la quête du Paradis est vaine, et que c'est sur la terre même, nourrie par l'amour des hommes, qu'une telle délivrance est possible. Le poète interroge d'ailleurs les coups de force par lesquels il aurait été possible d'y parvenir : « Quel autre projet pourrions-nous concevoir pour réclamer notre délivrance, nous qui avons conduit de si loin et marché depuis si longtemps. »

Si elle aborde ces questions existentielles, l'oeuvre semble également nourrir une

préoccupation charnière de la littérature acadienne : ouvrir une voie pour les écrits d'une littérature laissée-pour-compte. Dans *Béatitudes*, tous, sans contredit, accèdent au ciel. C'est donc l'incarnation d'un refus, par l'oeuvre elle-même, de se poser en marge du monde. En cela, le recueil d'Herménégilde Chiasson manifeste un fort désir de poursuivre la lutte pour la reconnaissance de la poésie acadienne.

A Mixed Bag

Colleen Craig
Afrika. Tundra $11.99

Cary Fagan
Mr. Karp's Last Glass. Groundwood $8.95

Annabel Lyon
All-Season Edie. Orca $8.95

Cathleen With
Skids. Arsenal $19.95

Reviewed by Lynn (J.R.) Wytenbroek

A mixed bag of four books indicates the variety available for children from age six, with their first chapter book, to late-teen fare. Not only is the age range mixed, but so is the quality.

Chapter books rarely offer depth in either theme or character, which is regrettable, as children just cutting their teeth on "real" books need substance to keep them interested in reading. MacLachlan's perennial and substantive favourite, *Sarah, Plain and Tall,* is a case in point. Unfortunately, Cary Fagan's chapter book *Mr. Karp's Last Glass* is typical of the genre, a light story of a reclusive rare-water collector who rents a suite in a home, befriending the eleven-year-old boy of the family, who also collects things. The odd friendship is a strong point in the book, but is almost the only one. The writing is fluid and coherent, but the characters are rather flat and the plot line silly. There is little action and no adventure, so the book goes nowhere.

Another book with an eleven-year-old protagonist, Annabel Lyon's *All-Season Edie,* is novel-length. This story is not as fluffy as Fagan's, hitting such important themes as the loss of a loved grandparent and the first disastrous drinking adventure of an older sister. The story is quite intriguing. However, Lyon's previous writing experience is with adult fiction, which shows through. Although the narrative voice is first person, phrases such as "far away some invisible heartbroken bird is wailing and sobbing and listening to its own echoes before it grieves again" ring false coming from an eleven-year-old. The narrative is inconsistent, with Edie, the protagonist, constantly misconstruing words she does not understand and wanting to become a witch to fix her ailing grandfather. Yet she has the maturity to phone her parents for help, not out of fear but out of an awareness of the dangers of an unsupervised party where a friend's parents have left thirteen-year-olds on their own with ready access to booze. Thus the novel does not really work, alternating between being too dark and too flip, with a protagonist who seems to oscillate from an immature eleven to a mature woman without warning.

Meanwhile, Cathleen With's collection of short stories, *Skids*, is for much older teens, and gives a harsh insight into the brutal lives of teenaged drug addicts, street kids or foster kids, and prostitutes on the mean streets of Vancouver, BC. Looking for love between one fix and the next, or while in detox or foster care, these kids constantly flirt with death. The young people are raped, in foster care with the usual gamut of lecherous, drunken foster parents, on drugs, in gay and lesbian relationships while turning tricks for the next fix. Their stories are gritty, realistic, harsh, not for the faint-hearted and certainly not for the sheltered, so-called "normal" teenager. However, they are well-written, if slightly too similar in tone and style.

The book that stands out in the group is *Afrika,* by Colleen Craig. This story of thirteen-year-old Kim, who travels with her journalist mother to South Africa, is in places gritty, in places heart-wrenching, at all times compassionate for a child searching for the father she has never met and whose name she does not even know. All she knows of him is that he lives in South Africa, her mother's birthplace, and has made no contact with her during her short life. Full of questions, she has to deal with her mother, who begins to become unravelled while covering the Truth and Reconciliation hearings of Nelson Mandela's new, post-apartheid government. She also has to deal with her developing feelings for Themba, the son of her mother's family's black servant. She has to deal with her own inherent racism when she discovers why she does not look the least bit like her blond-haired, blue-eyed mother as she finally meets the man she has sought all her life.

The book is well-written. The plot is fast-paced and full of mystery. The characters are consistent and beautifully drawn. The themes of fear and hatred accompanying racial prejudice are revealed through the life of Kim's mother, damaged because of her own family's inability to accept the man she loves, and in the suffering of an entire race under the iron fist of apartheid; these are interwoven so well with the characters that they are neither overwhelming nor didactic. Kim's confusion as she experiences her own first love for a black boy cleverly echoes her mother's more mature but forbidden love for a coloured man under apartheid. While issues such as wrongful imprisonment, torture, and racially motivated killings are dealt with in the novel, they are done with sensitivity and within a context that makes them manageable for the mid-teen reader from any background, unlike With's casually brutal stories of street life. Revealing a complex culture at its most chaotic, yet during a time when it was seeking healing, Craig's South Africa is heartbreakingly real while fascinating. This is one book not to be missed.

Le risque de l'éphémère

Pierre Crépeau
Madame Iris et autres dérives de la raison. David
20,00 $

Compte rendu par Stéphane Girard

La modernité de la nouvelle se laisse entendre dans ce qu'elle a de transitoire et de fugitif (pour reprendre les mots mêmes d'un Baudelaire), bref, d'éphémère. « Ce n'est pas tant l'art de l'éphémère que je pratique que l'art du risque », nous révèle toutefois l'autoportraitiste d'une nouvelle somme toute programmatique que l'on retrouve dans *Madame Iris et autres dérives de la raison*, le plus récent recueil de Pierre Crépeau. Plus loin, François Duberger, protagoniste de la nouvelle « Madame Iris », va un peu dans le même sens lorsqu'il s'étonne de l'intérêt porté aux iris par une vieille voisine : « Il ne comprend pas qu'on puisse se donner tant de peine pour voir éclore une fleur qui ne dure qu'un jour. L'éphémère l'agace et le tourmente. » L'auteur préfère ainsi la curiosité des sujets, risquant ses nouvelles du côté d'un fantastique convenu (fantômes, meurtres, étranges rages, etc.).

Cela dit, ce choix cadre mal avec le parti pris esthétique guidant la prose de Crépeau, prose à la facture réaliste, voire profondément naturaliste. Ainsi, le temps d'une nouvelle comme « Le temps mis en boîte », le lecteur est confronté, alors qu'il croise « gnomon », « logosiglite », « clepsydre » et autres « insectes xylophages », au réalisme pourrait-on dire didactique de l'auteur; ailleurs, on nous fait l'histoire, par voie de personnages littéraux, de Clovis, roi des Francs, de la fleur de lys héraldique, de Palerme et de la Sicile, question d'ancrer ces

fictions dans un réel plus encyclopédique que sérieusement crédible. Ce naturalisme est en bout de ligne lui-même abandonné alors que le recueil débouche sur « La complainte du violon », une nouvelle dans laquelle « un pauvre violon qui agonise dans la fange d'un fossé » et à qui la « raison dérailla », nous narre la liste de ses doléances.

Nouvelles risquées, peut-être, mais qui échouent à rendre leur éphémérité captivante. « À trop vouloir naturaliser, on finit par dénaturer », madame Iris elle-même affirme-t-elle sans savoir qu'elle porte, en abyme, le jugement le plus approprié sur le recueil qui porte son nom.

revolushun in the t.dot

d'bi.young.anitafrika
rivers . . . and other blackness . . . between us. Women's $14.95

Motion
40 dayz. Women's $14.95

Reviewed by T.L. Cowan

The two recent publications from Women's Press reviewed here come from two of Toronto's most popular and respected—and dynamic—performance poets: d'bi.young.anitafrika and Motion. Both collections refreshingly move beyond the transcription model of books by performance poets, showing equal attention to the look and sound of their poetries, but they are very different books.

In the preface to her first collection, *art on black,* d'bi.young.anitafrika defines dub as follows: "dub is word. dub is sound. dub is powah. dub poetry is performance / poetry / politrix / roots / reggae" and identifies four elements of dub poetry—language, musicality, political content, and performance. Since then, anitafrika has elaborated three additional elements—urgency, sacredness, and integrity—which infuse and inform her own practice of dub. These additional elements signal the arrival of the visionary poetics found in *rivers . . . and other blackness . . . between us*, a book that confronts systemic racism in Toronto, the ongoing global effects of colonialism and imperialism, and pursues a vision of a just future. In "young black," anitafrika repeats the incantation "*you are brilliant and beautiful and / strong and rare*" in a poem in which puns play alongside explicit commentary on local, national, and global politics:

> because I am more than the roundness of
> my ass
> the width of my tits
> the thickness of my thighs
> the depth of my hips
> the glimmity-glammity hold him tight
> all through the night
> is not necessarily my numbah-one priority
> . . . . . .
> we
> walking through metal detectors in school
> that refuse to detect the rape and pillage
> recolonized by the great
> *harris-tocracy*
> we
> experiencing
> the military's militarization
> of high school and middle school education
> police officers turned hall monitors.

Following in the dub tradition, anitafrika makes explicit her commitment to "revolushun." And more than even a political revolution, it is a "revolushun" in poetic language and form. Throughout the book, anitafrika switches between Creole and official "Standard English," and enacts dub's unofficial, emphatic intervention into this official world and its language. For the most part, anitafrika opts for a direct treatment of her subject; her poems operate primarily in the realm of what performance scholar Rebecca Schneider calls "explosive literality." At points, however, she ventures into more fragmentary and dramatic forms as in "when the love is not enough: the conversation i never had with billie holiday," a mournful love song in two voices, a dialogue that reflects anitafrika's skill as a playwright.

Overall, the poems in *rivers* embody anitafrika's seven elements of dub. Some readers may resist these elements and balk at the polemical tone of the book as a whole, but I encourage readers to consider these elements, and the poems they produce, in the context of our contemporary moment, in the context of the city section of the morning newspaper, and to reflect how this poet, and others working in the dub tradition, refuse to hide behind a veil of obscurity, and resist oppression with words, insisting that these words can do something *more* than sit on a page.

While anitafrika's poems read as the verbal weapons of a pacifist street-fighter, Motion's new collection, *40 dayz*, is an urban, funk anthem for the T.Dot—Toronto in 2008. These poems focus mainly on a series of vignettes about life in Toronto's North End and are figured through a series of metaphors that at once embrace and reject, reflect and conceal their own trajectories. Unlike the straightforward, linear narratives of much of the popular spoken word of today, Motion's poems—which several times reminded me of the work of New York slammer-turned-sound-poet, Tracie Morris—mostly avoid the didactic approach in favour of vivid, image-based, but still political, long lyrics. While there is restraint here, I appreciate the revelations as well, and the irrepressibility and emergence that, for me, bring life to these poems. For example, "woman," a poem that reveals the torment of watching a friend undergo cancer treatment, lays bare the painful ritual of hospital visits:

> when we'd say goodbye
> it was just till tomorrow
> another day of chat chatting
> bawl bawling
> another 24 hour crisis
> a next episode of *girl I got your back*.

Similarly, and this is a passage that particularly made me think of Morris, " the calling" writes the heat of a summer night in Toronto along with a set of contradictions for which the poet has no solution:

> buckles bones rip knots from limbs
> lost and seeking
> hearing home in a clearing
> of dust
> dancers jeaned skirted
> sneakered and sandalled
> sweaty and silent speak
> and cry as bodies wild out
> wrenching against chains
> leaping from ship boards
> beating down kicking.

The only question marks on my copy of this book occur beside images that were, a few times, abstract to the point of disguise, and I couldn't figure out what the poet was hiding, or why she was hiding it. However, taken as a whole, this book brings the reader on a sometimes boisterous, sometimes contemplative bus ride across an urban wilderness, through Toronto, to Kingston's jails, and to South Africa. *40 dayz* is a New Testament of Toronto poetry.

Finally, there is one similarity between these books that I want to draw attention to here. Both poets give significant weight to "womb" language and imagery, and both draw a generative power from what anitafrika calls a "wombanist" approach to poetry and politics. For some, this "wombanism" may cause a gender-essentialist alarm to sound, and certainly this is my first reaction. My Third-Waver feminist politics tell me that the danger of this "wombanism" is that it risks universalizing women via biology. But I wonder, too, if, as Motion's section title "transformashun" implies, these books mark a shift both in contemporary poetics and politics. Is it possible that we are in a post-anti-essentialist moment, and that these collections respond to the anxieties of dealing with the materiality of gender, especially the ways that these anxieties manifest in white feminism? This is a question that these collections refuse to answer, but I hope that it is one that others will ask too.

Baring Knuckles, Psyches

Craig Davidson
The Fighter. Viking $32.00

Reviewed by Martin Kuester

In German, there is a proverb saying "Sport ist Mord": sport is murder. This insight also seems to pertain to Craig Davidson's novel about boxing and bare-knuckle fist-fighting. Written at about the same time as his short-story collection *Rust and Bone*, it covers some of the same territory. While in the collection, the fierce and shocking brutality is often perpetrated by or upon animals, here it is mostly human beings whose bones are crushed, whose blood is flowing freely. Some of the effects of this "sport" on the human body and psyche are also featured on Davidson's website or in his *Esquire* article about steroid use.

The plot plays with well-known national stereotypes, as it confronts two young men, one from pampered upper-class Canada, the other from working-class America. Paul Harris, the son of a St. Catharines winery owner, still lives with his parents, but his traditional way of living is shattered when he is beaten up for no obvious reason. He tries to discover the meaning of life as well as his true self by inflicting pain on his own body and training as a boxer. His counterpart, Robert Tully from Niagara Falls, is the naturally talented son of a bakery worker and boxing trainer, for whom professional boxing appears to be the only way of advancing in society. At the intersection of their ostensibly downward and upward careers, the two meet in an illegal bare-knuckle boxing ring in rural Ontario where Paul had earlier devastated Robert's uncle, a former boxing professional, with a lucky punch. Being far less experienced and technically advanced than his younger rival, Paul is severely beaten. He leaves Canada behind for Thailand, where he joins a group of international dropouts who ruin their bodies and spirits in a fist-fighting circuit. This dark perspective—of somebody who has "fall[en] off the civilized slope of the earth"—is established in the short prologue preceding the main part of the novel.

In addition to cruel and gruesome boxing scenes drenched in blood and crunching bones, the novel draws the reader into a story of fascination with bodily power, whether it be sadistic and punishing or masochistic and self-punishing. Human beings are reduced to flesh, bones, and instincts, and education and rational thinking are of less than prime importance in this society: strangely shocking and repellent insights in a strangely fascinating book, the only hope offered by Robert's decision to maul his fist after his victory over Paul and thus to forestall a boxing career.

In the acknowledgements section at the end of the novel, Davidson thanks his mother for reading the manuscript "not because it was her cup of tea, but simply to support me." This novel of graphic violence (and occasionally sex) is most certainly not everybody's cup of tea, but it is impossible for readers not to be fascinated by Davidson's terse and shocking style of writing.

Olympian Efforts

Anne Dublin
Bobbie Rosenfeld: The Olympian Who Could Do Everything. Second Story $14.95

Ron Hotchkiss
The Matchless Six: The Story of Canada's First Women's Olympic Team. Tundra $22.99

Reviewed by Karen Crossley

One of the most amazing things about memorable sporting moments is the way they retain their excitement even while being replayed. In replay, the outcome of the magic moment is no longer uncertain. We know how it's all going to turn out. And yet, there is something in the reliving that still catches the breath and causes the pulse to race. Amazingly, this alchemy survives in the printed replay as well as in the video-taped version, as is proven in the pages of *Bobbie Rosenfeld: The Olympian Who Could Do Everything* and in *The Matchless Six: The Story of Canada's First Women's Olympic Team*. Both volumes tread the same ground—ground first pounded under the flying feet of the Canadian women's track and field team of the 1928 Olympics, a group otherwise known as "the Matchless Six," and featuring, as its highest scoring member, the accomplished sprinter Bobbie Rosenfeld.

Anne Dublin's *Bobbie Rosenfeld* highlights Rosenfeld's 1928 achievements in its title, but the book itself is a mini-biography of Rosenfeld, examining her life from its predictably humble beginnings to the posthumous honours she has received, including the establishment of the Bobbie Rosenfeld Award for Canada's Female Athlete of the Year. Designed for younger readers, this book is particularly good at putting the facts of Rosenfeld's life in context, giving you a sense of the period she lived in as well as the life she lived. Dublin sets Bobbie's accomplishments against the struggles of women in general and female athletes in particular. Like its title character, the book is fast-moving, the story is enlivened with high quality pictures, text-boxed points of interest, and a satisfying, if simple, scholarly apparatus in the form of a timeline, suggestions for further reading, research source acknowledgements, bibliography, and index.

The design elements that help support Dublin's book are generally weaker in Hotchkiss' *The Matchless Six*, which surveys the barriers broken not just by Rosenfeld, but by teammates Myrtle Cook, Ethel Smith, Jane Bell, Jean Thompson, and Ethel Catherwood—the "Matchless Six" of the title. Unlike Dublin, Hotchkiss starts his story somewhere in the middle, with the Canadian Women's Olympic Trials in Halifax. It proves an awkward starting point, sacrificing the drama of the events leading up to the trials (Hotchkiss deals with these later) for a ground-level introduction to the story's main players in action. There are several such awkward moments that mar the manuscript, including a misidentification of Rosenfeld's basketball team as the YWCA (it was the YWHA), and a puzzling insistence on referring to Toronto as the Queen City, inviting the modern Canadian reader to confuse it with Regina. Nonetheless, Hotchkiss' story is richly detailed, chock full of quotations that give the account an "I was there" kind of authenticity and excitement. While Hotchkiss struggles to do much more than Dublin, juggling the stories of the six women in an attempt to deal even-handedly with them all, his book is, in a sense, much more narrowly focussed on the one year (1928) and the one event (the Amsterdam Olympics). Still, both books strike one as Olympian efforts on the part of their authors to translate significant seconds of real-life action into compellingly written prose, a task at which they have both, in different ways, managed to succeed.

Rare Red Roses

Musharraf Ali Farooqi
The Story of a Widow. Knopf Canada $25.95

Reviewed by Summer Pervez

The most distinctive feature of Musharraf Ali Farooqi's debut novel is his remarkably realist style of writing, reminiscent of Chekhov, with its detached and non-judgmental narrator, intense realism on a small social canvas, and heavy use of sensual detail. Like the work of the master Russian storyteller, Farooqi's novel also lacks political discussion, nor does the writer attempt to convey any large national messages. He does, however, offer a subtle social critique of prohibitions on widow remarriage, and of the different cultural standards for men and women that Mona and Salamat Ali staunchly defy: that widowers should remarry only virgins, and widows not remarry at all.

As a woman of fifty who has recently lost her husband, Mona finds that her decision to remarry is immediately met with grave resistance from her family. Despite her family's and society's objections, she learns over the course of one year to take life into her own hands and awakens into a new-found sense of self at multiple levels—not only sexual, but also maternal, filial, and financial. But while the novel ostensibly centres on this theme of female awakening, or discovering the independent self, it is also about the relationship between mothers and daughters, and a wife's duty to preserve both her husband's and family's honour.

The novel is immediately perceivable as a very Pakistani story, with the simultaneous feel of a Victorian novel. This may be due to the noteworthy parallels between Pakistani drama serials and Victorian novels: unconsciously, they reflect one another. At the level of detail, Mrs. Baig's hiding of letters under the folds of her sari is reminiscent of Victorian women smuggling letters within the folds of voluminous dresses. At a another level, there are also strong thematic parallels: the crises are at once psychological and social, and maintaining image and reputation at any cost is essential. Farooqi's story is ultimately a domestic one, with marriage as the central theme around which the main character's crisis revolves. Like the serials, scenes outside the domestic are shopping or office scenes; male and female spaces are clearly demarcated, as they are in contemporary Pakistan. In this sense, it is a very Pakistani novel, rich in symbolism: a Banarasi sari, gold jewellery (a *nau ratan* necklace), a family portrait, a carefully tended garden, and lunching at Chinese restaurants with "continental" dessert menus. In fact, the novel is full of memorable imagery, such as the rare red roses in Mona's garden and on Salamat Ali's balcony, and moments of "gentle" humour, both of which linger in the mind long after one has finished reading.

Although Farooqi develops character psychology well and employs powerful imagery, his intense focus on interiority and attentiveness to symbolism is at the expense of a sharp sense of location or place, which could be articulated in more detail. The result is a novel that is almost too universal—there is nothing distinctly Canadian about it.

At the same time, however, Farooqi's novel is innovative in the context of South Asian Canadian literature, for it is the world of Pakistani Muslims—previously unrepresented in the genre—that is depicted. The novel also differs thematically from mainstream Asian Canadian novels: it is not a nostalgic story about the lost homeland, or the political and social tensions left behind (as with Vassanji's Africa, Mistry's Bombay, or Selvadurai's Sri Lanka), nor is it an exploration of migration and the identity crisis that results (as depicted by Mootoo, Baldwin, and Badami). This difference can be regarded as one of the novel's many

strengths: it is not what one would expect from a young "immigrant" writer from Toronto.

Along with his unexpected thematic focus, Farooqi's refreshingly direct and symbolic use of language marks him as a unique voice in Canadian literature. Ultimately, *The Story of a Widow* is a simple but powerful novel about ordinary people set in a local context, that allows for universal access due to the global relevance of its themes.

Fledglings in Flight

Alma Fullerton
Libertad. Fitzhenry & Whiteside $12.95

Irene N. Watts; Kathryn E. Shoemaker, illus.
Good-bye Marianne. Tundra $14.99

Reviewed by Hilary Turner

Young people are trapped in the whirlpools of history as often as adults are. Only somewhat less able to extricate themselves, and only slightly less aware of the powerful currents that surround them, children fleeing from oppression show human resourcefulness with particular clarity. In *Libertad*, a teenage boy and his younger brother make a tortuous escape from their home, a garbage dump in Guatemala City. In *Good-bye Marianne,* an eleven-year-old Jewish girl becomes a refugee from Nazi Germany. Both stories are realistic and suspenseful. Both argue convincingly for the value of freedom and the high costs associated with it.

The back cover of *Libertad* notes that the book was an ALA "Quick Pick for Reluctant Young Adult Readers." A selling point, perhaps, but this information seems to downplay the technical skill with which Alma Fullerton has constructed her narrative. Consisting entirely of short prose poems in the voice of the major character, the story forces readers to immerse themselves in his world and occupy his point of view. Libertad is both victim and hero. His father has temporarily abandoned the family for a job in Texas, and in his absence they have been forced to leave their village for a miserable existence as garbage-pickers in the city. For a while, Libertad makes the best of it. He teaches himself to play the marimba and scrapes together a few coins so that his younger brother can attend the charity-sponsored school known as Safe Passage. But when their mother is swallowed up by an avalanche of garbage, Libertad and Julio decide to set off in search of their father, and so begins their long trek north to the Rio Grande. These events are made compelling and real by the tone of Libertad's reporting—stark and factual, but with undercurrents of longing and fear.

An author's note at the end of the book explains that such journeys are shockingly commonplace. Every year, some 80,000 unaccompanied children illegally cross the southern border of the United States, and many more die in the attempt—conned by the human traffickers known as "coyotes" and often left to suffocate in transport trucks. Fullerton does not underestimate the dangers faced by her fictional characters: although occasionally helped out by a few generous souls, the boys elude predators of various kinds, narrowly escape permanent membership in a street gang in Mexico City, and nearly drown in the Rio Grande. The details of their ordeal are clear and precise, and it is obvious that the book has been a labour of love. It is a well-told adventure story, but it is also a record of injustice overcome and a lament.

Not quite as eventful as *Libertad* but equally gripping, *Good-bye Marianne* is a nuanced graphic novel in black and white tones well-suited to the depiction of a steadily tightening net. Also at the mercy of forces beyond her control, Marianne Kohn finds her world constricted by the Nazi regime and the petty spite of some of her neighbours. Forbidden to attend school, she

wanders the streets of middle-class Berlin and witnesses the Gestapo pounding on doors and making arrests. Marianne's father has been forced to go into hiding, and her mother, increasingly concerned for the safety of her child, seizes the opportunity to have her transported to England with a convoy of orphans. Escaping the war and the Holocaust, Marianne relinquishes her family—presumably forever. The emphasis of the story, however, falls on Marianne's growing self-reliance as she ponders her Jewish identity. Her eventual realization that "we are not all the same" comes to her from an unlikely source—that of her young neighbour Ernest, an aspirant to the Hitler Youth, who is as innocent in his own way as Marianne is in hers. It is a nice touch that Ernest and Marianne share the same favourite book, Erich Kastner's *Emil and the Detectives*, with a story in which children outwit adults to bring a villain to justice. Marianne's big discovery—that in life (as opposed to fiction) individuals just do the best they can—is understated and realistic.

Taken together, these two novels for young people do a fine job of showing the human and personal side of modern history. The drawings of Kathryn Shoemaker make *Good-bye Marianne* a vivid portrait of daily life in Hitler's Germany, and the subtle lyricism of *Libertad* lifts it miles above the level of a textbook account. In each case, engaging characters and a suspenseful story obviate the need for any bossy didacticism and convey important truths about the need for courage in times of strife.

Éloge de la lenteur

Maude Smith Gagnon
Une tonne d'air. Triptyque 17,00 $

Célyne Fortin
Un ciel laiteux. Noroît 17,95 $

Diane Régimbald
Des cendres des corps. Noroît 16,95 $

Compte rendu par Ariane Audet

Née sur la Basse-Côte-Nord, Maude Smith Gagnon a reçu, en 2006, le prix Émile-Nelligan pour son recueil *Une tonne d'air*. Poésie inscrite dans l'art de la description documentaire, elle dénote une connaissance profonde de la nature qui rappelle le poète Pierre Morency. Abandonnée par l'homme, cette nature reprend lentement ses droits et, si son expérience physique—par la promenade et l'observation—reste au coeur du recueil, sa saisie poétique se fait dans une sobriété qui donne à entendre et à voir la lente progression des cycles saisonniers par une multitude de points de vue. De ces différentes perceptions, qu'elles soient animales, végétales ou minérales, l'homme est quasiment exclu. Poésie anonyme, les histoires personnelles sont évacuées, et la présence humaine n'est illustrée que par des traces d'anciennes constructions et les déchets qu'elle y a laissés : « Granulée par la pluie, la neige laisse apparaître en fondant les débris accumulés durant l'hiver. » Toutefois, c'est précisément cet oubli par l'homme de la nature qui permet à celle-ci de ne pas « [craindre] l'indifférence », et ainsi continuer de foisonner malgré la fragilité, par la justesse de la prose de la poète.

Dans *Un ciel laiteux*, le sujet tente de capter les mouvements subtils du réel à partir d'un corps voyageur. Entre l'Abitibi et Las Vegas, la perception du monde se construit par de petits clichés poétiques qui empruntent largement à la pratique du haïku : « Quand l'automne arrive / avant son heure l'été / part avec la pluie. » Les poèmes sont à la fois fragments de vie intime et

tentatives de saisir des lieux dans leur totalité. L'inscription du quotidien par le voyage ou la nature est illustrée par le lent « égouttement » du temps, toujours ponctuée de questionnements existentiels qui se révèlent parfois peu subtils. Là où *Une tonne d'air* donnait dans la sobriété et l'objectivité, *Un ciel laiteux* de Célyne Fortin tend plutôt vers le lyrisme d'une réflexion métaphysique sur l'individu et la nature qui manque souvent de nuance.

Des cendres des corps aborde la question du cycle en termes d'achèvement. Réflexion sur la mort, la mémoire et le don de soi d'une fille à son père, la poésie de Diane Régimbald interroge l'origine incertaine de toute chose ainsi que sa fin inévitable. La progression des saisons corroborant celle de la vie, le recueil se veut une traversée du paysage comme un véritable rite de passage, s'illustrant formellement par des poèmes qui se rapprochent de la prière. En effet, comment dire et survivre à ce qui meurt fatalement; comment rendre céleste le terrestre, les cendres au ciel ? : « À partir des cendres, te donner le temps d'un poème. » Divisé en cinq parties et oscillant entre prose et vers libres, *Des cendres des corps* reste un pèlerinage poétique qui se veut moins un regard en mouvement sur la nature qu'une interrogation sur la fatalité de l'existence à l'intérieur de celle-ci. Campées dans des lieux incertains, les routes servent à l'errance et la terre aux spectres. Usant du paysage comme métaphore suprême de la fragilité, la poésie de Régimbald s'érige comme un chant de renaissance à toutes les mémoires, la voix comme une « nature [qui] se donne sans attendre et offre / dans ses cycles tout d'elle-même ».

Ce n'était qu'un jeu

Diane Giguère
La petite fleur de l'Himalaya. Triptyque 17,00 $

Compte rendu par Julia Morris-von Luczenbacher

C'est dans une écriture limpide que Diane Giguère, autrefois comédienne et travailleuse à Radio-Canada, nous livre *La petite fleur de l'Himalaya*, un court roman publié d'abord sous le titre *Le temps des jeux* (1961). La version remaniée se concentre sur Céline—jeune héroïne bâtarde, marginale et plongée dans le cru de la réalité suite à son renvoi du pensionnat—dont l'existence est précaire et constamment menacée : elle contemple le suicide quotidiennement et s'imagine écrasée sur le trottoir sous le soleil brûlant d'été. Malgré le fait que Céline cherche à se révolter contre l'autorité, en l'occurrence maternelle, « c'est bien une quête de pureté et d'authenticité qui motive [s]es actes », constate Robert Prud'homme dans la préface. Cette quête interroge la force de la socialisation dans l'apprentissage féminin, car nonobstant le mépris qu'elle éprouve pour sa mère, prostituée et caissière, Céline finit par suivre le modèle maternel : elle se soumet au désir de Monsieur Moreuil, un botaniste marié à une femme hargneuse, et se laisse déflorer par lui en espérant ainsi le convaincre de l'emmener avec lui dans l'Himalaya, loin de sa misère quotidienne. Le rapport qu'elle noue avec lui n'est cependant qu'une mascarade : elle s'efforce de lui trouver des qualités rédemptrices pour oublier son visage hideux, mais elle n'est pas amoureuse de lui. Ainsi, bien que le « temps des jeux » soit passé pour Céline, le ludisme ne demeure pas moins prégnant dans le récit. Il transparaît notamment à travers le style : la romancière communique efficacement la pensée de ses personnages ainsi que leurs sentiments qui ne sont pas nécessairement ceux qu'ils affichent aux autres.

Le jeu des apparences sauvera l'héroïne du destin malheureux qui attend la femme

déshonorée. À la différence des héroïnes d'autrefois, victimes du regard objectivant et aliénant de l'homme, Céline refuse de s'abandonner. Elle se sert de son pouvoir de séduction pour en retirer des bénéfices : au lieu de partir avec Moreuil, elle lui vole son herbier, la petite fleur rare de l'Himalaya, et part contre toute attente avec sa mère pour une contrée lointaine. Incapable de se soumettre aux conventions sociales, la fuite de Céline représente son refus de se compromettre et fait en sorte que son désir féminin d'émancipation jusqu'alors réprimé s'exprime. Publié pour la première fois à une époque maintenant révolue, le réalisme psychologique et la pertinence des thèmes abordés font de ce roman une oeuvre toujours d'actualité.

Envies de fuite

Brigitte Haentjens
Blanchie. Prise de Parole 29,95 $

Compte rendu par Laurent Poliquin

Figure marquante du théâtre québécois et canadien-français, Brigitte Haentjens signe avec *Blanchie* son deuxième récit depuis *D'éclats de peine* paru en 1991 chez le même éditeur. À la manière du cheminement du fugueur, dont les égarements et pérégrinations nocturnes concourent davantage à une fuite de soi pour mieux reconstruire à neuf une histoire de vie sans douleur, la narratrice de *Blanchie* s'enfuit d'une ville à l'autre, entre la France et l'Espagne, mortifiée par le deuil d'un petit frère qui s'est tué dans un accident de moto. Au cours de ces prétendues vacances, elle fait la rencontre d'un ancien militaire et se donne rapidement à lui. S'engage alors une relation malsaine, d'un érotisme douteux, un jeu d'« aventure torride », une sorte d'échappatoire à la hantise du frère dont la voix d'outre-tombe continue d'habiter son chagrin. De sa condition d'artiste libérée, cette photographe se trouve alors confinée dans une docilité dictée par une détresse sentimentale, où la brutalité, la jalousie et le lesbianisme involontaire font leur apparition. Intervient alors Montréal, ville de création qui libéralise l'accès aux émotions et à la contrainte de soi devant l'affliction. Sortie d'une tombe creusée en elle, c'est à Montréal qu'elle reprendra tranquillement possession d'elle-même et dissoudra ses dégoûts d'amour transitoire.

Dès le début du récit, l'auteure présente au lecteur un « je » déchiré par le deuil et établit une sympathie qui aide à adhérer à son propos profondément humain. Les nombreuses photographies d'Angelo Barsetti exploitent des paysages de cimetières, de statuettes angéliques et de mouvements de corps nus, créant un écho spiritualisé aux tourments de la narratrice. Cette sympathie première se renverse à plusieurs reprises, notamment quand la liberté de celle-ci est réduite à une servilité devant des bassesses sexuelles : « Je suis comme une poupée de chiffon », mentionne-t-elle pour montrer sa perte de repère devant l'existence et les vacillements d'un corps abandonné à l'autre. Le tout est entrecoupé d'interludes poétiques introduisant une sorte d'intoxication par le rêve. Les interventions du petit frère dans la psyché de l'endeuillée cherchent à distiller çà et là des conseils sur les comportements autodestructeurs de la narratrice, renforçant ainsi les effets de la fragilité émotionnelle mus par le deuil. Au final, la profondeur de l'écriture de Haentjens et le souci éditorial des Éditions Prise de parole rendent à l'expérience de lecture tout le bouleversement propre à ce qui fait la « littérature ».

May She Marry a Ghost

Kenneth J. Harvey
Blackstrap Hawco. Random House $34.95

Reviewed by Reece Steinberg

Blackstrap Hawco is the troubling, confusing, and engaging account not of the character whose name the title bears, and not of the generations of Hawco family alluded to in the subtitle, but of Newfoundland.

The narrative comes from all people and places at once, and the time period and style of writing changes abruptly and regularly. The first chapter begins in 1953, introducing Jacob Hawco, Blackstrap's father, who suffers a near-fatal injury alone in the frigid woods while setting snares. He sets his own his fracture and waits, kept alive by his own spirit and ingenuity as well as the curious help of a fox. His determination to survive comes from thoughts of home, and this is how the reader is introduced to his wife and one son. At times, the reader is dragged back as far as 1886 to Irish immigration, indentured servitude, escape, starvation, illness, and families wrenched apart. The present-day combines generic popular cartoons with culture that is singular to Newfoundland, and leads us up into 2042, the latest date of the book. Harvey weaves together subsistence moose hunting, seal hunt protestors, alcoholism, ancient Irish tales, and the diminishing fish populations.

Poetry and many styles of prose tell the story, the dialogue written as spoken by people living in rural or outport areas: "Close enuff, b'y. Newf'nland. Not da Maritimes dough." Harvey's irregularly-punctuated run-on lines rich with commas but without periods to express characters' breathless every moment and thought. Other times the thoughts grind to a halt with a string of one- or two-word sentences. Some chapters are purely lists of distorted or misrepresented historical events, "June 14, 1984 No woman allowed to bake decides Southern Baptist convention. June 15, 1984 Roberto Durán knocked up by Thomas Hearns." This stylistic compilation ends with an encrypted code by Blackstrap's estranged son whose main literary influence is the text message, still in a Newfoundland dialect: "d 1ly reasN he's contmpl8N it nw S coz of d f@ Nvelop dat wz n hs bx dat AM. Twas addressed 2 Jr Hawco." The different styles enhance the telling of each part of the book, which reads like an assembly of interconnected tales. This is unsurprising, since some of them began as short stories.

The different modes of writing are brought together by their shared sharp, descriptive accounts that force the reader to envision brutally disturbing scenes. The most vividly painful and revolting descriptions feature women who suffer in extraordinary ways. The women of *Blackstrap Hawco* suffer alcoholic husbands, twisted children, an unholy 13-month pregnancy, stinking fish plant labour, nauseating rape by a priest, and countless injustices that come with having little power. Women subsist through impossible circumstances throughout the book. They live on while the men die, lose parts of their bodies, or abandon their families for the mainland. The Irish insult "May she marry a ghost, and bear him a kitten" is felt by generations of women whose men are not present, physically or emotionally, and whose children are ravaged by neglect, abuse, and many kinds of hunger; yet the women still manage to retain a sense of humour. The short entries in this "human catalogue of quiet disasters" include the woman who picks up discarded wrappers on slow walks, the woman who runs the train museum, but is disliked for "sticking her face where it doesn't belong," and the woman who fights council. Blackstrap is the main character of the narrative; much of the last half of the book follows his life, and the rest of the book is intricately linked to him. Yet, the women's

presence challenges Blackstrap's hold as the book's primary tool through which Newfoundland's culture, triumphs, and staggering losses are examined.

Blackstrap Hawco draws one along its 829 dense pages through the use of multiple conflicting perspectives, voices, and styles, yet never loses its sense of unity or strength. Its rich detail and realistic dialogue forces the reader to experience the frustration of the disempowered characters, the corroded Atlantic scenery, and the pride that survives.

Les voyages scientifiques

Margot Irvine

Pour suivre un époux : Les réctis de voyages des couples au XIX^e^ siècle. Nota bene 24.95 $

Compte rendu par Paul Genuist

Cette étude s'attache à démontrer l'influence de la « socio-sexuation » dans les écrits des couples qui ont participé à des expéditions scientifiques dans divers pays au XIX^e^ siècle. Comme on s'y attend, les maris publient le résultat de leur recherche dans le style factuel et prosaïque qui convient à tout écrit à valeur scientifique. Les épouses les ont parfois assistés dans leurs travaux, mais elles ont aussi laissé des récits qui décrivent avec pittoresque et dans un style « vivant et coloré » la vie quotidienne, leurs découvertes des us et coutumes et des comportements des gens dans les pays visités, Russie, Arménie, Tibet, etc.

Si les recherches des hommes étaient appréciées en leur temps, elles sont périmées aujourd'hui. Les récits des femmes, par contre, répondaient au goût du XIX^e^ siècle pour l'orientalisme et ont été populaires. Grâce au féminisme, et dû au regain de faveur pour le tourisme exotique à la fin du XX^e^, ces ouvrages ont été réédités.

Margot Irvine, qui est l'auteure de cette étude sociologique, insiste beaucoup sur les multiples contraintes rencontrées par la femme au XIX^e^ siècle.

Le voyage réorganisé

Pierre Karch

Noëlle à Cuba. Prise de Parole 20,00 $

Compte rendu par Daniel Vaillancourt

La réédition d'un roman peut s'avérer périlleuse. En effet, la marque du temps vient souvent ombrager les couleurs d'un récit. Ce n'est pas le cas du roman de Pierre Karch qui, vingt ans après sa parution, interpelle encore notre monde. Il précède la littérature de la globalisation, terme qui, à l'époque, ne faisait pas encore partie du lexique de l'actualité. Pourtant, ce qu'il décrit appartient à cette mondialisation qui rétrécit la planète en égrenant sur sa surface des *resorts*, ces lieux aménagés pour consommer une altérité enclose, inoffensive, qui, à la fin, renvoie à soi.

Une des données fondamentales du récit tient au milieu où il est campé : les « pays chauds », en l'occurrence Cuba, où se retrouve en décembre un groupe de 27 touristes. Le lecteur est convié à suivre leurs péripéties. Volumineuse fresque des voyages organisés, le récit montre bien le symptôme du voyageur contemporain, enclin à oublier l'étrangeté du pays qu'il visite au profit de son indémontable identité.

Ce sera l'histoire de Noëlle, voyageuse typique à la recherche de l'homme idéal. Son personnage ouvre et ferme le roman, dans l'inévitable déception d'une quête insatisfaisante. Le narrateur observe, avec humour et finesse, la vie d'un collectif qui n'est ni groupe, ni communauté, formation hétéroclite qui permet à l'écrivain d'enrichir le tissu narratif de toutes ces petites histoires. Façonnée de portraits ébréchés de personnages qui forment le lot des voyages de groupe—nouveaux mariés, alcooliques de toute espèce, célibataires en proie à l'âme soeur ou au corps frère, retraités curieux –, la narration suit le parcours de chacun d'eux, en faisant ressortir leurs quêtes, leurs échecs, leurs modestes réalisations. Par

exemple, pour Suzanne, ce sera l'incapacité de quitter son mari violent et alcoolique; pour un autre, Hubert, ce sera l'espoir de trouver une compagne et la déception de la voir préférer un autre. Ce seront les petites tromperies dans le quotidien d'un couple fait d'un mari veule et d'une épouse tyrannique, la brutalité d'une nuit de noces. Ce sera l'amitié insoupçonnée d'un propriétaire de pizzeria et d'un avocat huppé.

Écrit dans un style limpide et parfois bonhomme, le roman fait appel à une texture mythologique variée, qui se donne à voir tant dans le nom de certains personnages—Daphné, Icare, Euridyce, que dans l'intrigue. Le personnage d'Icare, qui rappelle l'ange pasolinien de *Theorema*, objet de désir et centre mouvant du roman, entraîne le lecteur dans des ambiguïtés narratives et des incertitudes ontologiques qui ne manquent pas d'évoquer le réalisme merveilleux du roman latino-américain. Cette évocation se voit renforcée par le personnage de Mariposa, le papillon qui dialogue avec les uns et les autres. Le lecteur y trouvera aussi un stimulant jeu intertextuel avec Hemingway et interdiscursif avec les toiles du peintre Morrice qui deviennent à la fin le point de fuite du récit. Narré sur un mode parfois ironique, avec un sourire en coin, le roman de Pierre Karch met aussi en évidence, dans le détail qui paraît innocent, la cruauté des rapport humains « organisés ».

Time Keepers

Patrick Lane
Last Water Song. Harbour $16.95

Brian Bartlett
The Watchmaker's Table. Goose Lane $18.95

Melanie Little
The Apprentice's Masterpiece: A Story of Medieval Spain. Annick $19.95

Reviewed by Darlene Shatford

Last Water Song is the much-awaited new collection from one of Canada's finest poets, a series of poems in two parts that demonstrates Patrick Lane's acclaimed talent and technique. This collection reveals Lane's courage of expression, his unabashed vulnerability in exploring what is, what was, and what might have been.

In Part One, Lane pays homage to writers and colleagues who have died. These elegiac poems read like conversations Lane wishes he could have with the dead. Central to each piece is Lane's appreciation for the named writers' works and influence. To Adele Wiseman he writes, "I loved your words and taught them to the young. They seemed to understand. Seemed, not did." To Al Purdy he writes, "Following your mind was like my wandering in South America years ago. I knew there was no end, it was the going I had to learn, the nowhere we all get to." And, to Irving Layton he writes, "you showed a way for me to write myself toward a paradise and though I never got there, still, it was all in the reaching. I too have wanted to sing *in the throat of a robin*." Lane's recollections speak to the refuge he found in the poetry and, in some cases, the homes of his subjects, just as they speak to the taking of his own place among Canada's best poets. For example, in "For Milton Acorn" he writes, "Today I'm trying to find a piece of myself I lost. Instead I find you."

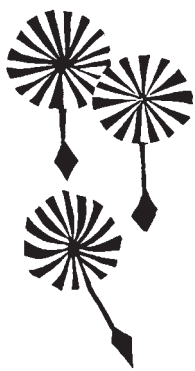
The poems in Part Two are infused with images of light, earth, and water as they explore isolation, grief, and fear. In

"Lookout," Lane illustrates the loneliness that arises through careful examination of seemingly ordinary things, such as the light on the plains or the "abandoned hulk of a turtle." Though far from directive, some of Lane's pieces in this section are proverbial, adding to the seriousness of his take on love, life, and the passing of time. In his shortest poem of the collection, "Journeys and Returns," Lane makes light of the passing of time and, though the sand flea has one of the shortest life spans of all the earthly species, reminds us that "Our lament makes the sand fleas dance. / Their tiny wings know a great secret."

The nature of time, and the inevitability of its passing, is the subject of several of Brian Bartlett's poems in *The Watchmaker's Table*. "The Sideways 8" tells the story of the speaker's daughter who one day comes home with the grade one knowledge of the "biggest number of all" and "laughs as if endlessness were a joke / only a child can get." In "Breathing and Reading," a father and his son read books in bed together, while they can, since "the father knows nights will come / when the son wants to tumble into sleep alone / so he doesn't budge." Time itself is the speaker in the playful piece called "Time Stands Up for Itself." Time in this poem is not just forceful, but cheeky: "Your poor metaphors try to trap me / but you can't save or spend me. . . I am the space between heartbeat / and heartbeat." But, arguably, Bartlett's most clever and powerful poem in the collection is "Travels of the Watch." In this poem, a watch, thankful it is not a clock doomed to hang on the wall, gets to play while its owner unstraps it, drops it on the bedside table, and makes love to her man: "It makes the hour hand go / fast as the second hand, the second hand slow / as the hour." The watch lolls, "stretching between a glass of wine / and a nine-hundred-page novel." But, "even the watch / grows tired of time and wishes it could / unstrap itself, / cast itself off, / sustained by some other heartbeat."

Melanie Little's *The Apprentice's Masterpiece: A Story of Medieval Spain* takes readers to the Spanish Inquisition, to a time of fear, betrayal, and bloodshed. Young Ramon Benveniste, a scribe's fifteen-year-old son, works as his father's apprentice during this period of strict edicts and confusing rituals. Fifteenth-century Spain hosted an enlightened culture where Jews, Muslims, and Christians respectfully co-existed. However, Queen Isabella put that enlightened time to an end. Ramon's family of *conversos* (Jews converted to Christianity) are ever watchful of their behaviours since neighbours, acquaintances, and even friends are known to turn people in for the slightest infraction in order to protect themselves from harm. Before long, Ramon and his family's young Muslim slave, Amir, find themselves on a dangerous journey where they both confront their families' pasts while simultaneously securing their futures.

Wonderfully written in eloquent verse, Little's story captures the power and importance of history, story-telling, and words, especially during times of instability and conflict. Every page is a poem, a place where her unforgettable characters come alive.



Outside the Ordinary

Shari Lapeña
Things Go Flying. Brindle & Glass $22.95

Claudia Dey
Stunt. Coach House $19.95

Cara Hedley
Twenty Miles. Coach House $19.95

Reviewed by Jodi Lundgren

In both *Twenty Miles* and *Stunt,* a young female narrator matures in the shadow of a larger-than-life, absent father. In *Things Go Flying,* a fallible father of teenaged boys suffers a mid-life crisis. In these three novels, coming of age involves earnest intensity while middle age tends to the ridiculous.

When, by the end of a novel, a protagonist gains a new identity "in addition to his previous identities as an underachiever, an inadequate father, a consumer of goods, and a cuckold," you can be fairly certain it is a comedy. Shari Lapeña, one of several contemporary writers revisiting omniscient narration, puts a bathetic spin on the classic comedic plot arc: her protagonist, Harold Walker, begins in adversity and ends in *slightly* improved circumstances.

Murphy's Law reigns as two accidental blows to the head trigger the psychic powers that Harold inherited from his mother and has concealed from everyone, including his wife, in a desperate bid to be ordinary. Indeed, each member of Harold's family harbours a secret, to which the reader alone is privy. The misunderstandings that result contribute greatly to the novel's humour. Poltergeists aside, Harold's unadventurous life contrasts sharply with that of the identity thief who leaves "a trail of blazing glory" on Harold's credit card: items charged include an Infinity G-35 sports coupe and a first-class airplane ticket to Brazil. But Lapeña turns Harold's phlegmatic nature into a virtue, invoking the novel's epigraph from Voltaire's *Candide*: "we must cultivate our garden." Expanded upon during hilarious sessions with a philosopher whom Harold visits instead of a psychologist, the Voltaire motif feels slightly overdone towards the end of the novel as Harold spends increasingly more time sitting on a homemade bench in his backyard. Still, the comic genre requires a tying up of loose ends, and this novel reaches a satisfying resolution.

Lapeña's Harold longs to be ordinary but fails to suppress his paranormal abilities; in Claudia Dey's first novel, *Stunt*, the ordinary has no quarter whatsoever. Raised and eventually abandoned by an erratic, bipolar father and a diva mother, the nine-year-old narrator, Eugenia, and her "Irish twin" Immaculata, have no opportunity to establish mundane routines. Fiercely loyal to her father, Eugenia searches for him throughout the novel, both in memory and in the present.

The relentlessly extraordinary nature of the characters and events makes for a demanding, unpredictable read. Dey does not reach simply for bizarre, mythic characters (like the metal-detecting diver who lives on a houseboat turning jetsam into jewelry), or quirky macabre situations (like Immaculata's hobby of preserving rodents in formaldehyde). Even incidental passages unfold into a wealth of sensation and suggestion. For instance, Dey gets her characters from a houseboat to a beach on Toronto Island as follows:

> [W]e run down to the channel. . . . Some children dance between the cottages in bright raincoats, pockets heavy with water, habitats for fish. Immaculata told me that goldfish grow depending on the space they are accorded. I see the children walking down to the lake and emptying their pockets there, returning day after day to wade into the water and to stroke their giant fish, their hearts swelling and becoming nearly unbearable in their chests.

Dey has revitalized the coming-of-age novel into a touching odyssey in which surreal

experiences, such as aging nine years overnight or "walking a wire that is fastened to nothing but the night air," become accessible via a universal theme: no matter how Dionysian the father figure, he must be overcome. Dey allows us to see growing up as a feat—a stunt—parallel to none.

In *Twenty Miles,* Cara Hedley's narrator, Isabel Norris (Iz), must also transcend the ghost of her father, a hockey star who died at eighteen, leaving her to be raised by her paternal grandparents. Interpolated with third-person passages from the grandmother's point of view, Iz's first-person narrative unfolds chronologically with few flashbacks. The past, however, constantly pulls at the present: Isabel's grandparents started her in hockey to continue their late son's legacy, and Iz now plays for Winnipeg University's hockey team.

The appeal of the game comes across clearly: "The hockey itself was the easy part: hands remembering the story, legs revising, improvising, that self-renewing drama unfolding in the white space between thought, the hard-breath moments when your brain forgets itself and the hands take over." Even more engaging are the finely-drawn portraits of the other women hockey players. Their raunchy colloquialisms and sadistic antics will surprise anyone who assumes that only male jocks revel in scatological humour, public urination, and hazing rituals involving beer bongs.

Yet, an incongruity exists between the coarse subject matter and the lyrical writing style—one that mirrors Iz's internal conflict. Not having chosen the sport, Iz remains distanced from it, observing her teammates' passion without truly sharing it. But the stakes behind the plot's central question—will Iz quit hockey or keep playing?—are not high enough, largely because it does not seem to matter very much to her either way. Iz's confusion and the mixed signals she sends (especially in the romantic subplot) seem to imbue the narrative itself with vacillation, blurring its focus. Despite the great originality and impact of individual scenes and characters, *Twenty Miles* falls short of the move that *Stunt* pulls off so well: making an extraordinary coming-of-age fully available to the average reader.

The Problem With Beauty

Jeanette Lynes

The Aging Cheerleader's Alphabet. Mansfield $14.95

Reviewed by Kelly-Anne Riess

Poet Jeanette Lynes has been called the voice emanating from the hair dryer, and it's a voice that should not be ignored. Lynes' book, *The Aging Cheerleader's Alphabet*, is about a sport riddled with stereotypes. As the speaker, Maud-Lynn Hope, mourns the loss of her beauty, the reader is given the chance to reflect on issues associated with identity, self-image, femininity, and feminism. Hope's ideals of beauty have been defined by the media. She describes herself as the sultry Ann Darrow character in *King Kong*, and has brandished her sexuality over men to get what she wants. But now that she's older, Hope's sexual power is declining, which sends the former cheerleader into crisis. This plot allows Lynes to use Hope to explore society's perceptions of beauty and how women's feelings of self-worth can become wrapped up in those perceptions.

Hope, as a cheerleader, symbolizes ideal beauty, which makes her tragic because her identity and self-worth are tied solely to her looks. She believes only her legs are capable of reason, and this perception of herself is shared by others. People assume Hope is an airhead and a contemporary of Barbie. Those who criticize Hope have forgotten that the feminist movement gave women the choice to be anything, including cheerleaders. The only woman who does not pass judgment on Hope whispers that she always wanted Ken—as if such a desire

has become a dirty secret after second-wave feminism.

Condemning Hope is difficult because she is sadly pathetic, mourning the loss of her sexual power, and because, like some women approaching middle age, she notices a change in how she is treated. The loss of youthful beauty means the loss of one of the few avenues of power that patriarchy has allowed women like Hope. Her story of fleeting beauty is a comment on how appearance is overvalued. Hope centres her entire identity on being a cheerleader. She was proud of her face when it was smooth and of her hair when it was its real colour, though other women seemed to hate her because of it. The opinions of other women did not matter, because Hope had power over men. The boys whistled at her when they drove by in their cars. She could get whatever she wanted with her body. But as this book shows, such powers diminish over time, because women eventually will age and some, like Hope, may lose their identity and purpose when they lose this power. When bombarded by youthful images in the media, it is easy for an older woman like Hope to feel depressed. And while Lynes' book does not offer any solutions to this, one can look at her book as a cautionary tale, warning one not to be so focused on physical appearance.

Diversité culturelle

Clément Moisan
Écritures migrantes et identités culturelles. Nota bene 22,95 $

Nicole Côté, Ellen Chapco, Peter Dorrington et Sheila Petty, dirs.
Expressions culturelles des francophonies. Nota bene 26,95 $

Compte rendu par Jorge Calderón

Écritures migrantes et identités culturelles est une lecture indispensable. Clément Moisan approfondit les points de vue critiques qu'il avait auparavant développés dans *Ces étrangers du dedans*—publié en collaboration avec Renate Hildebrand en 2001. Une fois de plus la question de l'identité est au coeur de la réflexion de Moisan. Il met tout d'abord en relief l'histoire et certaines caractéristiques de l'identité collective au Québec. Ensuite, il retrace l'émergence des problématiques identitaires soulevées dans des oeuvres littéraires écrites par des immigrants de première ou de deuxième génération. Puis il propose une définition des écritures migrantes, fondée principalement sur des facteurs littéraires et non seulement sociopolitiques.

Le dialogue entre une vision relativement homogène de la culture et la mise en évidence de la pluralité des perceptions et des représentations culturelles dans le Québec contemporain est central dans la réflexion de Moisan. Il analyse cette tension à partir de la polémique qui a entouré *L'arpenteur et le navigateur* de Monique LaRue. Moisan démontre qu'une opposition entre les concepts du Même et de l'Autre peut être dépassée par la mise en relation d'une culture fondée sur la tradition et d'un processus de diversification culturelle. D'une part, la continuité et le développement de l'histoire du Québec doivent être reconnus. D'autre part, la prise de conscience des dynamiques interculturelles et transculturelles qui enrichissent le Québec est nécessaire.

Dans cet ordre d'idées, la littérature est un témoin privilégié des échanges et des transformations de la culture. Moisan revient sur le découpage historique proposé dans *Ces étrangers du dedans*. Il rappelle qu'entre 1937 et 1959 il y a une relative unité des voix culturelles au Québec. Ensuite, la culture devient plus polyphonique entre 1960 et 1974. La période commençant en 1975 et se terminant en 1985 est, quant à elle, interculturelle. Enfin, les échanges transculturels sont dominants entre 1986 et 1997. S'il est vrai que les différentes vagues d'immigration au cours du XX^{e} siècle ont eu une grande influence sur la transformation de la littérature et de l'institution québécoises, Moisan souligne l'importance de différencier l'immigration en tant que réalité sociale et les écritures migrantes en tant que phénomène littéraire.

De plus, Moisan met en relief une série de caractéristiques des écritures migrantes. Ces oeuvres racontent une expérience qui a été vécue dans un pays d'origine avant l'immigration au Québec. Elles témoignent également de la réalité du déracinement à travers le récit de l'émigration et de l'immigration. Les écritures migrantes représentent aussi « le devenir québécois », c'est-à-dire qu'en analysant l'adaptation sociale elles mettent en évidence certaines particularités de la culture du Québec. Pour Moisan, l'une des contributions les plus importantes des écritures migrantes concerne leur participation à la diversité culturelle parce qu'elles questionnent le mythe de l'homogénéité identitaire et les fondements de l'imaginaire de la nation.

Le collectif *Expressions culturelles des francophonies* met en parallèle l'étude d'oeuvres littéraires, cinématographiques, et artistiques du Québec, du Canada francophone, de la France, des Antilles et de l'Afrique subsaharienne. Le livre est utile pour les québécistes et les canadianistes qui sont intéressés par une mise en contexte transnationale de la littérature, de l'art, et de la culture. Notons la contribution de François Paré qui analyse la notion d'américanité en fonction du Québec, de l'Acadie et de l'Ontario francophone. Il propose l'hypothèse selon laquelle « [l]es mouvements migratoires et diasporaux qui ont façonné le Canada francophone depuis le XIX^{e} siècle ont désolidarisé les convergences identitaires ». Les conséquences de ces migrations sont, d'une part, « une fracture "ontologique" du sujet minoritaire » et, d'autre part, l'intégration d'une pluralité identitaire qui devient « une condition de réalisation de soi ». Soulignons également le fait que les chapitres écrits par Christine Ramsay sur *Léolo*, François Ouellet sur le cinéma, Lucie Lequin sur l'écriture des femmes et Nicole Côté sur *Le coulonneux* sont particulièrement intéressants.

Vulnerable Bodies

A. Mary Murphy
Shattered Fanatics. Buschek $15.00

Joanne Weber
The Pear Orchard. Hagios $16.95

Margaret Atwood
The Door. McClelland & Stewart $22.99

Reviewed by Antje M. Rauwerda

In one respect, these collections of poems share a similar interest in reflecting on the female body and its vulnerability to its own limits as well as to the effects of time. Murphy writes:

> What a cruel twist it is
> that gives me a body
> that droops and sags and shrivels
> and all too readily harbours fat
> just when it yearns the most
> to be desirable

Meanwhile Atwood, with similar wryness, asks:

> (Could it be that we are the old people
> already?
> Surely not.
> Not with such hats.)

And Weber writes of a couple in which the deaf wife is frustrated: "your anger at your deafness has split our voice." Most simply, these three poets contemplate what it means to live in a body that is not what the mind would have it be. However, in each case, these ruminations on bodily limitations are a backdrop, not a central focus.

Murphy foregrounds the sinister power dynamics inherent in human attraction and its consummation: the menace of "when I write you you are mine" in an early poem becomes a fond recollection of the speaker's father's manipulation of her mother after they first had sex in a much later one "*there / now you'll have to marry me / or I'll tell your dad.*" Murphy's use of the first person throughout the collection lends intimacy to the poems, making them rational confessions to the reader of the madness (sometimes humorous, sometimes devastating) to which the speaker is prey in experiences of love and lust. Her speaker experiences pain and danger as well as the self-conscious silliness that comes with knowing one is playing a part—while old enough to know better—in the cliché that sexual relationships too often turn out to be:

> he looks me straight
> in the breasts
> calls me beautiful
> you are very beautiful
> he tells them

Unlike Murphy, Weber uses extensive allusion in *The Pear Orchard* (the brief explanatory notes at the back are useful). The collection is impressive in scope (poems referring to the ornamentation of medieval French coffins along with contemporary renderings of a farmer and his deaf wife), and still more impressive in its weaving of shared images through these diverse vignettes: the pear orchard as metaphor for the female body, the deaf or intractable wife and the confounded husband, the amber dresses that make wives (medieval, contemporary) velvety and yet again pear-like. Weber tells specific stories in each poem and yet also calls on each poem to interact with others in the collection. Consider, for instance, the complexity and beauty of two poems in juxtaposition: In "Geertgen Tot Sint Jans: The Holy Kinship," Weber writes:

> In this pear orchard, my elongated head
> is an egg wrapped in a green turban.
> . . . . . .
> The mummied egg has a wimple yet,
> the white linen falling down my neck,
> the hills of my amber gown hide
> my spreading buttocks.

The poem refers to a fifteenth-century style of portraiture, but also gives the image of pear orchard, of woman as pear (clad in amber gown), and of woman as both fertile and deaf ("mummied egg"). Sixty pages later is "Thomas Aquinas—Last Words," a poem which illustrates how these images are sustained, are added to the collection's "sub-plot" about a farmer and his deaf wife, and are embedded in a reflection on Aquinas' *Summa*:

> My wife has packed her amber dress in
> the trunk up in the attic,
> for she is wearing her jeans again. It must
> be spring
> for she comes toward me stranded in this
> orchard.
> I see light and air, the scent of pears and
> apples reach me
> . . . . . .
> She holds out another book,
> the Summa, some ancient book
> by some fat monk

Intimate like Murphy and, in places, as allusive as Weber, Atwood's collection is distinct from the others in its specific consideration of what it is to be a poet who is no longer at the beginning, or perhaps even in the middle, of a successful career. Her collection quite explicitly, and elegantly, manipulates the reader by providing an opening section of ten decent but

pedestrian diary-like poems (poems disappointing to an Atwood fan) before launching into a transitional section which explains that *now* "The poet has come back to being a poet / after decades of being virtuous instead." In her third section, Atwood tackles a range of painful issues on large and smaller scales, like global warming ("The Weather") and the psychological damage parents inflict on their children ("The hurt child"). All of this leads to section four, which Atwood opens in dialogue with her readers (and what they might think of her work so far):

> Enough of these discouragements,
> you said. Enough gnawed skulls.
> . . . . . .
> Why can't you tell about flowers?
> But I did tell, I answer.
> . . . . . .
> You didn't want them,
> these pastel flavours.
> You were bored by them.

Section four ends with a poem culminating in lines about what a poet does: "I tell dark stories / before and after they come true." The final section, five, leaves the reader's desires out of things to deal with time and mortality for the individual. It ends with the title poem of the collection, "The Door," which ultimately connotes going through to death. Overall, the collection dramatizes the interplay between poet and reader. Sections one and five open and close with a focus on the poet, but the intervening material shows the conflicts over what it *means* to be a poet, and how the expectations of a readership turns the poet into a voice for its desires. It's clever, and, as one would expect from an established poet well into a successful career, extremely good.

Pionniers à la Martinique

Réal Ouellet

Cet océan qui nous sépare. Les Éditions de la Huit
23 $

Compte rendu par Paul Genuist

Ce roman épistolaire se passe entre 1664 et 1671. Christophe et Élisabeth, jeune couple français de la région nantaise, partent s'installer sur une concession à la Martinique.

Le roman se compose exclusivement des lettres qu'ils échangent avec la mère d'Élisabeth, les amis Béatrice et Maurice, et quelques autres personnages plus épisodiques, puis quand les circonstances les séparent, des lettres que Christophe et Élisabeth s'écrivent.

Amoureux et solidaires, ils confient dans leur correspondance leur émerveillement face aux paysages, à la faune, et à la végétation des Antilles. Dans le dépaysement, face aux difficultés, et sous l'écrasante chaleur des tropiques, ils font preuve de courage et de détermination, portés par l'espoir de réussite qui anime tout pionnier.

Suite au décès de la mère d'Élisabeth, Christophe demande à son beau-père la part d'héritage qui leur revient afin de payer la concession. Outrée de cette initiative maladroite, Élisabeth n'admet pas que son mari prenne une décision qui ne revient qu'à elle et affirme son esprit indépendant : « je ne suis pas votre *femme*, je suis votre *égale* ». De même, quand le frère de Béatrice, jésuite qui ne pense qu'à christianiser les « Sauvages », lui rappelle que le but du mariage est de procréer, elle lui déclare tout net de se mêler de ses affaires.

Plus tard, seule en France où elle est rentrée pour raison de santé, elle administre avec compétence le domaine de son père décédé. Ce n'est donc pas une femme soumise qui suit docilement son mari. Elle agit en personne décidée et libre. Cette attitude féministe n'est pas anachronique car déjà au XVII^{e} siècle, des femmes cultivées

qui donnaient du prix à leur vie discutaient de procréation, du rôle de la femme dans le mariage et la société.

Réal Ouellet écrit ce roman dans un style moderne et dépouillé, il sait établir une complicité entre le lecteur et les correspondants, et traduit également bien l'esprit de l'époque. Le séjour à la Martinique, sur fond de rivalité entre puissances coloniales qui ne pensent qu'à se nuire, occasionne de nombreuses péripéties qui transforment le rêve en cauchemar. Parallèlement, les personnages effectuent un voyage intérieur. L'expérience les a mûris et ils ont perdu l'enthousiasme conquérant du début. Ils jettent sur la vie un regard plus détaché. L'évolution de leur caractère et de leur mentalité permet diverses interprétations.

Four Cassandras

P.K. Page; Arlene Lampert and Théa Gray, eds.
The Essential P.K. Page. The Porcupine's Quill. $12.95

Joanne Page
Watermarks. Pedlar $20.00

Margaret Christakos
What Stirs. Coach House $16.95

Monika Lee
Gravity Loves the Body. Southwestern Ontario Poetry $10.00

Reviewed by Emily Wall

The new collections by poets P.K. Page, Joanne Page, Monika Lee, and Margaret Christakos each provide a vision of the experiences of being a woman. While the poems are wildly different, they fit together in a tapestry of time. Joanne Page looks back for us. Her poems concern themselves with the historical, the literary, and the battles long won or lost for women. Margaret Christakos looks forward. Her poems project us fragmented and flying into an uncertain and dislocating future: a woman spliced by life, media, and the new language of texting. Monika Lee and P.K. Page separately look the present right in the eye, and give us a rich, lyrical vision of a woman's life as it exists now.

Joanne Page's book *Watermarks* is a blizzard of literary allusions. We leap across time and place wildly, moving from Rodin to the Inuit. Page unravels life rules, criticizes the feminist experience, and dismisses entire cultures and belief systems. Snow is her controlling image in these poems, and it's an apt symbol for the entire book: like walking in a blizzard we see outlines, flashes of things, moments of hope, a rope to hold onto, and then we are lost again. "Authority of authorship has a similar/shifting nature blowing, as it were, in the wind." She takes us through a landscape rich but ungraspable as we try to understand the history of women. Her strongest poems come from a sequence about the painter Harriet Clench. These are the only narrative poems in the book, and in reimagining the life of this woman, Page helps us grasp the challenges of our early sisters in feminism. In most other places, we find ourselves walking blindly, hands out, hoping to stumble upon a truth we can touch. What we must learn, in the end, is that the woman, as a concept, is not graspable, even while we admit a desire to do so. Ultimately, there is no getting to know the speaker of this collection; she's half-hidden behind a shelf of books, buried in a still-life painting, briefly outlined in a prairie blizzard.

Margaret Christako's book *What Stirs* is a postmodern frenzy of images and dislocations. If Joanne Page takes us through the past, Christakos is taking us into the future. The women in her text are blinded and silenced by a deafening cacophony of multimedia references, white noise, and the hundred distractions of family, work, television, internet, and texting. The language itself mirrors the chaos of this world: there are few periods, random capitalizations, much white space, language splicing, and

some text talk: "Sorry wrecked everything with rancor All/ 4 now—." While her poems make us breathless and certainly avoid any trite sentiments or clichés, the book is ultimately unsatisfying. It makes a strong statement about the world we live in, but it is a single statement, made repeatedly. After reading two or three poems, the mind wanders, aches to land on a single image, and laments the rejected tradition of storytelling. This is a book of chaos and ultimately one that gives us snippets of a fragmented, pasted-together woman, but not one we can truly recognize or understand in our own experiences. Reading this book is exhausting and dislocating—intellectually interesting, but ultimately emotionally unsatisfying.

Monika Lee's book *Gravity Loves the Body* is a beautiful counterpoint to that of Christakos and Page. In her collection, we look at the immediate, the *right this very instant* living of a woman. Lee is our present voice. This book offers us rich, tactile images of a woman, mother, and lover: "[w]e are the petals of one flower." Lee never strays into easy summary or sentimentality. She refuses to hide behind language or obscure literary allusions. Lee takes us on a wide sweep of experiences to explore what it means to be a woman. Along with her, we nurse a baby in the bath, visit Marrakech, and lose a mother to death. Her humor, wit, and unflinching view make us trust her, and want to live in the richness of this book as long as possible.

P.K. Page's book *The Essential P.K. Page* is a selection of her poetry from earlier books. Like any selected collection, it's not possible to see the book *as a book*, but as a vision of this poet's life work. As the oldest poet among the group, Page offers us a rich mix of searching and finding. She doesn't stray into easy answers, but she doesn't duck the questions, either. Her poems are the most balanced of the four poets. Her poem "Beside You" is both a lament and a celebration of the sexual life of a woman:

> My body flowers
> in blossoms
> that will fall
> petal by petal
> all the days of my life.

With a few simple images Page gives us both lament and hope. Like the others, she avoids simplification of womanhood.

While the four writers offer visions of the world women live in, Lee and P.K. Page are the most successful. All four remind us that it's impossible to pin down the experience of being a woman, but Lee is the only one willing to look at it head-on. Page is the only one who remembers her audience, and understands that we come to her book with our hands wide open, hoping to be filled.

Cause for Inspiration

Elise Partridge
Chameleon Hours. Anansi $18.95

Erín Mouré
O Cadoiro. Anansi $16.95

Fred Wah
Sentenced to Light. Talonbooks $29.95

Barbara Nickel
Domain. Anansi $18.95

Reviewed by Jason Ranon Uri Rotstein

The four books under review demonstrate the diversity of Canadian poetry being written today and give much cause for rejoicing. Roughly what is at stake in each of these documents of artistic delineation is the course for inspiration and the continuous journey to locate ever more appropriate vehicles for the release of our most passionate inner convictions.

Elise Partridge seems like a veteran of the poetry game, though *Chameleon Hours* is only her second collection. She is a force that Canadians cannot afford to ignore any longer. Such is clear from the extolments by Robert

Pinsky of Partridge's poetry in national American newspaper columns. Many of Partridge's poems from this collection have been previously published in the best venues here as well as abroad, in the US and the UK—and as will be made clear—with reason.

Throughout this volume where Partridge uses poetry to work through, enable, and explain her own thoughts on life, death, and illness and come to terms with her own battle with cancer, there is a remarkable maintenance of equilibrium. The careful selection of material ensures the prepossession toward the human need for stability, envisioned or embodied for Partridge in the use of poetic form. There can never be any question in this volume of Partridge's labour, her determination of will, the fastening of the will to the poet's task. And together with an incredible distinction of craftsmanship, of mastery and devotion to the form, Partridge's poetry also features the successful integration of demotic language, such that these poems can be enjoyed both for their use of form and for their enjoyment as ordinary life-affirming poems. In "Crux," an exemplary poem in the collection, "the seamless weave of the spider's web" becomes a metaphor for Partridge's practising of her art. She contemplates "sweeping down to save the spider teetering on the edge," the life of the spider tied irrevocably to portentousness, a symbol of luck as the role of saviour in the life of David in the Bible—and for the speaker we must presume as well:

> Self-possessed, idling, calm
> riding out every quiver
> the spider perched at the rim.
> What should the witness do?
> Should I, like God, swoop down,
> with capable hands arrange
> some culpable mercy?
> Or not intervene (like Him)?

It would seem that Partridge has found the perfect voice for chronicling the most difficult subject matter.

Again and even more so in Erin Mouré's *O Cadoiro* do we experience the refreshing complement of a poet infinitely rooted to her subject. Where Mouré's project of "translating" "medieval Iberian songbooks, written in Galician-Portuguese," might seem dry and academic, she does an admirable job winning readers by performing an amicable turn for these "forgotten classics"—much as Paul Muldoon has done for Irish language translation—drawing out new material and taking liberties with translation for the brokering of new inventiveness in poetry translation. Mouré's imagination and word profusion tend to run away with her as in her postface on her critical approach to the project—"They are fount for my own inventions and coalects, which are but small plaints rustlings, a *ruxarruxe*, an *altermundismo* or 'otherworld-wantingness'" and so on—she has nonetheless found a voice in this alternative pre-modern lyric tradition, of recording beautiful Galician cavatinas and making her poetry matter most.

All of these poems are untitled but numbered with original authorial attributions. This one is by Ayras Nunes Clerigo: "Does a flower sleep? / Does a branch, touched once by the bird, tremble? / I wish at times I could be touched by / sleep, that I could // forget[.]" Most interesting is the "improvised" spelling and unusual punctuation that give these poems the sense of being a part of a larger "work in progress."

Fred Wah's *Sentenced to Light* focuses not on the inspiration found in older poetic traditions but on the hidden or unspoken language implicit in visual media. All of the poems in this collection in one sense or another are countenanced or precipitated by the visual image and relish the interconnectedness or the evolving dialogue between word and image as experienced uniquely on the page. Many of these "projects" are fascinating, provocative, even inspiring, and are best read perhaps as "*gedanken*-experiments."

Particularly stimulating is the project "Sentenced to Light," a series of prose-poem sentences that write or rewrite the language of the spaces "enclosed" or "disclosed" in the Mexican photography of Eric Jervaise. This example gives a good sense of Wah's way of working: "Yours faithfully waits for a verb to fall graze grampa skin to touch or curb the chord guilty of a broken string Christ it's true five fingers bleeding in the dark / room of history always after the harsh reminder that *Attentamente*! signs off until the continuous will have been stopped for the old man's idea to be perfect." Even in this example one has the sense of Wah's effort to catch inspiration in its everyday-ness at its most raw and vital.

Barbara Nickel's *Domain* is perhaps the most removed of the collections under review, though you wouldn't know it from the titles of the poems in the volume. The collection is divided into sequences entitled "Master Bedroom," "Girl's Room," "Living Room," "Utility Room," "Kitchen," "Boy's Room," and "Storage Room." All of this sounds very familiar, but it is perhaps the intensely personal nature of the narratives that Nickel discloses in this volume that will both repel and attract readers in equal measure. There is a real eeriness and starkness to her visuals that while somewhat difficult to get in to, reverberate in memory. "Climbing" is certainly a poem that will remind many of Gregory Orr's own famous/infamous mordant poem "A Litany":

> My sister fracturing a slope of snow
> with her fall. Minutes ago her bone was
> whole:
> we wanted to summit. X-rays won't show
> tips white and distant, afternoon-lit. Her
> howl.
> The helicopter took her. I was left
> holding a sleeve. Alone, I folded up
> the sky, she descended to stone; lifting
> her wrist, impossible at first. Nerve-sleep.
> Then speaks in twitches. I can feel the
> ridge
> under skin of metal that will outlive her,
> see the summer night she wakes and rides
> the tingle of a healing line, the scar
> she's climbing with a fingertip to numb
> terrain, receding down the slope again.

Representing Wilderness Travel

Raymond Murray Patterson; Richard C. Davis, ed.
Nahanni Journals: R.M. Patterson's 1927-1929 Journals. U of Alberta P $29.95

Andrew Gow and Julie Rak, eds.
Mountain Masculinity: The Life and Writing of Nello "Tex" Vernon-Wood in the Canadian Rockies 1906-1938. AU $29.95

A.L. Karras and Olaf Hanson
Northern Rover: The Life Story of Olaf Hanson. AU $29.95

Reviewed by Paul Huebener

In *Nahanni Journals*, Raymond M. Patterson's personal travel journals from 1927-1929 are published for the first time. Patterson, a privileged English bank clerk who moved to Canada in 1924 to pursue adventure, is best known for his book *The Dangerous River*, which recounts his travels by foot and canoe along the Northwest Territories' remote Nahanni River, near the Yukon and British Columbia borders. As editor Richard C. Davis points out, Patterson's daily journals record a very different perspective on these travels, possessing "an appealing immediacy and emotional honesty not found in *The Dangerous River*, which was written more than a quarter-century after the fact." Through the journals, Patterson comes across less as a dominant hero of the wilderness and more as an inexperienced adventurer who, addressing the entries to his mother, marvels at the sight of moose calves and the northern lights even while he struggles to fend off mosquitoes and portage a canoe. In Davis' words, the journals anticipate "the values of today's ecotourists who seek recreation and communion,

rather than conquest, when they travel the Nahanni."

Davis' extensive introductory material delves into the context and history of Patterson's writings, and highlights how the journals reveal certain elements of *The Dangerous River* to be fabrications; while *The Dangerous River*'s Patterson completes the treacherous solo journey to Virginia Falls (alas, forgetting his camera), the journals' Patterson reaches only within earshot of the falls, and, frustrated by difficult terrain and dwindling supplies, is forced to turn back to seek a travelling companion. Davis' editorial choices in transcribing the unpolished journal entries are conscientious but unobtrusive, and, as with the two other works reviewed here, interspersed black and white photographs are welcome additions. The journal entries themselves, which Patterson accurately admits "are all much the same—got up, travelled & went to bed," are nevertheless intriguing in terms of the literary construction of wilderness travel experience, and will hold special significance for scholars of *The Dangerous River*.

Mountain Masculinity is a collection of stories by Nello Vernon-Wood, an English-born gentleman who, after moving to Canada in 1903, redefined himself as "Tex," a pragmatic, uncultured hunting guide in the Canadian Rockies. The stories, which originally appeared in sports hunting and fishing magazines in the 1930s, recount Tex's experiences helping wealthy tourists hunt sheep and bears in the wilderness outside of Banff. The brief commentary that introduces each story highlights the construction of what editors Andrew Gow and Julie Rak call "mountain masculinity," a set of hunting skills and sporting attitudes by which Tex measures his clients (interestingly, the hunters' wives sometimes achieve the required masculinity while the men complain about wet socks).

Tex writes in exaggerated colloquialisms, revelling in his own constructed persona: "I've quit arguing with any pilgrim that wants to tell me how to hunt. The thing to do is give 'em their own way, until they see that it ain't putting any meat in the pot, or helping the taxidermists to earn an honest dollar. They will come around then and give my system a whirl." And yet, as Gow and Rak suggest, while his exaggerated style "might have led some clients to think that Tex had always been a frontiersman," it simultaneously "'winks' at an audience which was expected to enjoy the conceit." What is more, a few of the stories—what Gow and Rak call the "straight" pieces—are written entirely in the voice of a well-educated Englishman. Sighting a ram, Tex (or rather, Vernon-Wood) writes: "*O. canadensis*, grace and poise in every line of him, head held regally, standing nonchalantly on the edge of a sheer chasm, is a sight for the gods." Readers may not have the patience for all twenty-five of Tex's repetitious "yarns of the wilderness," but as Gow and Rak rightly point out, the value of his writings lies in his revealing, and partially mocking, constructions of the dwindling wild Canadian Rockies and the sporting, self-sufficient outdoors people worthy of inhabiting them.

Northern Rover is the biographical account of Olaf Hanson, a Norwegian-born Canadian who, from 1919 to 1970, lived and worked in northeastern Saskatchewan as a trapper, fisherman, prospector, provincial game guardian, and road surveyor. A.L. Karras, relying on Hanson's notes and memories, wrote the manuscript in the 1980s, though neither man lived to see it in print. And because Karras narrates Hanson's story in the first person, authorship is difficult to pin down—whose thoughts are we hearing, exactly? At the same time, the memoirs are related in hindsight with many years, even decades, separating the events from the telling. As a result, the highly experienced narrator maintains a distanced perspective on the young Hanson's trials, and one

wonders how Hanson, like R.M. Patterson, might come across differently in his own daily journals, if they exist. The minimal editorial commentary leaves plenty of room for such questions.

Still, Hanson's reminiscences, which shift from heroic feats of strength over muskeg portages, to genuine wilderness survival tips, to partial remorse over the use of leg-hold traps and the selling of live bear cubs, are fascinating in their description of a changing boreal culture and wilderness. During the Great Depression, Hanson spends months trapping and fishing on unmapped lakes, out of contact with the "outside" world, unaware that collapsing markets have rendered his work financially untenable. Describing Hanson's reaction to seeing the region's first aerial maps, Karras writes, "The North as I knew it lost some of its enchantment for after that when I travelled I knew what to expect before I got there." And years later, Hanson marvels at the holiday vehicles and pleasure boats lining up along the highway that bears his name. Hanson's story, Anthony Gulig writes in a brief introduction, "is as much a coming-of-age story for the author as it is for the province about which he writes." Given the question of who this "author" is, the book will also prove valuable for those interested in the politics of biographical representation and wilderness writing.

Unir ailleurs. Être ici

Dany Plourde
Calme aurore (s'unir ailleurs, du napalm plein l'oeil). L'Hexagone 16,95 $

Paul Savoie
Crac. David 15,00 $

Compte rendu par Émilie Théorêt

S'unir ailleurs, parce qu'avec le recul on se voit enfin. Parce que pour trouver son unité, il faut dépasser les luttes extérieures, sortir hors des revendications étudiantes ou de celles du pays à faire, aller en soi.

Calme aurore, de Dany Plourde, par l'absence du *je,* témoigne d'une recherche de soi. Cette poésie en prose prend la forme de blocs troués par les blancs du sujet. Elle n'est qu'action, une action désespérante parce que dépossédée de soi, celle d'un étudiant revendiquant à bout de voie et d'un poète devenu clown de service.

Il faut quitter ce référentiel, l'effet autobiographique qui, comme pour arrimer le sujet au réel, empêche l'incursion dans l'ailleurs. Les deux parties centrales, plus près du vers libre, traduisent un détachement, permettent au sujet lyrique de lâcher un peu prise et d'aller de l'avant dans son voyage intérieur. Le récit s'achemine littéralement vers un autre lieu, en Corée, où l'Autre, la femme aimée, permettra l'unité. « Du napalm plein l'oeil », le regard ne peut désormais se diriger que vers l'intériorité.

Il faut aller plus loin que les mots pour se trouver et enfin pouvoir y revenir. Le retour au pays, dans la trame narrative (deux dernières parties), s'accorde d'ailleurs avec un retour au style plus prosaïque. L'incursion du poète ne révèle-t-elle pas la nécessité du poème—tel un « pied de biche qui écartille »—dans la reconnaissance de soi, du peuple et ultimement du pays. Lorsque le poète se reconnaît lui-même, ailleurs, il peut revenir au soleil, s'unir et donner à lire son verbe nouveau, afin d'offrir un rayon

d'aurore et l'espoir d'une unité à venir.

Crac, de Paul Savoie, présente une autre forme d'incursion, plus métaphorique. Le recueil convie à ce voyage en trois étapes à l'intérieur d'un monde virtuel et monstrueux qui happe et dépersonnalise.

« Bas-fonds » illustre l'enlisement du sujet dans ce trou noir, qui aspire dans une eau sans fond; un dédale bruyant d'assonances qui sucent, fouettent et claquent, traduisant le bruit de cette dispersion en eaux troubles. « Écran », surface lisse sur laquelle il faut surfer, fait nettement référence à l'univers virtuel des nouvelles technologies. Celui dans lequel on est attiré malgré soi, celui d'une indifférenciation, d'une perte des sens et du corps.

« Crac », c'est la fissure finale dans cet écran trompeur, qui déracine et uniformise. On assiste alors à la lutte du sujet qui crie enfin pour se dépêtrer de ce trou bleu qui l'enrobe et l'insensibilise. Le sujet réaffirme sa personnalité par un retour à ses racines traditionnelles : aux « images virtuelles / sur vos écrans », il oppose « un *réel* / plus réel » (nous soulignons). Par le joual et les références historiques et culturelles (« messe du dimanche », « c'te fameuse bataille-là / sur ces maudites plaines », « mon pays n'est pas un hiver » . . .), il réaffirme les frontières abolies et s'enracine comme *être* dans un lieu délimité: « je suis ici / je demeure ».

Centenary Complexities

Mary Henley Rubio
Lucy Maud Montgomery: The Gift of Wings. Doubleday $39.95

Jean Mitchell, ed.
Storm And Dissonance: L. M. Montgomery and Conflict. Cambridge Scholars US$59.99

Reviewed by Sean Somers

Mary Henley's Rubio's biography is enjoyably extensive and exhaustive in its treatment of the perennial Canadian icon, Lucy Maud Montgomery. Although beginning with Montgomery's own caveat against biographies—that they are a "screaming farce"—Rubio nonetheless sets out to chart the progress of a brilliant author whose novels were both salve and curse in the dynamic of her prodigious imagination. As Rubio relates, Montgomery's life story elicits the same range of emotions as do many of her heroines. Scholarly and readable, this book's detailed considerations of Montgomery and her milieu are balanced and sensitive in their composite image of a woman who, too often, is made to coalesce with her fictions. As both documenter and interpreter, Rubio never trails off into an absinthe-trip amongst some supposed green fairies of Montgomery's kindred other-world. And, at the same time, she does not enact some cynical slaying of all the sentimentality connected to Montgomery, just for the sake of providing a counter to the rather twee images to be found on postage stamps. Overall, Rubio's work demonstrates, compellingly, just the kind of depth and exactness of results that can emerge from decades of scholarly inquiry; and this is the level of dedication that Rubio has very evidently invested. Thus, it is difficult to imagine a richer, or more complete, project that will ever surpass *The Gift of Wings*. For her efforts, Rubio was a finalist for the British Columbia National Award for Canadian Non-Fiction.

There is an evident timeliness to this publication: 2008 marked the centenary celebration of the publication of *Anne of Green Gables*, a literary landmark whose reception history has increased, rather than shrunk, in breadth and complexity. Of course, the global reach of Anne's red plaits is well known; and there is nothing like a one-hundred-year anniversary to create energetic ripples of attention. For example, in 2008 NHK Television in Japan broadcasted, on multiple occasions, a commemorative documentary, entitled *Yokoso! An no sekai e*, as well as a three-month-long series of ESL lessons, with the novel as the pedagogical focus. In Korean, a lavish edition of *Ppalgangmeori Anne* (a translation based on the original English text, rather than Muraoka's Japanese, as had been the case in previous efforts) has enjoyed considerable sales. In this climate of receptively good-wishes the world over, Rubio has stepped in to the necessary seriousness that will underscore the more excitable treatments. Alongside the lovely, yet somehow stale, pastoral images appearing on postcards, *The Gift of Wings* provides pages of informative liveliness for the occasion, revealing most fully a Canadian novelist who was "addicted to asking 'what if?'"

The biography, on the whole, follows a pattern based on the chronological transitions of Montgomery's life in terms of geographical relocation. Although evocatively described, PEI, as the locale of Montgomery's enduring imagination, figures prominently only in the first two chapters. Much of Montgomery's time, as we perhaps tend to forget, was spent on the hard-cobbled Canadian mainland, with varying degrees of urbane ambitions. To contextualize her multi-spatial analysis, Rubio draws our attention continually to the specific socio-cultural nuances that defined the norms of appearance and expectations for each location, taking us from reedy neo-Scottish villages to a robust Toronto preparing for the Second World War.

Throughout these scenic transfer—and Rubio's versatile prose contours them well—a persistent theme does reveal itself: Montgomery's readership must recognize the complexity that informs this author's oeuvre. Imaginative capabilities, torrential inner feelings, and palpable difficulties continually marked Montgomery's life. To make this apparent, Rubio's comprehensive knowledge of Montgomery's *Journals*, which she edited with Elizabeth Waterston, allows her to skilfully intersperse private premonitions with public events. Certainly, this biography will put to rest any lingering stereotypes of Montgomery's life as that of a matronly appendage, busily fiddling only with pinafored virtues and freckled duties in a never-endingly bare, Victorian domesticity.

What has aroused considerable attention in the Canadian media is speculation about Montgomery's possible suicide. An embittered note, possibly expressing a death wish, has elicited much discussion and apprehension since Kate Macdonald Butler disclosed it to the *The Globe and Mail* in September 2008. On this distressing account, Rubio perhaps most deftly displays her biographical skills: she handles this topic, which remains open to debate, with admirable care and delicacy, never descending into analytical psychology, but using the question to raise further queries about mental illness, Canadian society, and the pathologization of women's psyches in Montgomery's era and beyond. In tones of triumph and tragedy, Rubio brings a level of assessment that Montgomery has long deserved.

While Rubio explores Montgomery's life and society, Jean Mitchell has assembled a compellingly diverse group of essays that explore the complexities of Montgomery's works, in her edited collection, *Storm and Dissonance: L. M. Montgomery and Conflict*. Mitchell has brought together many prominent Montgomery scholars, impressive in the range of their critical methods

and perspectives, for a roundtable discussion that provides constant surprises, including penetrating essays by Carole Gerson, Margaret Doody, and Benjamin Lefebvre, to name only a few. Gathered on a common theme of discord and dichotomy as multivalent tensions that complicate our readings of Montgomery, the articles here challenge superficial tendencies to read into Montgomery's work simplistic moralities or domestic identities.

Increasingly, English departments are compiling introductory literary studies courses that combine close reading of primary texts with disciplinary critical studies. This volume provides an intriguing array of research viewpoints that demonstrate the variety of explorations that Montgomery's invite for researchers. To cite one example, Susan Meyer's essay, "The Fresh Air Controversy," examines how the *Emily* novels invoke common-sense platitudes about health, well-being, and the blessings of fresh air and exercise. Much like *The Secret Garden*, Montgomery's novels do maintain a certain emphasis on nature as having sanative properties. Meyer connects this kind of rhetoric of *fresh air* to medical discourses about illness and enclosed household spaces, as popularized in hygiene pamphlets of the time.

Both students and seasoned Montgomery scholars will delight in the thought-provoking research perspectives that these authors undertake. Certain quibbles might be raised as to the cost *vis-à-vis* the production quality of this volume—an issue for the publisher rather than the editor—but Mitchell's assemblage is certainly one of the most comprehensive gatherings of scholarly investigations on Montgomery to date.

Defeat at Dien Bien Phu

Raymond Souster, with Les Green
What Men Will Die For. Battered Silicon Dispatch Box $30.00

Reviewed by Marlene Briggs

Twentieth-century military history fascinates Raymond Souster: his distinguished career as a poet highlights his abiding interest in combat. His lyrics recall the First World War (1914-1918), notably his father's participation in the infamous battle of Passchendaele with the Royal Canadian Field Artillery. In turn, Souster served in the ground crew of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) during the Second World War (1939-1945). This formative experience inspired his association with two books on the RCAF and its contribution to World War II, namely *On Target: A Novel* (1972) and, with Douglas Alcorn, *From Hell to Breakfast* (1980). Souster subsequently published a long poem, *Jubilee of Death: The Raid on Dieppe* (1984), concerning the disastrous Allied invasion of occupied France by his Canadian contemporaries. Recently, despite failing health, he completed *What Men Will Die For* with the assistance of neighbour Leslie Green.

What Men Will Die For: A Docu-Poem in Many Voices of the First Vietnam (French Indo-China) War concentrates on the legendary siege of Dien Bien Phu (1954) that resulted in the defeat of French Union forces by the League for the Independence of Vietnam (Viet Minh). While Canada plays a negligible role in this study of the Asian Pacific theatre during the Cold War, the battle warrants widespread attention. The victory of Communist units at Dien Bien Phu galvanized international anti-colonial struggles, only to culminate in the protracted Vietnam War (1959-1975). Souster and Green generate an absorbing chronicle of important events, diligently plotting political manoeuvres and tactical

operations in Indochina based on available sources. In this wry documentary poem, empirical research and linear chronology displace formal experimentation and figurative expression. Regrettably, the book stresses factual information rather than critical interpretation, which may limit its audience to fellow military enthusiasts.

This populist work on Vietnam charts the decline of French imperialism in five parts, from 1861 to 1954; it features four maps and a bibliography. Nearly fifty voices enrich the cast of historical actors, including commanders Vo Nguyen Giap and Henri Navarre, as well as leaders Ho Chi Minh and Dwight D. Eisenhower. Despite a dearth of accessible sources by the Viet Minh, Souster aims to dramatize both sides of the conflict. As in *Jubilee of Death*, he fashions colloquial first-person speeches from addresses, conversations, diaries, letters, manuals, and memoirs. He also introduces a speaker, "The Author as Amateur Historian," whose explanatory surveys of the action occasionally draw attention to dubious claims or gaps in the record. Long verse lines facilitate narrative momentum while the juxtaposition of eyewitness accounts by civilians and combatants, superiors and subordinates, and imperialists and insurgents fosters a cumulative awareness of historical irony.

What Men Will Die For offers a compelling depiction of the desperate conditions in the doomed French garrison at Dien Bien Phu. The underground hospital, where hundreds of casualties lie exposed to the elements, subject to deadly infections and enemy assaults, is overwhelming in its squalor and suffering. Major Grauwin, M.D., sustained by cigarettes and cognac, works around the clock in his bloody apron, exemplifying heroic endurance. Geneviève de Galard, an air transport nurse and the lone female voice in the book, receives the *Croix de Guerre* for her tireless efforts to minister to men mutilated by aerial bombing, hand-to-hand combat, and heavy artillery. In a compassionate bid to transcend the hostilities, Dr. Grauwin and his Viet Minh counterpart plan to coordinate care of the wounded after the cease-fire. This retrospective account champions the humanism of medical officers: the urgent needs of dying men outweigh imperialist self-justifications and anti-colonial grievances.

The conclusion of the poem laments unsung voices from both camps in accord with Souster's condemnation of "the supreme uselessness and stupidity of war." Yet material concerns and precise contexts complicate this general theme of futility. Despite its conventional approach to the fortifications, operations, and weapons of war, *What Men Will Die For* is a powerful indictment of colonialism. The clash of armies and ideologies in Europe and Asia exposes the contradictory logic of empire: French forces mobilized colonial troops to defend their occupation while decrying the ingenuity of their Vietnamese adversaries. Moreover, the carnage at Dien Bien Phu illuminates the unresolved legacies of the World Wars. Authorities preoccupied by the humiliation of France during the Vichy regime (1940-1944) prohibited surrender under fire but paradoxically withheld vital support in Indochina. Notwithstanding summary judgments on the deplorable waste of war, Souster and Green effectively reconstruct a specific turning point in military history. In the process, they stimulate worthwhile reflection on the complex dynamics of historical trauma that shaped the battle of Dien Bien Phu and its divisive aftermath.

Deux textes formalistes et poétiques

Denis Thériault
Le facteur émotif. XYZ 18,00 $

Hervé Bouchard
Parents et amis sont invités à y assister. Drame en quatre tableaux avec six récits au centre. Le Quartanier 18,95 $

Compte rendu par Virginie Doucet

Le nouveau roman de Denis Thériault, *Le facteur émotif*, ne décevra pas ceux qui avaient été séduits par l'écriture forte et imaginative de *L'iguane*, premier ouvrage de Thériault, couvert de prix lors de sa sortie (les prix France-Québec Jean-Hamelin 2001 et Anne-Hébert 2002, ainsi qui le prix Odyssée 2002 du premier ouvrage littéraire).

Cette fois, il met en scène un personnage adulte, Bilodo, un facteur solitaire et curieux. Comme d'autres regardent des téléromans pour meubler leur vie esseulée, lui ouvre en cachette les lettres personnelles qu'il doit livrer. Les échanges épistolaires des autres comblent sa vie trop ordinaire, en particulier les échanges entre Gaston Grandpré et Ségolène, une belle Guadeloupéenne dont il s'éprend secrètement. Grandpré et l'institutrice de Pointe-à-Pitre s'échangent des haïkus, ces courts poèmes japonais de trois vers, qui chavirent le jeune facteur. Le jour où le vrai destinataire des poèmes de Ségolène meurt devant ses yeux, Bilodo comprend que, pour ne pas perdre les précieux envois de Ségolène, il n'a d'autres choix que de se faire passer pour son correspondant jusqu'à prendre littéralement sa place.

D'une écriture simple et habile, Denis Thériault nous fait vivre l'enivrement poétique de son facteur émotif, dans ce second roman où les thèmes du double et du temps circulaire nous entraînent dans le tourbillon de « la boucle maudite ».

> Tourbillonnant comme l'eau
> contre le rocher
> le temps fait des boucles

Dans *Parents et amis sont invités à y assister* d'Hervé Bouchard, le travail sur la forme atteint un autre niveau. Comparé à Ducharme et Beckett, Bouchard nous invite à entrer dans un monde étrange où les mots parlent autrement : « Veuve et mère manchée dans sa vieille robe en bois d'esseulée, d'évorée, de maison, bouche au centre, un évier blanc au ventre et tout le jauni des années dans la tête malgré ce qu'elle voit et qui là la corrompt. Sa robe changeant de couleur au gré de son humeur et de celle d'un qu'on ne voit pas. » Ce *drame en quatre tableaux avec six récits au centre* est impossible à résumer. Disons simplement que la veuve Manchée a perdu son mari Beaumont, celui-ci laissant six orphelins de père numérotés de un à six dont doit prendre soin la nouvelle veuve avec l'aide de ses multiples soeurs, d'un prêtre à la langue coupée, et de l'épisodique Laurent Sauvé. Ce drame où les personnages se confondent et se multiplient parle de la mort et de la difficulté à l'exprimer, comme dans ce passage où la veuve Manchée crie sa souffrance : « Ça veut dire que nous parlons trop et que les mots nous enferment. Est-ce que je suis bien au centre? Les paroles, c'est tout ce que nous avons, je dis les paroles, et ce sont des gaz qui empestent la place. »

La voix puissante et unique d'Hervé Bouchard et son univers étonnant nous happent et nous ressortons de cette lecture épuisés mais admiratifs.

L'épaisseur d'un lieu

Louis-Jean Thibault
Reculez falaise. Noroît 18,95 $

Compte rendu par Emmanuel Bouchard

Pointer du doigt « le centre de gravité » de ce recueil place le lecteur devant une alternative : la ville de Québec, représentée dans ses endroits les mieux et les moins connus, ou le poète, foyer et objet d'une

observation minutieuse et pénétrante. Il se peut que la force de l'oeuvre se trouve précisément dans le mouvement de va-et-vient entre le « dehors » et le « dedans ». Car si le parcours présenté dans *Reculez falaise*, finement illustré par les photographies d'Yves Laroche, parvient à « découper l'espace au millimètre près », cette topographie, quand elle n'est pas simplement miroir de la vie intime, conditionne réellement l'observateur dans ses errances affectives ou existentielles. « Le moi est une question de pente et de climat », lit-on au début de « Stadaconé », un poème où se manifeste clairement la relation entre l'homme et son milieu. Dans « Parc Montmorency », c'est le fleuve, évoqué dans d'autres textes, dont le très beau « Musée de la civilisation », qui s'offre au promeneur couché « sous les arbres » : « Le fleuve à ses pieds est une lente respiration d'oiseaux / endormis dans les feuillages et le temps, un souffle plus large, / plus profond, dans lequel se noie et renaît toujours son propre souffle. » Portée par un rythme ample, soutenu et sans lourdeur, cette poésie invite à une contemplation active : celle d'un lieu, dans toute l'épaisseur qu'en révèle un regard sensible et profondément humain.

Full Time Soccer

Alan Twigg

Full Time: A Soccer Story. McClelland & Stewart $32.99

Reviewed by Laurie Ricou

As in so many sports books, the proposition that (my) sport equals life turns, feints, and sprints down the length of *Full Time*. But the title highlights a distinctive feature of the analogy that bewilders soccer culture—or football (as Twigg would prefer us to call it). Unlike most sports on a clock, or games such as baseball where full time depends solely on the score (and in principle may be infinite), football is on a clock (90 minutes playing time) that is *never* respected. The clock is invisible. Full time is indeterminate and the blowing of the final whistle happens arbitrarily and subject to the inscrutable whim of the referee.

Hence, full time is a surprise. The idea is varied throughout the book. Twigg, a youth player who returns to the game in middle age, keeps finding surprise in what he thought he knew all along. Footballers have stable marriages. Joy depends on experiment. Chemotherapy for one player with leukemia could become a "team effort" for the full squad. And the surprise toward which the whole book moves is that an over-50 and over the hill team from Vancouver, the Legends, would travel around the world to play exhibition games in Spain. They were surprised that the teams they played against were far younger, and more fiercely competitive than promised or expected.

Then I was surprised—even as a coach of girls and women's soccer for 30 years—that one of my soccer dads made it into the book (in a very moving story) along with the daughter I coached. Twigg illustrates the vitality of surprise by telling of his goal-keeper, who at least once a game must carry the ball to near centre before kicking it. "A circus act without a tent" Twigg exults. Maybe, too, the form of his book (a collage of e-mails, imagined letters, bizarre dialogues, and not quite completely incongruous digressions) is an experiment in surprise.

In his foreword, Twigg announces that "Canada doesn't have any serious soccer books." Almost true, I think, but despite its status as children's title, Twigg's allusion to Inuit games suggests he might have cited Michael Kusugak's *Northern Lights: The Soccer Trails* (1993) as Canada's best soccer book to date. As in other contexts, Canada is on the fringe in the world of football. We the nice guys are surprised, with Twigg, that the pick-up team of Spaniards has little wish for sportsmanship. And Twigg's book

begins in a modest way to issue a Canadian passport to the world of the world's most popular sport.

Friendships and Discoveries

Samantha Warwick
Sage Island. Brindle & Glass $19.95

Marina Endicott
Good to a Fault. Freehand $25.95

Reviewed by Lee Baxter

Set in the Roaring Twenties, *Sage Island* depicts glimpses of America during the Prohibition and the changing attitudes amongst the younger generation after World War One. Based on the 1927 Wrigley Ocean Marathon, Samantha Warwick has meticulously researched everything from the contestants to 1920's swim coaches' techniques and the wool bathing suits worn by the swimmers, and has created genuine characters in the process.

Nineteen-year-old Savana "Savi" Mason feeling the urgent need to vindicate herself for her perceived failures in swimming, leaves New York un-chaperoned to swim the Wrigley Ocean Marathon—a twenty-two-mile race from Santa Catalina Island to Los Angeles. As Savi trains to acclimatize her body to the cold waters she recalls her moments of defeat that have led her to Catalina Island—failure to make the 1924 Paris Olympic Swim Team, failure to be the first woman to swim the English Channel, and failure to keep her handsome rich boyfriend—all of which she blames on her rival, Trudy Ederle. But more importantly, Savi can no longer stand being hidden in her older brother's shadow. Savi, believing that the only way for her to change her luck and her world is to win the marathon, is willing to endure the ridicule of traveling and staying alone as she trains in the cold water off of the coast.

On her first day on the island Savi meets Sol, whom she takes an instant dislike to. Part of Savi's dislike for Sol has to do with rumours that he was once a respected doctor in a big city but had to leave because of a "botched job." Yet, Savi is eventually forced to rely on Sol's help in order to have a chance at winning. Sol has his own secrets and, like Savi, tends to remain aloof from others. The two form an unlikely friendship that leads Savi to ask important questions about herself and her life as she swims to become the first woman to win the Wrigley Marathon.

Inspired by her own love for swimming Warwick's first novel *Sage Island* beautifully captures the passion and sense of freedom swimming offers to those who love the sport. As a swimmer myself, Warwick's ability to capture the random thoughts and feeling of just "being" that a swimmer has while in the water is wonderful. Warwick's poetical use of words engulfs one in the fluid motions of a graceful well-trained swimmer from the beginning to the end of the novel.

In *Good to a Fault*, one wrong turn causes Clara Purdy to crash not only into a car but straight into the lives of the family in the other car. Trying to alleviate her guilt for causing the accident, Clara moves the homeless family into her own home when the mother, Lorraine, is diagnosed with cancer at the hospital after the accident. Taking in the three children, the husband (Clay), and Mrs. Pell, the cantankerous grandmother, Clara's life is changed from one of mundane routine into that of changing diapers, running after children, visiting the hospital, and sleeping little.

Shortly after the family moves in, Clay leaves without any warning and Clara finds herself left alone with the children and Mrs. Pell. Although she carries the burden of supporting a family that is not her own, Clara finds that she is not as alone as she had allowed herself to become after her own mother's death

While taking care of the family Clara is forced to ask who she is and, more

importantly, wonder if she has been selfish for taking in this strange family. Amidst all of the confusion and chaos Clara finds the children filling the void in her life. The children also struggle with conflicted feelings and with where their loyalties should lie, with Lorraine or with Clara. Further, Lorraine, lying in the hospital, is worried about what will happen to her children and how she will ever be able to pay Clara back for her kindness.

Good to a Fault, a 2008 Giller Prize finalist, is Marina Endicott's second novel. Written with clarity and insight, *Good to a Fault* is about self-discovery and our need for others. Endicott has taken the hectic daily routine of motherhood—cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, wiping noses, changing diapers, and sleep depravation—and brought to life the worry, the frustration, but more importantly, the love that develops between people with shared experiences. Endicott's novel is a compelling read that holds the reader in suspense until the end.

Aesthetics of Sport

Or, Why I Started Diving and Figure Skating

Priscila Uppal

Divers are as concerned with perfect lines as poets. Poets are as preoccupied with balance as divers. And both deeply understand that the most beautiful display of one's talents occurs after much struggle but is executed with the illusion of zero effort, zero splash. Splash bursts in the audience's mind after witnessing the perfect dive, the perfect poem. Splash is what the audience remembers as being theirs, not the performer's.

Frequently the creative arts (as well as other liberal arts) are derided in North American society as unproductive leisure activities. They are viewed as superfluous to real, practical knowledge, and little more than entertainment (when deemed harmless), or worse, the harbingers of moral corruption, laziness, and perversion. Athleticism, while in general deemed beneficial for the maintenance of physical health and useful in military pursuits, is not frequently touted as a form of knowledge, worthy of epistemological or ontological consideration. But it is. Most top athletes know this. Some speak eloquently about the perfect arc, the battle of self with self on the playing field, the desire to push one's physical limitations as a test of human capability.

While there is the stereotypical image of the artist as an effete pleasure-seeker with a bottle of red wine in one hand and some other mind-altering substance in the other, who can barely open a can of tuna let alone run a marathon, many of the writers I know have played, and continue to play, sports. Many run "to clear their heads"—and I might add here that this dynamic should be studied for its potential societal benefits. Many weight-train and take aerobics classes. For an extreme example, my friend and colleague, Suzanne Zelazo, author of *Parlance*, is an elite triathlete. An older writer I know recently took up a form of Asian martial arts weapons training: "I can now deal more confidently with my editor," she tells me. Another swims. Another plays volleyball. Another boxes: "You actually look a long time at someone when you're trying to figure out how to hit them. It's very intimate," he insists. This being Canada, many—both male and female—play hockey. Many writers have had competitive, even professional, experience of sport as youths and young men and women.

The realms of sport and art complement one another; dialogue and collaborative research across the two fields have much to teach us. Both the artist and the athlete pursue excellence through discipline and rigour; both sacrifice other pleasures and opportunities in this pursuit; both actively engage in "pain management" (the ability to turn pain into a creative, dynamic force); and both give concrete form to transcendental aims. As Michael Novak discusses in "The Natural Religion," "sports flow outward into action from a deep natural impulse that is radically religious: an

impulse of freedom, respect for ritual limits, a zest for symbolic meaning, and a longing for perfection" (352); to my mind his observation nicely describes the artistic impulse. And Spencer K. Wertz, in his article "Artistic Creativity in Sport," argues that if art can be understood as "aesthetic control of a medium" (511), then many athletes achieve artistic aims through the control of their own bodies as their medium (513). American novelist Don DeLillo defines the "exemplary spectator" as a "person who understands that sport is a benign illusion, the illusion that order is possible" (104). What else have creative artists sought to make visible, but a perceived, imaginative order? Ronald J. Meyers, in "Literature and Sports as Ritual and Fantasy," also argues: "the appeal of sports is no doubt connected to the fantasy of control. Through our own efforts, we can control, or have a greater influence on the outcome. Is that not the meaning of sports? We can operate on a level playing field, in which effort, struggle, and talent win out in the end. We serve our society and earn the respect and admiration of our peers. Like artists, whether dancers, singers, writers, painters, actors who include their whole being in their creativity, so too athletes perform in their field of dreams" (343).

And there's a deep connection to language that both sports and literature create with audiences and readers. As DeLillo claims: "Much of the appeal of sport derives from its dependence on elegant gibberish" (105). Much poetry might be described as "elegant gibberish" too. The language of sports is perfect fodder for wordsmiths. Who can resist the strange beauty and ecstatic, even erotic, playfulness of such words and phrases as: slam dunk, top of the key, passata-soto, "sow cow" (saulchow), walkover, blind tag, pick and roll, Geländesprung, five hole, 3½ somersaults in the pike position? Much of sports language is metaphor, image, symbol. Just think that we have a sport where you make your body as lean as possible, shoot it down a fast, icy, vertical track, with very little safety protection, and we call this activity: Skeleton. I have no idea what half pipe in snowboarding terminology refers to, but I can't resist the rhythms, the playfulness of the sounds of the words, the invigorating manner in which they are spoken, just as it is difficult to resist the nonsense poetry of Lewis Carroll or Ogden Nash. A tight system of reference or symbology changes as the rules of the game and the players themselves change, in much the same way as poets create elaborate metaphorical landscapes for themselves (W.B. Yeats or Gwendolyn MacEwen come to mind). The experimental verse of one generation becomes the cliché to be overcome and surpassed by the next, the same way athletes wish to break records and invent new skills. Furthermore, sport commentary is narrative, and many who are giants in this field know it is meta- and macro-narrative at its best, constantly referring to absent players, past histories, future competitions. Think of our own Ron MacLean, who manages to fire at least one pun (many of which are exceedingly clever) every week on *Hockey Night in Canada*'s Coach's Corner, most based on hockey vocabulary. Language links fans to the actions and outcomes of sport, just as it links readers to the fullness of characters or the scope of an artist's narrative.

In my duties as a professor of creative writing, I frequently discuss the art of writing in terms of sport. I tell my students on the first day of class that if they've ever played on a sports team or trained in athletics, they are far ahead of the other students in the course in two ways. One, they know how to train, and all craft requires training, no matter how much innate talent one might possess. Two, they know what it's like to finish second, or third, or last. There's almost always somebody better than you. I tell them to think of me as a coach—they will sometimes hate me,

sometimes admire me; it's my job to see that they work their hardest to reach their potential. Although I do not say this on the first day, I believe those with sport experience are also ahead in the pursuit of artistic excellence because they will likely recognize more quickly, and probably with less pain, that this pursuit is not easy. Even successful athletes and artists, those who are able to play and write and make a living, are not necessarily going to be remembered as the best of the best in the record books, canons, and halls of fame. Results are strongly affected by randomness, serendipity, and chance. One must surrender to such inexplicable justice. We have no control over who has been given a greater talent than another, and most people who attempt to reach a dream goal, *no matter what they do*, will fail. Hans Lenk and Gunter Gebauer remind us that in sports (and, I'd like to add here, in art) one must accept the simple fact that "The majority always lose" (80).

And yet learning to lose makes sport fertile ground for creative expression. Individual failures are tragedies, while our collective attempts at success time and time again are comic. As Joseph Epstein proposes: "The cast of characters in sport, the variety of situations, the complexity of behavior it puts on display, the overall human exhibit it offers—together these supply an enjoyment akin to that once provided by reading interminably long but inexhaustibly rich nineteenth-century novels" (116). The articulation of sport experiences can create important bonds for communities. In *Sport Inside Out: Readings in Literature and Philosophy*, the editors argue: "there is the faith that sport is a humanizing endeavor, that the athlete undergoes unique and intense experiences closed to others—experiences that make him more human somehow. . . . Surely a kind of mysticism attributed to the sport experience underlies the compelling appeal of sport for the human imagination" (xi). I agree that, like the best art, the best sport experiences are those that humanize, for both athletes and spectators.

Following a decade of springboard diving, fencing, figure skating, and stroke mechanics training for swimming, I have been slowly but surely coming to the realization that sport is a sister art to my work as a creative writer, that sports practice and artistic practice should be discussed and investigated more often together. So, I have sought to collect and discover more Canadian works of literature focused on sport. This continued investigation has led to my editing *The Exile Book of Canadian Sports Stories*, a first-of-its-kind anthology published in September 2009 by Exile Editions. What a treat it has been to read Morley Callaghan and Stephen Leacock alongside Diane Schoemperlen and Stephen Heighton, Katherine Govier beside Roch Carrier, Dionne Brand beside W.P. Kinsella—nearly all of our greatest storytellers have had their imaginations fired by sports. The majority of existing anthologies are devoted to a single sport (baseball or hockey, for instance). Very few feature female writers or stories about women playing sports. *The Exile Book* collects literary short stories about nearly two dozen sports, exploring the sports experiences of men, women, and children, as well as a wide variety of sports roles: current and past players, pros and amateurs, coaches, scouts, fans, parents of athletes, friends of athletes, trainers, researchers, and sports writers.

People are generally surprised when I tell them how many Canadian sports stories I've managed to collect (and there are dozens more that I was unable to include). While we certainly have our share of baseball stories (as do the Americans) and, unsurprisingly, an impressive storehouse of hockey stories, our writers focus on all manner of athletic activities from basketball to surfing, skiing to diving, extreme marathoning to fishing. They address our complex social and cultural histories as they break down barriers and stereotypes of all kinds

(gender, race, class, religion, nationality, ethnicity, and regionalism).

Canadian institutions should consider teaching more sports literature as a viable way to engage the average university student in reading and writing about literature, especially when the majority of students are required to take a general education arts/humanities requirement to fulfill their degree requirements, regardless of their chosen majors. What a great way to start a dialogue about the intersections of sport and art, human possibilities and the imagination.

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Hockey Dreams

The Importance of 'The Game'

David Adams Richards
Hockey Dreams: Memories of a Man Who Couldn't Play. Doubleday $27.95

Tom Allen
The Gift of the Game: A Father, a Son, and the Wisdom of Hockey. Doubleday $21.00

Richard Harrison
The Hero of the Game: 10th Anniversary Edition. Wolsak & Wynn $15.00

Randall Maggs
Night Work: The Sawchuk Poems. Brick $20.00

Michael McKinley
Hockey: A People's History. McClelland & Stewart $60.00

Don Cherry
Don Cherry's Hockey Stories and Stuff. Doubleday $29.95

D'Arcy Jenish
The Montreal Canadiens: 100 Years of Glory. Doubleday $35.00

Stephen Brunt
Searching for Bobby Orr. Knopf Canada $34.95

Shawna Richer
The Rookie: A Season with Sydney Crosby and the New NHL. McClelland & Stewart $29.99

John Manasso
A Season of Loss, A Lifetime of Forgiveness: *The Dan Snyder and Dany Heatley Story*. ECW $32.95

Michael Peterman

1

Faced with a number of books about differing aspects of hockey, I have opted for a personal approach. With some surprise, I realize that hockey has held my attention longer than any of my other strong interests. For more than sixty years, it has shaped a significant part of my leisure time and affected my very frame of reference. I suspect it plays a strong role in the tendencies of my imagination. In this inclination I am not alone in this country. I simply have to pay attention to hockey.

For Canadians, hockey is a deep-seated cultural marker; some would argue that it is

the single most powerful connector amongst a diverse and widespread populace. It is a passion for many, a compelling and sometimes contentious history for some, a regrettable and embarrassing reality for others; whatever the perception, hockey figures in a unifying cultural mythos. Hockey lies close to the heart of Canada's northern identity—it is a game that functions as a centripetal force in small towns and urban neighbourhoods. Its evolution encapsulates a wide range of aspirations even as it provides a plethora of heroes, goats, and ghosts for observers to ruminate upon. A boy from the Mirimichi shares primal feelings, formative experiences, and youthful aspirations with a kid from Etobicoke or Iqualuit, or a girl from Medicine Hat. Those experiences remain alive in the Canadian psyche; they contribute, sometimes in subtle ways, to the man the kid becomes and the boy that he continues to be. As Roy MacGregor has written, "it is impossible to know this country without knowing its game." Many new Canadians are not long in being drawn into the same net, as it were.

But hockey, which was still struggling to exert community control in the days of my west-end Toronto boyhood, is now highly organized and over-governed at all levels of play. Nostalgically, I deem that a considerable loss, even though I paid my own dues as a coach in the Peterborough Church League. One might complain nowadays that a child's hockey life is far too organized and bureaucratically controlled; many kids simply pull back from the cold and autocratic structure that seems bent upon dictating their activities and opportunities on the ice.

Equally daunting can be the ambitions of parents pushing their children onward to greater hockey achievements. We might deem this (with due respect) the Walter Gretzky syndrome. Moreover, at its upper levels of operation, hockey is nowadays less a game than a big, voracious, mean-spirited, and often tawdry business, even though it turns games into light shows, dresses itself up in expensive shirts and ties, and speaks to the public with suave rhetoric, the kind one has come to expect from NHL President John Bettman and the hockey suits (or, more likely, hockey jackets) who speak for hockey at lower levels of organization.

At the top, professional hockey has become a sport almost exclusively for big players and big money. One must figure on a durable body—at least six feet in height and close to two hundred pounds as a minimum. Big bodies dash and swerve within a small, boarded space. To be up close to the action is to be astounded by the speed. Little guys struggle to survive long, punishing seasons in this hard-hitting environment, and a demanding regime of physical training and nutrition. Then, as always, the inescapable issues of fist fighting, dangerous boarding infractions, and the deliberate use of high sticks continue to disturb many spectators and commentators year by year.

There are several reasons why 'The Game,' as Ken Dryden has called it, might seem to be slipping away from its close connection to the Canadian consciousness. Yet, for all its new and continuing problems, its corporate bigness, and its ethical failings, hockey continues to hold its place in Canadian hearts, trained though we may be to be critical of big-business tactics and ethics, to be skeptical of increasingly tarnished reputations, and to be disgusted by the relentless bombast of Don Cherry and his less sartorial, more articulate media colleagues. Just visit a local hockey rink some cold February evening or take a train from Toronto to Montreal prior to a Leafs-Canadiens game and you will instantly realize that the great passion continues to run very deep.

I write this review as one of those 1940s kids, whose first books were Scott Young's hockey stories and 'quicky' hockey

biographies by such sports writers as Ed Fitken. It is family lore that I came downstairs as a four-year-old with a tattered paperback of the Syl Apps story in my hand, demanding of my father and uncle what they knew of this wonderful captain of the Toronto Maple Leafs. "Who is this Sigh-el Apes?" I burst out, only to be met by a volley of merriment. Pronunciation was never my forte, even at that delicate age; however, an enthusiasm for the idea of the game and the lore of the Maple Leafs was already percolating. It is still with me like the taste and smell of fine French Roast coffee in the morning.

But such reading was for the quiet times when we weren't playing shinny on the frozen fields across Royal York Road in the days before the big overpass was built to allow unimpeded north-south traffic across Dundas St. Such daily excitement preceded the great thrill of playing in an organized game—a game with a referee and real nets—in a local scrub league. Such west-end leagues, especially at the lower age levels, were just beginning to emerge then. One needed what would marginally pass for (full) equipment. Imagine showing up for a tryout with skates that had never been sharpened (who knew?) and a well-worn (pointed) stick held together by worn tape. For several seasons in those uneven fields my breeches were my shin pads. It was years before I heard of a jock strap.

2

I share this passionate affection for the game with two authors and two poets whose books about hockey I have found stimulating and compelling. Reaching back a little, I re-read novelist David Adams Richards' memoir, *Hockey Dreams: Memories of a Man Who Couldn't Play* (1996). Growing up along the Mirimichi ("the remotest corner of a remote country") with an eccentric set of friends, Richards provides a stock of early memories built around his lack of success in becoming an able player and his breathless interest in hockey news from Canada and Europe. The game on the Mirimichi was, he writes, "all so primitive, I suppose—hockey, frozen hands, ice in your lungs and the fires burning here and there." "We were just specks on the river." These pick-up games brought a boy closer to the natural world and to an understanding of the limits of his own body. It helped to define an outlook that emphasized simply trying and playing—rather than winning. "Call it a tie," boys would shout as a way of ending hours of puck chasing. The joy was in the playing. It is a sad, perhaps symbolic, fact that the NHL has, in its wisdom, now put an end to tie games.

But Richards takes things much further. Astutely terming hockey "the non-intellectual impulse of [Canadian] life," he embroiders and enriches his personal narrative with thoughts on the game's importance to the national psyche. He sees hockey as "a far more political game than baseball." Regarding that importance, Richards writes, "The Canadian psyche is not wrong, it is just different. Some of our greatest moments have been in defeat rather than in victory (sometimes we do blush when we win)." He quite rightly deplores "the notion of the [Canadian] intelligentsia . . . that hockey is a part of what's wrong with our country." Rather, he sees the game as the basic glue that defines the country; it is the thing about which no Canadian is indifferent. It is the ingredient that is "essential to understanding a love of my country."

Tom Allen, a CBC musical commentator and writer, provides an equally salient record of hockey's surprising influence in his life. *The Gift of the Game: A Father, a Son, and the Wisdom of Hockey* (2005) describes the crucial role that hockey played in his relationship with his son in the wake of a painful divorce. Though he thought of himself as "a lousy hockey player," he began at age 41 to get involved in hockey

in order to spend more time with Wesley. In so doing a man who might be seen as a member of Richards' unseeing Canadian intelligentsia was won over in surprising ways.

Hockey was not a game Allen played much as a boy in Montreal; it was a passive part of an experience more governed by education, music, and culture. But, as he got more involved for Wesley's sake, "hockey turned out to be fun." Evocatively, he describes the "fantastic" joy of making "wrong-side turns," of skating backwards, and of stickhandling through a set of pylons. The experience awakened a fatherly fantasy:

> The difference was, instead of imagining myself as Jean Beliveau streaking across centre ice, I imagined myself as myself, but better: the dad who could skate, the dad who could land the puck right on the tape of his son's stick and then trail behind, waiting for the rebound that never came because that brilliant son faked left, swooped right and drilled a wrist shot into the top corner, then turned, his arms raised as he jumped into his dad's arms in celebration.

Tom Allen describes his trajectory as fledgling coach and "oldtimer" player, partially fulfilling his middle-aged fantasy and other aspects of his life in the process. Such a narrative ought to be required reading for the "intellectual" snipers who deplore the game and seek to write it off in various condescending ways. It spoke volumes to me.

Two recent books of poetry also illustrate hockey's powerful place in the Canadian imagination. It is in books like these that we can see the best of creative writing about hockey. So far at least. Richard Harrison's *Hero of the Play* (2004) is a reprint of the first edition (1994), with additional poems. Introduced by Roy MacGregor, it speaks brilliantly, sometimes philosophically, to the attractions of the game, even as Harrison explores ideas of beauty, manliness, friendship, and fatherhood. With a fine sense of imagery and word choice, Harrison unlocks the hockey fantasies and images that young Canadian boys live with as they grow up. He postulates "art's advice to sport"—"for all that we say we love winning, we love drama more" and he integrates into the drama he projects an awareness of "the odd mix of feudalism, free enterprise and trade unionism that governs hockey's economics."

There are many nuggets in the collection but one must suffice to illustrate. It catches the same sort of fun in playing hockey that Tom Allen described as a novice old-timer:

> TIE GAME
> —for the team
>
> A good game repairs the boy inside me—I mean a *good* game as spoken of in the language of men. Everyone knows—win or lose—you did what was asked, the guy with the puck counted on you in position whether he passed or not, and the one that rang off the post was still hailed as a good shot in words heard round the rink; when the better shooter says to you, *Take it!* This is impersonal love, this movement of men on the ice, thinking, talking all the time, playing the angles and each other, the love the mind has for the body, the key for the lock, the one men express for machines they've owned that always started in the cold. Today, because of how we felt, we let the game end in a tie. You don't see that every day, but one of us was leaving town next week, and we couldn't let him go with that good game dying in victory or defeat.

Randall Maggs provides a darker and more sobering look at hockey in *Night Work: The Sawchuk Poems* (2008). Blending prose and poetry, Maggs, whose brother Darryl played in the NHL, traces the troubled but brilliant career of goalie Terry Sawchuk (1929-1970). A Ukranian from Winnipeg, Sawchuk played over twenty seasons in the NHL, setting many goaltending records while enduring many injuries and extra-ordinary pain. He battled depression,

alcoholism, and mental instability over his career, becoming estranged from his wife and seven children and dying prematurely after an infamous tussle with a roommate. Maggs sets the mood by opening the collection with the autopsy report that documented in cold detail the six hundred plus stitches Sawchuk took in his face before he began using a facemask.

I remember Sawchuk as the unflappable brilliant netminder of the Detroit Red Wings in the 1950s. So does Randall Maggs, who, working from black-and-white photographs of the wounded warrior and old newspaper reports, vividly catches the drama of Sawchuk's fading grandeur. He focuses on "Uke's" heroics in the 1967 playoffs when, replacing the injured Johnny Bower, he first shutout the mighty Chicago Black Hawks and then led the Leafs to the Stanley Cup over the Montreal Canadiens. In game five in Chicago Stadium, Sawchuk took a 120-mile-an-hour slapshot from Bobby Hull squarely on his already-injured shoulder. Down for fifteen minutes and with the Chicago crowd singing "Good Bye, Terry, Good Bye," he pulled himself together and scrambled to his feet. His defiance of pain and his opponents is palpable, unpoetic, perhaps unchartable:

> You look at Terry's lowered head and wonder
> At the crudely touched-up curly hair
> (where does *that*
> come from?) You think of beaten soldiers
> slogging back
> to the beach. Twenty years of taking
> heavy shots,
> of having to rally your nerves, now this
> *howdy doody* blast from Hull.
> ("An Ancient Fire")

He dismisses the worried trainer's offer of help, saying only "*I stopped the fucking puck didn't I?*"

Maggs explores the gap between Sawchuk's poise in the crease and the darkness of his lonely, often alienated, personal life. His indicative epigraph—Robert Frost's lines about "what to make of a diminished thing"—poses the question of how we see such a hero and how little we know of his pain, confusion, and sins against decency. Maggs explores hockey's legacy of physical prowess, its nightly violence and excitement, while gauging the price that many of hockey's heroes (Sawchuk and Montreal's Doug Harvey among them) have paid for their commitment to and engagement in what is often a cruel game. It is a capacious collection blending vivid imagery with startling realism.

3

The rootedness of hockey runs deep. I was struck by a comment made by Deb Good about hockey culture in Elmira, Ontario. John Manasso quotes her in *A Season of Loss*, the story of Dan Snyder's tragic death in Dany Heatley's Ferarri. Deb organized the young Elmira hockey players who took part in Snyder's funeral in 2003:

> All we think about—a lot of us think about—is hockey. It's a huge part of the community and everybody's life. . . . If you make it to the [Elmira] Sugar Kings in this town, you're a hero. I have two boys. That's what I want my boys to do. It's huge when they make it.

Her commitment to her sons is heartfelt, even as her enthusiasm masks a litany of concerns. Education is nowhere present in this view unless hockey itself is seen as the essential education. Nor is maturity. The small-town sense of community is also strong, but what happens to Deb Good's sons when they make—or don't make—the Sugar Kings? Do they ever, can they ever, escape their narrow-gauge sense of what matters? How in any progressive way can they move forward with their lives? Perhaps Elmira is enough in itself. For many it is. Alternatively, having dreamed, do the boys succumb, finally and sadly, to the litter of broken hopes, seedy arenas, and macho stupidity that a life in hockey can become?

Consider too the words of Jarrod Skalde, a long-time minor-pro, and former teammate and friend of Dan Snyder. Calling Dan's death a "hockey tragedy," he mused about the funeral in Elmira:

> After seeing how the hockey world came around, it was unbelievable. I was so proud to be a hockey player. . . . I thought 'I'm in the best profession in the world: hockey.' People say it's just a sport, it's not life. When you see the funeral, it was all about hockey. That was the most important thing to me. It made me so proud to be associated with the people I was associated with (169-70).

Hockey culture is finally about people. In Skalde's view hockey people are, at their best, very good people; seen from this side of the border, they are very good Canadians. Death clarifies values in sharpened ways. What Skalde and Deb Good tell us are not to be forgotten.

The Snyder-Heatley story both darkens and brightens my sense of the reality that underlies Canadian hockey dreams. No people dream them deeper or better than Canadians and no culture is so deeply infused by them. Scratch many of the best and brightest and you will touch a warm edge of the inviolable hockey dream. They may be playing in pick-up games once a week or stealing off from a major social or business event to check on an NHL score on their Blackberries. Drop in to an unpretentious bar and most of the locals will be bandying about hockey trivia, fantasy pools, or personal memories over a few beers. Increasingly, women are just as deeply engaged in all aspects of the stick-and-puck culture.

4

Non-fiction books about all aspects of hockey are big and steady business in Canada, representing a significant portion of the country's book trade year by year. Michael Levine of Westwood Creative Artists notes, "In no country in the world are books about hockey so much a cultural staple." Their staying power in the market is a function of the sport's deep roots and the unflagging interest it generates. Cynthia Good, formerly with Penguin Canada, notes that every publishing house, small or large, will publish one or more hockey titles per year, confident a ready audience exists. Since the success of Ken Dryden's *The Game* (1983), those expectations of sales have been raised. But then Dryden's book was in Roy MacGregor's view "possibly the best book ever written by an athlete." Here are a few worthy examples that have come my way.

In 2006 McClelland & Stewart published Michael McKinley's *Hockey: A People's History*, based on the CBC television series. It's a fascinating read, full of historical detail and mini-narratives, though it lacks a bibliography and notes. One learns that there was never a pure and edenic time for the game and that its development was closely tied to the growing power of newspapers in Canadian lives. The game was violent and dollar-driven from its early days. Competition was marred by intimidation tactics, unruly behaviour on the ice and in the stands, and occasional deaths from stick attacks. From its earliest days, hockey was "a sport in need of help from the law" though the courts were resistant to engage in legislation. Nor was amateur hockey long in trying to professionalize itself and exert control over the players. As McKinley summarizes, "It took American capital and Canadian talent and a shared appreciation of the profit motive to make hockey a professional sport." This first occurred about 1905 as players moved back and forth across the American border, lured by salaries that readily eclipsed what they could earn in the workaday world. Even then, spectators eagerly paid to see their team play while the players, if so inclined, routinely bet on results, even on their own games. One is enriched by the wealth of stories about teams, entrepreneurs, aspiring

leagues, and legendary players. The yearly attempts by the NHL to control fighting and stick work seem tame by comparison to a colourful past now mostly forgotten.

I juxtaposed my reading of McKinley's engaging history with *Don Cherry's Hockey Stories and Stuff* (2008). Both contain fine photographs and juicy stories. Now a CBC institution and the pampered czar of "Coach's Corner" on Hockey Night in Canada, Cherry is, for many viewers, the real authority about hockey and how it should be played. Richard Harrison calls him "the priest of rock 'em sock / 'em." For years, despite knowing his personal history as a tough-guy in the minor leagues, I have regarded him as an egotistical carney; still, I often note insights and wisdom buried in his bombast. He is a good old boy in wolf's clothing, someone who knows and loves the game from hard experience; as well, he understands (most of the time) his new-found role as cultural guru and hockey authority. When he tells us that fighting is irrevocably part of the game, he is right—the history bears him out, even if it could be (mostly) done away with, as has been the case in American college hockey.

His book is full of anecdotes, told in his unabashed voice by Al Strachan (whose name is not on the book's cover). One can grimace over such phrasings as "If he had saw this, this guy would have been in deep trouble" and note that the volume's presentation is lazy, repetitive, and often tedious. I thought I would dislike the book, but I found many nuggets in it. I lingered over Cherry's dislike for such "nasty" hockey men as Eddie Shore, Hap Day, and Joe Crozier (he suffered under all of them), but enjoyed his lauding of Brian Kilrea (another career minor-leaguer who went on to greatness as a Junior A coach in Ottawa). Grit carries the day with Cherry. He made me recall what it felt like to be stitched up after being hit by a high stick or after being crosschecked into the wire screening behind the net. One had to get back in the game quickly and without fuss; such was the code.

Commenting on the Cherry phenomenon, Roy MacGregor has deemed "His thinking, and his extraordinary influence . . . the single most destructive influence on the development of Canadian hockey." And, indeed there is much to dislike. Cherry is always defending or justifying himself as "a beer hall kind of guy," "a player's guy" with a "common touch." Having lived by his toughness on the rink, having become a "hockey bum" in his time, he remains proud of his career. More recently on radio and television, he has lived by his wits, reacting to situations rather than thinking them through, speaking, as he would say, "from the heart" and coyly playing a number of sentimental cards. As such, he is often a bully; he has a "wise-guy attitude" such as, I suspect, he would dislike if he had to deal with his own public self in person. His carnivalesque sports jackets and high collars, which have become his signature, originate, I learned, in his father's insistence on high-toned clothes ("He looked super," according to Don), even when his dad was simply stopping by the local poolroom. Having "lived with the sharks," he admits to being devious, self-serving, and lacking principles, even though he reads books of history with interest. Surprisingly, he now views himself as no "team guy"; he espouses "redneck" views, deplores "tree-huggers," and berates "intellectuals" who, for him, have neither grit nor credibility. It is a good thing that his television partner, Ron MacLean, is only "a semi-tree hugger" in his view.

D'Arcy Jenish's *The Montreal Canadiens: 100 Years of Glory* (2008) makes a valuable contribution to hockey history. Prefaced by Bob Gainey's "Introduction", the book traces a century of extraordinary achievement by "the oldest, most famous club in pro hockey" and the passionate, sometimes manic, support of its fans. Jenish deftly draws his material from the many French

and English newspapers that have covered Les Canadiens over the decades, providing a much-enriched perspective on that splendid history, one that rivals the dominance of baseball's New York Yankees. Nevertheless, in the early years, there were many uncertainties.

So powerful is the team's presence for Montrealers, especially for French-Canadians, that a management shakeup of the team in the 1995-96 season "bumped the [second referendum] campaign from the top of the day's newcasts and led Parti Québécois leader Jacques Parizeau to interrupt a crucial speech that evening to lament "a catastrophe tonight. It is the one that has taken place with the Canadiens." Jenish cleverly entitles his final chapter, "Win, Tabernac!"

Aiming to recapture "the story's original sparkle and freshness" and to "shed new light" on the team's "haphazard origins" and complicated history, he succeeds well, though his publishing date of 2008—in line with the team's one-hundredth anniversary (formally the winter of 2009)—was a far more disappointing year than any Habs fan would had wanted. There was no Rocket Richard or Jean Beliveau, no Doug Harvey or J.C. Tremblay, to lift the team above its sustained and devitalizing mediocrity. Nearly two decades of dumping team captains, coaches, and general managers had served to undercut the few strong years enjoyed by the team since its heyday. Hence, this summer of 2009 Bob Gainey is once again struggling to rebuild a faltering team even as financial stability and fan support are once again solid. The record Jenish offers is testimony to the almost inviolable place that Les Canadiens hold in the minds of Montrealers, far and wide.

Three other books that trace the records of outstanding NHLers proved good reading—better than I expected. Stephen Brunt's *Searching for Bobby Orr* (2006) is a superior study by an accomplished journalist. It is also the best of the three both for the story it has to tell and the dramatic way in which Brunt tells it, even though he researched and wrote without Orr's cooperation. He traces the rise and injury-plagued career of the best defenceman ever to play in the NHL. Orr's wonderful but sadly shortened career included three MVP awards, twice leading the NHL in scoring, and leading the Boston Bruins to two Stanley Cup championships. He survived various domineering hockey bosses—especially Hap Day and Wren Blair—but his ascension from quiet Parry Sound, Ontario to fame in Boston was closely tied to the rise of a charming and aggressive Toronto lawyer named Alan Eagleson. In allowing "the Eagle" to negotiate his first professional contract, Orr began a hockey lifetime of putting himself fully in his lawyer's hands; "no other single event . . . so dramatically altered the course of the game, or at least the business of the game" as that first contract. It would serve as "emancipation day for the players" as a whole.

The Eagle used his privileged position with the young superstar to develop the idea of player agency and eventually the players' pension plan. Along the way he rode Orr's star like an equestrian, becoming in time "the most powerful man in hockey." Thus, we follow not only Orr's outstanding career and his several debilitating knee injuries, but also the changing business of hockey as the original six NHL teams made way for expansion. International hockey rivalries, including the famous 1972 showdown during which Orr was forced to the sidelines while Eagleson managed to steal much of the show in the name of Canadian patriotism and his own swollen ego. Here too money wagged the dog. Brunt completes his story with the downfall of Eagleson in a Boston courtroom, charged at the urging of former players like Carl Brewer with pension fraud. Back-dropping that court case and the judgement against Eagleson, was what Brunt terms "the hockey Judas story." Eagleson

decided not to tell his trusting client that the Boston Bruins had made him a very attractive, final-contract offer that would have kept him a Bruin for life; instead he badmouthed the Bruins' executive and arranged a trade that would send the injured Orr out west. In biblical terms, then, Brunt ponders upon "How golden Bobby Orr, nearly crippled now, approaching the end of his magnificent, star-crossed career, sacrificing the last of his bad knee in the aid of his country, was fucked, yes, fucked, by Al Eagleson, in whom he had placed his blind and absolute trust."

Contrast the rich and sordid tapesty of the Orr saga with the ostensibly slighter fare of Shawna Richer's *The Rookie: A Season with Sidney Crosby and the New NHL* (2006). Crosby is now of course the real thing in most people's minds, a new Canadian superstar who has carefully been preparing himself to carry on the superstar tradition of Bobby Orr, Guy LaFleur and Wayne Gretzky. A *Globe & Mail* sports reporter like Stephen Brunt, Richer follows Crosby from his Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia home and roots through his first full NHL year at age eighteen with the Pittsburgh Penguins. In his Introduction, Roy MacGregor notes the hype that Crosby had to endure as the first pick in the NHL draft: "if anyone could sustain it, it would be this kid from Cole Harbour with the low centre of gravity and the slightly goofy smile." And sustain it he did through a tough rookie season when wins were rare and criticisms of his whining and "diving" grew, fanned by such prominent observers as Don Cherry.

But as Richer ably reveals, Sid the Kid prevailed. He did so because of his immense ability, his grit and determination, his enormous love of the game, and his unwavering commitment to his chosen profession. Richer records the march of a long and indicative season—2005-06—when the NHL successfully rebounded from its strike year and revamped its rules to provide more offence for the fans. In that sense Crosby, with Alexander Ovechkin and a fine (double) rookie class, "launched a new era" for the NHL. He registered 102 points on a bad team, lost out in the Calder Trophy voting to Ovechkin, even as he became "the league's biggest draw" in its important season of recovery.

I came away deeply impressed by Crosby's unwavering focus and resiliency. Richer deems him "at heart . . . a rink rat" and she shows the deep pleasure he takes in the game as well as his high level of responsibility to the fans and the media. As the Penguins' strength coach told her, "I've never known anyone who loved [hockey] so much" (290). It is a long leap from a reticent and shy Bobby Orr to the open and frank Sid the Kid, both of them teenagers before the media rush; but then Orr did not follow IMG's media training course that Crosby took; nor was the league and the media then what they are today. There is scrutiny everywhere and a cacophony of voices venting in the media, on talk shows, and in blogs. Through it all, Crosby diligently perseveres, his love of and respect for the game steady and deep. That he should have been able to captain the Penguins to an unlikely Stanley Cup victory in the spring of 2009, just four years into what should be a stellar career, is ample testimony to the intensity of his focus and the quality of his preparation.

By contrast, the Danny Snyder story provides another glimpse into the darker side of the professional hockey dream. Dany Heatley might have been one of those important superstars—many projected him as a first draft pick on the basis of a fine Junior A year in Calgary and two years at the University of Wisconsin—but he has proved a major disappointment in several ways. The Dannys were teammates and roommates with the Atlanta Thrashers when on 29 September 2003, Dany Heatley lost control while speeding his Ferrari in a

residential area. The crash critically injured his passenger, Danny Snyder. When Danny died a few days later, the Snyder family proved wonderfully generous in their forgiveness and support of Heatley.

John Manasso's book traces the lives of the two Dans and measures the effects of the loss of a solid and likeable young man whose NHL career was just beginning. Meanwhile, Heatley, the budding star, recovered from his own injuries, later telling reporters that "I'll never be the same." However, as a hockey player and a talented goal scorer, he escaped legal punishment and has gone on to fame with the Ottawa Senators and the Canadian National team.

The great story here is, thankfully, not Heatley; rather it is the generosity of the Snyders and their commitment to the idea of forgiveness or "restorative justice." Manasso tells it with sympathy and feeling, and does not shy away from Mary Ormsby's observation that Heatley, for all his hockey ability and resilience, was "just a punk in a fast car." Heatley's recent attempt to manipulate a trade away from the Senators, the team that gave him a fresh chance to achieve NHL success, has recalled for many this sad and regrettable chapter in his early career. It brings to mind so many negative things about professional sports—the effects of big money, the possibilities for irresponsible behaviour, the prominence of self-serving goals, and the absence of personal loyalty among them. But then, if we cast an eye back to professional hockey's early days, as Michael McKinley does so well, we would see that the Heatley story is nothing new.

The Journal of Canadian Fiction

A Particularly Lovely Project

John Moss

In the late spring of 1971, New Brunswick was the centre of the world and anything was possible. Sitting at the inevitable kitchen table in Nashwaaksis, across the St. John River from Fredericton, drinking morning coffee that in other jurisdictions might have been declared illegal, David Arnason and I decided to create something which to give our banter appropriate gravitas we named the *Journal of Canadian Fiction*. Dave's coffee was made by pouring boiling water through a rancid bag full of grounds that then soaked in the pot. It was either an Icelandic contraption or Ukrainian. Dave was from Winnipeg.

We had finished our first year in the legendary University of New Brunswick PhD program in Canadian literature. We were both in our early thirties with families in tow; not exactly young and perhaps not quite geniuses together, but astonished by the possibilities of a life in letters. I wonder if the TISH bunch had the same irrepressible confidence only a few years earlier? In the spring of 2009 I overtook George Bowering on a street in Vancouver and we talked for awhile. *Of course,* they had the confidence, he still does, and they had an agenda which changed the way we talk to ourselves in this country. Dave and I didn't have an agenda, no manifesto to nail to the doors of CanLit. We abhorred the term CanLit. We just had an inspired restlessness and an encyclopaedic enthusiasm.

There once was a time when it seemed both important and possible to have read almost everything. We were still in the thrall of the Great Tradition, but under the influence of Desmond Pacey and Fred Cogswell, Bob Gibbs, Don Cameron, and the others at UNB, we were immersed in Canadian

literature as a legitimate if improbable academic pursuit. Students and faculty talked together in a comfortable scholarly context about our own country's literature from its earliest beginnings to its current achievement as if it all mattered, and talking made it so.

Taste and judgement had magically become matters of cultural awareness, not the measures of a prescriptive sensibility. Dave's prairie bias, and our shared immersion in what was then called Commonwealth literature that came from an inspired course we had taken with Tony Boxhill, struck a lovely dissonance with my own Upper Canadian background. Yes, we were informed as graduate students by Empson and Leavis, but reading Achebe and Ngugi and Rhys and Lamming and Rasipuram Krishnaswami Ayyar Narayanaswami, better known as R.K. Narayan, gave us different possible contexts within which to experience literary fiction.

We were not Frigians. That is one of the great myths perpetuated by god knows who (Frank Davey), that we who were wallowing, perhaps, in thematic criticism were acolytes of Northrop Frye. I skimmed Frye once, and found him inimical to my own critical project and personal experience of Canada. Our Canadian world was both infinitely larger, more cosmopolitan and complex, and much smaller, tighter, more close up and personal. We were more influenced by the eclectic commitment of Carl Klinck, the casual authority of Malcolm Ross, the critical generosity of Clara Thomas, the dissident worldliness of George Woodcock. Frye was brilliant, effete, given to alarming generalizations, and had really not read all that much Canadian writing. We had, or thought we had, which at the time amounted to the same thing.

We had read Frances Brooke and John Richardson, James De Mille and Laura Goodman Salverson, Ethel Wilson and Thomas Raddall. Writers like Grove and MacLennan, Moodie and Carr offered a significant context for the critical consideration of our own country's literature alongside Austen and Faulkner. Not because they were as good, but because they spoke in the voices that were already inside our own heads. Notions of mirrors and maps may seem quaint, now, putting literature in the service of psychosocial and cultural needs. Then, it was a revolutionary necessity.

Sitting at the kitchen table in Nashwaaksis, drinking David's toxic brew, we talked about bringing down the wall between writing and literature. In a town where the hugeness of Alden Nolan formed a raucous counterbalance to literary pretension, such walls seemed absurd. Each weekend, Alden, kept barely in check by the diminutive grace of his wife, Claudine, hosted the world at their little house on Windsor Street. Academics appeared as writers, writers from up and down the valley and across Canada appeared as themselves, and gifted readers, debaters, scholars, and clowns were welcomed in a scotch-laden air of flamboyant erudition and biting good humour. The classic divisions between students of literature and its practitioners perished.

While David and I each went on to have an academic career, we were both at heart creative writers. We wanted to publish a journal that would feature new fiction along with critical and scholarly writing, covering the whole gamut of Canadian literature. We wanted context. We wanted reviews of fiction and of academic criticism. And quite arbitrarily we wanted to pay $100 a short story, a vast sum at a time when little magazines rewarded contributors with free subscriptions.

George Woodcock's *Canadian Literature* was iconic, but it was not our model. It was genteel; despite the editor's anarchical predilections, its was thoughtfully indispensable and therefore conservative. *TISH* wasn't our model. Too strident. *The Fiddlehead* and the *Malahat Review*. Too writerly. *Alphabet*. Too

Reaney. There were experimental reviews available, as there always are, all radically chic and ephemeral. There was *Mosaic*, trying to be all things to all readers, and there were the university journals which dabbled in Canadian content: *Dalhousie Review*, the *Queen's* and *UofT Quarterlies*.

Our timing was right on: there was room for, a need for, the *Journal of Canadian Fiction*. Hybridity based on genre; creative, critical, whiggish, confident enough to think Grove was important and informed enough to know why. By the end of that morning in 1971, as the coffee leached into our bones, we had formulated the basis of what was to become a radically successful quarterly with a circulation of around 2,500 by the end of its first year.

Before leaving Fredericton to its own resources for the summer, we invited Fred Cogswell and Desmond Pacey to serve on the editorial board. From my Ontario base, by the end of the summer I managed to inveigle a diverse crew to serve alongside. While talking to Clara Thomas on the phone, she handed me off to an unidentified woman who waxed enthusiastic about the possibilities of our project: it was Margaret Laurence and she signed on to become one of our most active board members. Northrop Frye generously loaned us his name, as did Roch Carrier. Others, like Rudy Wiebe and Dave Godfrey became actively engaged in the editorial process. Both Margaret Atwood and George Bowering made numerous suggestions, although both declined to be on the board. Literary journalists like Robert Fulford offered to contribute, then faded; others, like Pierre Berton, came through.

Sinclair Ross wrote to express interest, as did Hugh MacLennan and Hugh Garner and Dorothy Livesay. The irrepressible Robert Kroetsch, then still living in Binghamton, got involved. So did John Metcalf, in the days before he became god. Matt Cohen sent us a carbon-smeared coffee-stained copy of a brilliant story. Bill New and Sherrill Grace and Laurie Ricou connected, as did the incredibly gracious George Woodcock. UNB undergraduate David Adams Richards phoned me at home periodically, hoping we'd publish a story, which we eventually did. A relative unknown from Vancouver Island sent us a manuscript that was impossibly long but Dave insisted we publish it, and we did: Jack Hodgins. And so it went. Canada, from a Fredericton perspective, came together.

During the autumn of '71 I wrote personal letters to every library in the country, to every high school and college and university, to writers and critics and scholars, as well as to anyone else suspected of being even remotely sympathetic to Canadian writing. Subscriptions poured in, stories and essays poured in. Without understanding what a ponzi scheme was, I basically juggled the books to make us seem financially viable. After our second issue, Canada Council came through with, as I remember it, a staggering $17,500 grant—almost as much as we had asked for. We were alive.

The UNB English Department gave the journal office space. Sherry Dykeman abandoned her secretarial job in the president's office for a part-time position with JCF. I must be among the few graduate students in UNB history to have had a private secretary who could take dictation in shorthand! Sherry went on to become Cheryl Bogart, one of the best artists in the country.

That was a different era. I recall receiving a formal letter from someone at Canada Council asking us to fill in the gaps in our financial statement. I wrote a pompous note back, saying I was an editor, not an accountant. Over the next five years the Council gave us their fullest support. We in turn distributed hundreds of $100 cheques to writers ranging from Hugh Garner to Clarke Blaise, Hugh Hood to Miriam Waddington. Another government agency underwrote significant expenses—a situation about

which nothing more need be said (except that my intentions were not in the least bit larcenous). Somehow, we fared well for five years.

I took the editorial offices of the journal with me to Montreal in 1976, when I joined the faculty of Sir George Williams University during its transition to Concordia. David continued his irrepressibly prescient role as fiction editor from his aerie at St. John's College, University of Manitoba.

After three years teaching, I decided to move to the margins of academe, something that proved disastrously temporary. During the Learned Societies Congress at the University of Toronto in 1974, Jack McClelland and Anna Porter approached me to take over the *New Canadian Library*. Sadly, no one told the NCL founding editor, my former mentor, Malcolm Ross. Nonetheless, on the basis of a handshake and a promise, my family and I moved to the country where I could focus on revamping Ross' astonishing but stumbling achievement. Managing Editorship of JCF was turned over to John Robert Sorfleet, who had been reviews editor from the first issue, and who succeeded me at Concordia. David was now deeply involved with the fledgling Turnstone Press in Winnipeg. He and I retired to the wings. Over the next few years, the *Journal of Canadian Fiction* faltered and somewhat ignominiously expired.

From the beginning, it had been an amateur project in the best and worst senses of the word. Covers were generously provided by Tom Forrestall, Greg Curnoe, and several of the country's leading cartoonists, all for effusive gratitude and a $100 gratuity. The first few issues were laid out in my dirt-floor basement on Charlotte Street, with Letra-set, Exacto knives, wax, a hand-iron, and awkward patience. An energetic undergraduate volunteer, Judith Steen, and I taught ourselves the principles of design as we went along. Glueing large font, letter at a time, onto the title page, Judy and I managed to represent one of our editorial board members as "Margret Lawrence." In the first issue off the press, autographed by most of the writers involved, one autograph stands out. In her firm hand, the great lady of Canadian writers signed herself, Margret Lawrence!

The *Journal of Canadian Fiction* didn't change very much in the world, but we were very much part of the times. David Arnason and I, if we are remembered at all, will be remembered for other things. But for a while, our project that warmed into being over rancid coffee, connected with readers and writers, critics and scholars, in a particularly lovely way. We had fun, we all did.

Contributors

Articles

Joel **Baetz** teaches at Trent University, and has published articles about early twentieth-century Canadian poetry and contemporary fiction. He is also the editor of Oxford's *Canadian Poetry of the First World War: An Anthology* (2009).

Michael **Buma** holds a PhD in English from the University of Western Ontario, and currently teaches at both Western and Redeemer University College. His dissertation examines the cultural work of Canadian hockey novels.

Sally **Chivers** is associate professor and chair of Canadian Studies at Trent University. The author of *From Old Woman to Older Women*, she is currently working on two research projects: the first is on disability in the Canadian public sphere and the second is on old age in film.

John **Moss** is Professor Emeritus at the University of Ottawa and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. After a slow transition from what George Woodcock called being a public critic to theorist and metafictionalist he has moved on to writing literary mysteries.

Michael **Peterman** is Professor Emeritus at Trent University and working currently on a biography of James McCarroll and two editions of works by Susanna Moodie. He has played hockey virtually all his life and includes among his happiest memories his years as a varsity player at Princeton University.

Katherine **Sutherland** currently is Dean of Arts at Thompson Rivers University. Her research areas include Canadian and Postcolonial literature and Sports Culture.

Priscila **Uppal** is a poet, novelist, critic, and professor at York University. Among her publications are five collections of poetry, including the Griffin Prize shortlisted Ontological Necessities; two novels, *The Divine Economy of Salvation* and *To Whom It May Concern*, and the academic study *We Are What We Mourn: The Contemporary English-Canadian Elegy*. Her works have been translated and published in several countries.

Suzanne **Zelazo** is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Modern Literature and Culture Research Centre, Ryerson University, and is a professional triathlete. She studies the body as performance, women writers, and avant-garde artists of the early twentieth century.

Poems

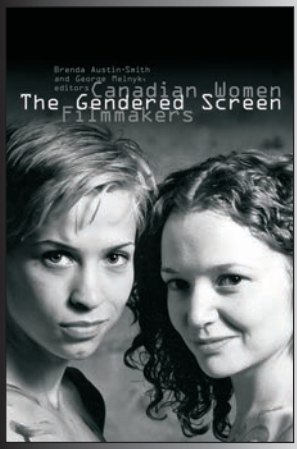
Dennis **Cooley** teaches at the University of Manitoba, and lives in Winnipeg. Susan **McCaslin** teaches at Douglas College, and lives in Coquitlam. Rodin **Renee** lives in Vancouver. Priscila **Uppal** teaches at York University, and lives in Toronto. Fred **Wah** lives in Vancouver.

Reviews

Ariane **Audet** lives in Montréal, QC. Lee **Baxter**, and Paul **Huebener** live in Hamilton, ON. Louise-Marie Bouchard lives in Bellingham, US. Marlene **Briggs**, Virginie **Doucet**, Laurie **Ricou**, Ralph **Sarkonak**, and Sean **Somers** teach at the University of British Columbia. Jorge **Calderón** teaches at Simon Fraser University. T.L. **Cowan** teaches at the University of Calgary. Karen **Crossley** lives in Winnipeg, MB. Paul **Genuist** lives in Victoria, BC. Stéphane **Girard** teaches at the Université de Hearst. Anne L. **Kaufman** lives in Milton, US. Martin **Kuester** teaches at the Philipps-Universität Marburg, Germany. Maurice **Lamothe** lives in Pointe-de-l'Église, NS. Jodi **Lundgren** teaches at Thompson Rivers University. Julia **Morris-von Luczenbacher** teaches at the Université d'Ottawa.

Barbara **Pell** taught at Trinity Western University. We are saddened to hear of her death in March 2009; since 1982 she has written 60 reviews for us, and we will miss her for her warmth, acuity and kindness.

Summer **Pervez**, and Hilary **Turner** teach at the University of the Fraser Valley. Laurent **Poliquin** teaches at the University of Manitoba. Antje M. **Rauwerda** teaches at Goucher College, US. Kelly-Anne **Riess** lives in Regina, SK. Jason Ranon Uri **Rotstein**, and Kinga A. **Zawada** live in Toronto, ON. Darlene **Shatford** teaches at the College of New Caledonia. Reece **Steinberg** lives in Vancouver, BC. Émilie **Théorêt** lives in Blainville, QC. Ariane **Tremblay** lives in Québec, QC. Daniel **Vaillancourt** teaches at the University of Western Ontario. Emily **Wall** teaches at the University of Alaska Southeast, US. Lynn (J.R.) **Wytenbroek** teaches at Vancouver Island University.



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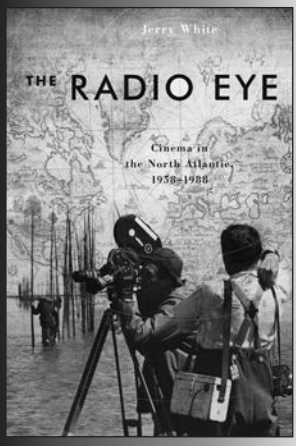

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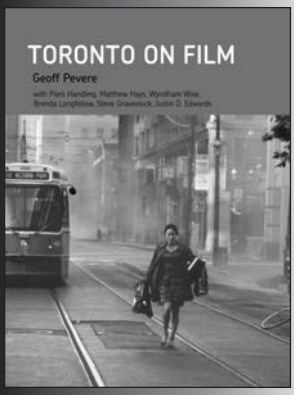

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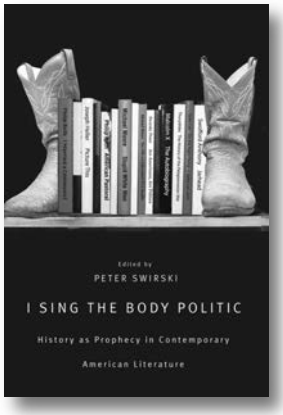

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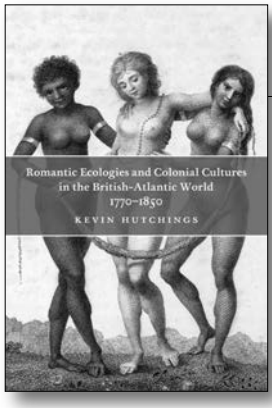

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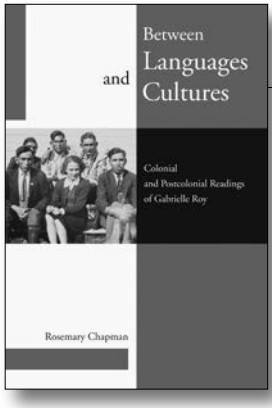

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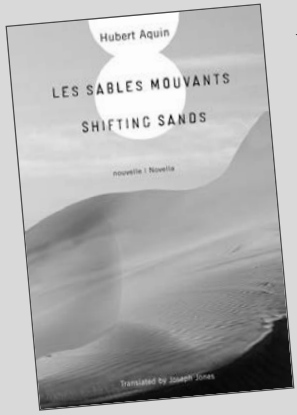

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