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REVIEWS

CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN LITERATURE

Eva Darias Beautell, guest-editor

INTRODUCTION*

This special issue offers a rich and diverse range of perspectives on English Canadian literature and culture of the last quarter of the 20th century. In the chronological and thematic planes, they implicitly or explicitly take the nationalist movement of the 1960s as their starting point, a time when the supposed absence or weakness of a national sense becomes the touchstone for official discourses about the cultural identity of the country. Together with the use of the well-known connection between Canada and the wilderness, many texts of that period, draw on a victimized sense of the national, deliberately producing an image of Canadian identity as weak or "feminine" (a process later known as *the feminization of national identity*). At the time, that type of metaphor provides the country with the distinctive elements it is looking for, contributing thus to the creation of a sense of tradition that has survived to the present. In the following decades, however, artists and writers have repeatedly questioned such a model of the national identity, introducing alternative perspectives, and thus intervening in a notion of tradition still fragile and in need of full articulation. We could, in fact, suggest that the artistic and cultural flowering we are now experiencing in Canada at the beginning of the 21st century is, to a great extent, based on the dismantlement of the few images constructed only 30 years ago to represent the nation.

The essays that follow provide analyses of specific instances of such changing nature of contemporary Canadian production, focusing on a wide variety of texts, analyzed in their turn from an equally varied selection of theoretical frameworks, often tracing interdisciplinary connections between theories and texts. By so doing, they also implicitly articulate the relationship of this production with major contemporary theoretical discourses, social contexts and movements in and outside Canada. These critical readings retrieve and reclaim a corpus of texts, a region or a perspective as belonging and contributing to the national tradition. Additionally, they evaluate the influence of current social and discursive paradigms, such as multiculturalism, new historicism, diaspora studies, environmentalism and gender studies, on the current processes of construction and revision of the literary canon.

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In "Erasing the Nation: Canada's National Literature in the Age Of Globalization," Albert Braz starts with an innovative perspective on contemporary Canadian literature in English by focusing on texts which consciously write against the national paradigm and writers who, despite their success in and outside Canada, make a conscious effort not to be identified as "Canadian." Engaging in a shrewd reading of works by well-know writers such as Douglas Coupland, Thomas King or Margaret Atwood, Braz draws from social, historical and political analyses of the country to find out the reasons why Canadian critics would insist on celebrating those texts as *Canadian* assets.

"'The Nature Of My Belongingness': Diaspora In M.G. Vassanji And The South Asian Novel In Canada" takes up a similar argument in exactly the opposite direction, by examining the case of diaspora Canadian writers who rarely set their fictions on Canadian soil. In this essay, María Jesús Llarena Ascanio first discusses the various approaches to the notions of diaspora and cultural identity to then centre on recent South Asian Canadian fiction and the question of its belongingness to the national tradition. An analysis of M. G. Vassanji's work, and especially of his novel *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, will serve as paradigm of the obstacles for full integration of the immigrant into the Canadian multicultural society as well as of the South Asian Canadian texts into the CanLit canon.

And so does "Space Invasion: Jewish Canadian Women Writers and the Reshaping of Canadian Literature" involve a discussion of Canadian multiculturalism, although from a very different perspective. In this article, Julie Spergel examines the role of spatial metaphors in two Jewish Canadian novels: *Fugitive Pieces* and *Your Mouth is Lovely*. The essay initially draws on the Bakthinian notion of the *chronotope*, to argue for the importance of the social and the historical layers in any reconceptualization of space, as well as of the past in any figuration of the present. From there, the author takes the argument to the Canadian scene of writing, demonstrating how, by self-consciously situating their works in specific Jewish chronotopes, Michaels and Richler construct the contemporary Canadian city in a truly multicultural fashion, redefining thereby the very notion of what it means to be Canadian today.

The Bakhtinian chronotope will also provide the theoretical starting point of "Margaret Atwood's Metafictional Acts: Collaborative Storytelling in the *Blind Assassin* and *Oryx and Crake,*" in which Pilar Cuder Domínguez scrutinizes the role of storytelling and the function of narrative self-reflexivity in two recent novels by Margaret Atwood. This essay draws on narratological as well as postmodern theories of textuality to analyze the peculiar narrative triangle that typically structures Atwoodian texts, and argues for the importance of "the lover's room" as the site in both novels of challenging meanings affecting the whole work. In so doing, it offers

* The work conducted as guest-editor of this issue has been part of a larger research project funded by the Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (HUM2006-08288/FILO), to which I wish to express my most sincere gratitude.

not only a critical reading of questions of readership, authorship and textuality in the last decade, but also a contextual approach to the works of one of most important Canadian writers of the past 30 years.

The next essay, "Linguistic Fragmentation as Political Intervention in Calgarian Poetry," takes the reader on a challenging trip to the alternative scene of younger Canadian writers. In it, derek beaulieu inquires into the role of a group of Calgary poets in the unmaking of a traditionalist view of Alberta writing as landscape-based, and explores the possibility of looking at these poets' rejection of imposed literary/regional models as a political choice. In his freshly critical appreciation of the urban fragmented poetry of Jordan Scott and ryan Fitzpatrick, beaulieu convincingly explains how these poets break regional expectations, ideologically charged, as well as the convention of linguistic structure, syntax, form and meaning.

"Where Has 'Real' Nature Gone, Anyway?: Ecocriticism, Canadian Writing And The Lures Of The Virtual" intersects at different places with the issues analyzed by the previous essays, by offering an approach to ecocriticism in the context of contemporary English Canadian literature and culture. This article analyzes definitions of the national identity in the past three decades in connection with Canada's real and/or imaginary wilderness. Following a period of dismantlement of such associations, a period characterized by the rise of a fundamentally urban multiculturalism in Canadian literature, the ascent of ecocriticism in the 1990s might be interpreted as a conservative move towards the recuperation of the unified national metaphor the country's association with the wilderness seemed to provide. But, is there anything Canadian about ecocriticism? What could Canadian writers and critics contribute to it? To answer these questions, the essay will scrutinize various moments of the metaphor in criticism and fiction, along with changing concepts, in the age of technology, of nature and of our relation to it.

The special issue closes with "Two Voices from Newfoundland: History and Myth Addressed by Maura Hanrahan and Paul Butler," a double interview conducted by María Jesús Hernáez Lerena in which anthropologist Hanrahan and novelist Butler reflect on writing and history in Newfoundland, on the paths of creative non-fiction, and the refashioning of foundational myths of Newfoundland. Through their personal, fresh and honest, rendering of the realities, the history, the literature, and the culture of Atlantic Canada, these interviews contribute a most welcome perspective to the analysis of contemporary Canadian production in English, acting like a Derridean *supplement* to the issue in that *they add something that was missing while they add something else*.

ARTICLES

ERASING THE NATION: CANADA'S NATIONAL LITERATURE IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION*

Albert Braz
University of Alberta

ABSTRACT

One of the great paradoxes about contemporary Canadian literature in English is that, at the same time it is consolidating its international reputation, many of its writers continue to make a conscious effort not to have their works identified with the geopolitical space called Canada. The main object of this article, however, is not to explore why Canadian writers would compose works like *Generation X*, *The English Patient*, or *Oryx and Crake*, but rather to investigate the reasons Canadians would insist on celebrating those texts as *Canadian achievements*. That is, it examines why Canadians would champion writers who, at times, make such overt attempts to mask where they are from.

KEY WORDS: Canadian literature, continentalism, diasporic, globalization, national, postnational, transnational.

RESUMEN

Una de las grandes paradojas de la literatura canadiense contemporánea en inglés es que, al tiempo que su reputación se consolida a un nivel internacional, muchos de sus escritores continúan haciendo un esfuerzo deliberado para que sus trabajos no se identifiquen con el espacio geopolítico llamado Canadá. El objetivo principal de este artículo, sin embargo, no es tanto explorar por qué los autores canadienses componen novelas como *Generation X*, *The English Patient,* o *Oryx and Crake*, como es investigar las razones por las que los canadienses insisten en celebrar esos mismos textos como logros *canadienses*. Es decir, este trabajo examina por qué los canadienses defienden y se identifican con escritores que, a veces, tratan de una forma tan explícita de enmascarar su procedencia.

PALABRAS CLAVE: literatura canadiense, continentalismo, diáspora, globalización, nacional, post-nacional, transnacional.

> "What happens to a national literature when the very idea of the nation has been set in doubt?"
>
> Jonathan KERTZER

One of the great paradoxes about contemporary Canadian literature in English is that, at the very same time it is establishing an international reputation,

many of its writers continue to make a conscious effort not to have their works identified with the geopolitical space called Canada. We have long had the phenomenon of the sort of émigré authors that critics like Pico Iyer (2002) praise and prize, self-declared transnationals who can live in the country for decades, take up citizenship, but never really engage with its political or intellectual life. No less significant, though, is the case of Canadian-born or raised writers, who are embraced by their fellow citizens as national icons, yet frequently produce texts in which Canada is either treated as a foreign country or is completely effaced. The main object of my article is not to explore why Canadian writers would compose works like *Generation X* (1991), *The English Patient* (1993), or *Oryx and Crake* (2003), but rather to investigate why Canadian critics would insist on celebrating those texts as *Canadian* achievements. I have no objection to continentalism, a political option that I consider perfectly legitimate. However, I am perplexed that Canadians would champion writers who, at times, make such overt attempts to mask where they are from.

In his influential 1998 study *Worrying the Nation: Imagining a National Literature in English Canada,* Jonathan Kertzer makes the convincing argument that the "nation is inescapable, and cannot be banished by theoretical degree" (35). Despite the fact we live at a time when it is common to dismiss the nation as peripheral to our globalized selves, he contends that the national remains essential to the understanding of any collective endeavour, particularly in a country like Canada. Kertzer admits that Canadian history, including Canadian literary history, is not unitary, for there "have always been challenges to the nationalist ideology, first made in the name of regionalism, modernism, or cosmopolitanism, now made in the name of feminism, ethnicity, postmodernism, or post-colonialism" (22). As he notes, "[b]eyond the nation lie more nations, differently conceived" (193). Yet his point is precisely that these challenges to mainstream Canadian nationalism do not transcend the national but simply reflect other national visions. That is, while groups "differ drastically in their faith in authenticity, they all assume that a literary community, however combative, will produce 'our' literature, however conflicted" (23). Interestingly, one group whose politics Kertzer does not examine in any detail is that of established Canadian writers who often set their works outside the country, notably in the United States, and strive to inscribe their texts into other literatures. The reason for this gap is probably that these writers tend not to advertise their political stance. On the contrary, many of them present themselves as proud Canadians. Yet they produce works that at best, are nationally ambiguous, and, at worst, affiliate themselves with separate national traditions.

The contemporary ambivalence about the national of course is not restricted to Canadian literature. Rather, it seems to be a world-wide phenomenon, affecting

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* This article was written partly with the support of a Standard Research Grant by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), to which I would like to express my gratitude.

not only small nations but even some of the "major" ones (Csicsery-Ronay 236). For example, in an essay she wrote in the early 1990s about "Decentering Community and Nation," Mary Louise Pratt explores the rise of a transnational or postnational literature in the United States. Struck by the publication by mainstream presses of numerous literary texts by U.S. residents that have very little to do with the country's life and culture, Pratt ponders to which national tradition those works belong, beyond what one of her friends playfully terms "California" literature (84). Her conclusion is that they are part of a new category of literature that not only circumvents "altogether the question of the national" but operates as if "the traditional homology of the cultural and national" did not exist or apply (84). Pratt unnecessarily complicates her argument when she conflates the postnational with the global, as reflected in the drive by the editors of anthologies of world literature or the directors of international film festivals to include works from around the world. Clearly, the desire for inclusiveness is not analogous to postnationalism, as Pratt herself concedes when she alludes to the declaration by the Nigerian musician Fela Kuti that he does not play "world music, but African music" (Pratt 85); for what Kuti is demanding is an acknowledgment of his national or continental specificity, the very geographic specificity so often occluded in postnational texts. Still, it is difficult to dispute Pratt's contention that the "transnationalization of culture at the global level has coincided with the dissolution of correspondence between culture and the national *within* the metropolitan nation-states" (86). This dissolution is evident in the existence of a growing body of literature by writers who politically and legally may be citizens of a country but who have little involvement with the sociocultural life of the polity where they happen to reside or who pretend to be citizens of other countries.

If what Pratt terms "the implosion/explosion of the national" (86) is manifest in literature produced in the United States, it is even more pronounced in that written in her native land. After all, Canada has to deal not only with the postnational wave in general but also with its proximity (cultural as much as spatial) to the United States, which has long led many Canadian writers to pass as Americans by producing essentially "transnational" texts (Mount 144). A conspicuous example of the effacement of Canada's national specificity is provided by Douglas Coupland's emblematic novel *Generation X*. The text's treatment of Canada is problematic throughout, but never more so than in the opening paragraph:

> Back in the late 1970s, when I was fifteen years old, I spent every penny I then had in the bank to fly across the continent in a 747 jet to Brandon, Manitoba, deep in the Canadian prairies, to witness a total eclipse of the sun. I must have made a strange sight at my young age, being pencil thin and practically an albino, quietly checking into a TraveLodge motel to spend the night alone, happily watching snowy network television offerings and drinking glasses of water from glass tumblers that had been washed and rewrapped in paper sheaths so many times they looked like they had been sandpapered. (3)

Coupland is a respected Canadian writer. He was born to a military family at a Canadian base in Germany and raised in Vancouver, the city with which he is

usually identified. He has set several of his subsequent books in Canada and often expresses pride in his country, even declaring: "It's never felt as different to be a Canadian" as it has since the turn of the millennium (*Souvenir* 114). Or, as he boasts to an interviewer, "[w]e went from being boring little Canada to a sexy country of sin overnight" (qtd. in Birnbaum, n. pag). However, there is very little celebration of Canada or Canadianness in his first novel. Perhaps because Coupland used to think that "Canadian stuff was slightly inferior to American stuff —and that being Canadian was being a watered-down version of being American" (*Souvenir* 114)— he elects to set *Generation X* largely in the United States and to relate most of the action from a U.S. perspective. The novel's opening scene is certainly disconcerting from a Canadian standpoint, as the author's homeland is othered, and a visit to Canada's heartland is presented as a journey to the depths of nowhere.[1]

Coupland's work, including *Generation* X, has been praised by Karen Skinazi for its "Canadianation" of U.S. culture, for injecting "Canadian elements (people, values, practices, vernacular, and so on) into a foreign context and thereby mak[ing] that context richer, since the Canadian elements cannot be subsumed into a mononational discourse" (n. pag.). Coupland, elaborates Skinazi, "*Canadianates* the American landscape, extending the notion of 'America,' or the New World (a term he favours) to include both Canada and the United States, separate but overlapping entities that suggests a cosmopolitan idea of '(re-attachment, multiple attachment, or attachment at a distance'" (Skinazi, n. pag.; Coupland, *Polaroids* 8). In *Generation X*, Coupland himself emphasizes his text's ostensible cosmopolitanism. He writes that "where you're from feels sort of irrelevant these days" and that his three youthful protagonists belong to "an enormous global group," what he terms "the poverty jet set" (4-5). Yet one cannot help but notice that the one Canadian member of the group, Dag Bellinghausen, is the only one with "dual citizenship" (4), and presumably divided loyalties. Also, while it may be true that one's geographic origins have become irrelevant, one's spatial location has not. The bulk of the novel transpires in a specific space, the desert of Palm Springs, California, a place that may not have much history but clearly has a distinct culture. Indeed, *Generation X* would appear to be most accurately classified as a California novel, not in the sense of being proudly deterritorialized, as Pratt's friend would have it, but because it is so profoundly engaged with the alienated reality of life in Lotus Land in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

From a Canadian perspective, *Generation X* is very much a specimen of what the novelist and critic Stephen Henighan terms "free trade fiction," a significant body of writing that he asserts reflects the fact the contemporary Canadian political and literary establishments have come to see the country's culture "as em-

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[1] Incidentally, this uncertainty about the national identity of *Generation X* is shared by the taxonomists at the Library of Congress, who place Coupland's novel, not with Canadian texts, but with U.S. ones, at: PS3553 0855 G46.

barrassing baggage to be jettisoned in the quest for global competitiveness" (134). Henighan identifies such attempts at denationalization in several novels, the most prominent of which is Michael Ondaatje's 1992 international best-seller *The English Patient*. Henighan has serious reservations about the text's "neutering of the past into harmless, ecstatic visions," but what most disturbs him is its "eradication of the particularities of Canadian history in favour of a continentalist vision that had little currency during the period when the story takes place" (139, 144). He illustrates his point by showing how Ondaatje has a character incongruously state that "'I'm from Upper America'" and his narrator "speaks of 'North American troops' in a war that Canada entered two years before the United States and under very different conditions" (143-44; Ondaatje 76, 41). Henighan also claims that, while "the Canadian writer of the [nineteenth] century addressed a foreign reader, the contemporary Canadian writer pretends to be a foreigner. We have arrived at the brink of a new form of alienation" (37-38). However, this form of literary denationalization is considerably older than Henighan seems to realize. It definitely precedes the North American Free Trade Agreement of 1994, which links Canada, the United States, and Mexico in an economic alliance. As Nick Mount has demonstrated, the proclivity of Canadian writers to camouflage their national origins is at least as old as Confederation. Moreover, some of the country's most popular writers have engaged in the practice, everyone from Bliss Carman to Charles G.D. Roberts (Mount 69-79, 128-38). In fact, what is most striking about the tendency of Canadian writers to erase the national in their works is not the newness of the custom but its long history, a history that is underscored by a series of thematic affinities, not the least the denigration of the border between Canada and the United States.

The Canada-U.S. border is presented as being extremely porous in *Generation X.* Thus the text's Canadian protagonist, Dag, hails from Toronto, but moves south with no discernible difficulty. Similarly, one of the sisters of the main narrator faces no apparent obstacles as she migrates from Portland, Oregon, to the interior of British Columbia, where she "runs a lucrative feminist dairy farm in the allergen-free belt" (135). Still another person, we are told, went to "a party in Canada but woke up the next morning in the United States, a two hour drive away, and he couldn't even *remember* driving home or crossing the border" (48). The frontier between Canada and the United States seems to be of so little consequence in Coupland's fictional universe that his characters cross it back and forth as if it did not exist. As Skinazi observes of another of his novels, "border-crossing into the United States *does not happen*, even when it does" (n. pag.). Curiously, that is not how Coupland depicts the U.S.-Mexico border. As the three central characters prepare to move from California to Mexico at the end of the novel, the narrator states that the border denotes "a newer, less-monied world, where a different food chain carves its host landscape in alien ways I can scarcely comprehend. Once I cross that border, for example, automobile models will mysteriously end around the decidedly Texlahoman year of 1974" (171). That is, some international borders are real. The one separating Canada and the United States is just not one of them.

The presumed unreality of the Canada-U.S. border is a particularly common trope in Indigenous literature. Thomas King, for one, has stated that the

international line between Canada and the United States "doesn't mean that much to the majority of Native people in either country. It is, after all a figment of someone else's imagination" (*Truth* 102). The artificiality of the frontier is something he often explores in his work, never more poignantly than in the short story "Borders." The story relates the trials faced by a nameless Blackfoot woman as she travels with her young son from their reserve in Alberta to visit her daughter in Salt Lake City, Utah. Everything goes well until they reach the international line. However, when the U.S. border guard asks the woman about her citizenship, she replies: "Blackfoot" (137). Initially, the guard takes the situation humorously. He tells the woman that he realizes that her people live in both countries but, in order for the police to keep their "records straight," she must declare if she is on the "Canadian side or American side?" To which she responds, "Blackfoot side" (138). For the U.S. guard there are only two options when it comes to citizenship, U.S. and Canadian, and thus when the Blackfoot woman refuses to choose one of the two, she and her son have to return "to where [they] came from" (139). The woman and the boy get in their car and head back toward Canada but, when asked by a Canadian border guard about her citizenship, she again declares: "Blackfoot." The Canadian guard informs her that "I'd be proud of being Blackfoot if I were Blackfoot. But you have to be American or Canadian" (141). The Blackfoot woman, though, refuses to accept the logic of her interlocutor's argument, and so she and her son are caught in the territorial no-man's land between the two border stations, an area tellingly centred on the duty-free shop. Their plight eventually attracts the attention of the media, who inquire what it feels "to be an Indian without a country" (145).With television cameras filming them, mother and son once more head toward the U.S. border and, as usual, the woman identifies her citizenship as "Blackfoot" (146). This time the guard lets them through, and they finally head for Salt Lake City.

Judging by "Borders," as well as by his comments on the subject elsewhere, one cannot help but conclude that King considers the international line between Canada and the United States not so much unnatural as farcical, since apparently the only way one can ascertain that one has crossed from one country to the other is because of the different "flagpoles" ("Borders" 134, 147). Yet his own publishing history suggests that the border between Canada and the United States is not totally arbitrary, for the two countries are shown to have distinct cultures. In his story "A Short History of Indians in Canada," first published in 1997 in the Canadian magazine *Toronto Life*, King concocts a phantasmagorical narrative about a businessman named Bob Haynie who is making his first trip to Toronto. Finding himself unable to sleep, at three o'clock in the morning he decides to explore the city. More specifically, he takes a cab to Toronto's financial centre, Bay Street. But no sooner does he start savouring "the smell of concrete" and "the sound of skyscrapers," both of which he loves, than "a flock of Indians fly into the side of the building," barely missing Bob (1). As he looks around, more Indians keep hitting the pavement all around him, and he has to "leap[] out of the way of the falling Indians" (2). Although the out-of-town Bob is unprepared for the incident, it is obviously not uncommon, for before long two men jump out of a city truck and start cleaning up the scene. The two men, whose names are Bill and Rudy, "bag" the

dead Indians and, after they "tag" the living ones, "[t]ake them to the shelter. Nurse them back to health. Release them in the wild" (3). Bill and Rudy are self-described experts on Indians. They "got a book" to identify to which nation the Indians belong, which they usually can do through the "feathers" the victims wear. Bill and Rudy also tell Bob that the reason the Indians crash against the skyscrapers in such numbers is that they are "nomadic" or "migratory" peoples, and "Toronto's in the middle of the flyway [. . .]. The light attracts them" (3). Apparently, the falling Indians have become a major tourist attraction in Toronto, luring visitors from as far away as Alberta, who do not always manage to spot them. So Bob is extremely pleased with his outing. As he tells his doorman when he returns to the hotel, "I saw the Indians" and they were "spectacular" (4).

While "A Short History of Indians in Canada" is not a particularly upbeat narrative, it is very much a Canadian one. It is full of references to Toronto places, from hotels to streets, and to Canadian First Nations. However, something curious happens when King writes the story for the U.S. market. To begin with, he changes the title to "A Short History of Indians in America," by which he means, not the continent of that name, which would include Canada, but only the United States. Also, while the central character remains a businessman named Bob Haynie, he is now visiting, not Toronto, but New York City and, instead of staying at "the King Eddie" ("Canada" 1), he is a guest at "the Park Plaza" ("America" 32). In addition, when his inability to sleep leads Bob to seek "some excitement" in the middle of the night, he makes his way to "Wall Street" (32), rather than to Bay Street. Finally, the falling Indians now attract visitors not as far away as Alberta but as "Florida" (34). Indeed, even the types of Indians Bob encounters are different. Whereas in the Canadian version of the story the first Indians that he spots are identified as "Mohawk" and "Cree" ("Canada" 2), those in the U.S. version are "Penobscot" and "Delawares" ("America" 33).

Like any other writer, King of course has the right to disseminate his work whichever way he pleases. Nevertheless, one cannot help but notice how the transformation of "A Short History of Indians in Canada" to "A Short History of Indians in America" de-Canadianizes the text. Perhaps even more significant, the national metamorphosis undergone by his narrative seems to undermine his frequent claims that the border between the two countries is "an artificial marker of difference" (Groening xvi). If it were really true that there are no major political and cultural dissimilarities between Canada and the United States, he would not have had to change his story so substantially in order to appeal to a U.S. audience. Moreover, King's cultural translation is not particularly successful. The white experts on Indians in both versions of the story are called Bill and Rudy. It has long been noticed that those happen to be the first names of W.P. (Bill) Kinsella and Rudy Wiebe, two white writers who have written extensively about Indigenous peoples in Canada, and who incidentally have clashed publicly on the politics of voice appropriation (Groening 6-7). "A Short History of Indians in Canada" thus could easily be read as a satire on those whites who present themselves as experts on Indians, and who continue to make a living out of Indians even as the latter kill themselves. But the names do not function in the same way when the story is relocated to the United

States, since they are not associated with specific writers. In fact, what the cross-border migration of King's story underlines is that Indigenous peoples play a much less central role in the U.S. imaginary than they do in the Canadian one. While the ethnoracial discourse in the United States is fixated on "the black-white argument" (Rodriguez 29), the one in Canada is dominated by the idea of belonging to the land, which for the majority of the populace is possible only through some kind of affiliation with Indigenous people. This reality gives Indigenous people in Canada a prominence that they do not have south of the border, and explains both why the "national" translation of King's story was necessary and why it was not likely to succeed. The Canadian reality cannot be transposed to another country merely by changing the names of cities or hotels.

Notwithstanding the tendency of writers like King and Coupland to make light of the international line between Canada and the United States, the irony is that the line is becoming increasingly more real —regardless of how Canadians may feel about it. As Helen McClure writes in her essay "How Far Is the Canadian Border from America? A Case Study in Racial Profiling," ever since the attacks on the World Trace Center on September 11, 2001, the people of the United States have become extremely anxious about their national security, as they no longer consider that their country is "safe, strong, and impenetrable" (509). This is a development that has had major repercussions for Canada, which is now perceived by its southern neighbours as being unable to ensure its territorial integrity. Moreover, McClure asserts that prior to "9/11, the focus was on the porosity of the Mexican border, primarily in regards to illegal immigration, but also for drugs. Post 9/11, much of the focus has shifted to the Canadian border's potential for leaking in terrorists" (511). Indeed, since that fateful date, Canada has been transformed into "a frightening other" in the eyes of the people and politicians of the United States (521). They see Canada as a haven for terrorists and, as a consequence, have attempted to determine "who is and who is not 'truly' a Canadian" (519), excluding anyone born in an Arab or Muslim country. The magnitude of the conflict between the two countries is conspicuously illustrated by what McClure terms the attempts by the United States to "securitize[]" its northern frontier. Or, as she phrases it, instead of treating "Canada preferentially," the current U.S. administration "pushes Canada further away, moving the border metaphorically away from America" (521). In short, contrary to what writers like Coupland and King imply, the border is becoming more, not less, real.

Needless to say, the militarization of the frontier between Canada and the United States is not likely to have much impact on those Canadian writers who do not even acknowledge the border's existence but simply set their texts in other countries and inscribe them into other national traditions. Contemporary Canadian literature, particularly the novel, has received much praise for its reputed worldly rootlessness, the fact that one may find in it the whole globe—with the apparent exception of Canada. According to the aforementioned Pico Iyer, Canadian writers at the turn of the millennium focused mostly on "Italian priests and Zoroastrian landladies, Japanese grandmas and the uncertain affiliations of Egypt before the war" (120) and the "best thing" about them, as about contemporary writers in

general, was that "no one seemed to know where they were from" (168). Not everyone, though, sees the absence of Canada from the works of many Canadian writers as a sign of emancipation, either political or intellectual. Henighan, not surprisingly, considers the trend nothing less than a form of "neo-colonial self-abasement" (77). However, even someone like Chelva Kanaganayakam appears troubled by this development. A specialist in multicultural literature, Kanaganayakam wishes to expand the "margins" of Canadian literature to include writers born and raised outside the country and whose work is centered on their native lands. Yet he remains rather self-conscious about the lack of "Canadian referents" in their writing (2). As he notes, if one rejects the "symbiotic relation between the nation and a varied body of writing" (1), what makes one's work part of that national tradition? In other words, it seems difficult to imagine a national literature that does not bear an intimate connection to a specific landscape.

In a way, the tendency of well-known immigrant writers like Rohinton Mistry and M.G. Vassanji to set their works elsewhere is understandable. Nancy Huston contends that the place where you spend your childhood determines your true identity, and that you cannot really outgrow your formative years. In her words, "*[y]our childhood stays with you all your life, no matter where you go"* (7). If this is true, if one is so indelibly shaped by one's childhood, then those writers who grew up outside the country cannot be expected to respond to the local landscape in the same way as those who grew up there. But it is much more difficult to rationalize why Canadian-born and raised authors would efface the national in their works. This is particularly true when the writers in question have acquired a reputation as nationalists, as is the case of Margaret Atwood. Atwood, who was born in Ottawa in 1939, first gained national prominence in 1972, with the publication of her immensely popular *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature.* More a manifesto than a scholarly survey, *Survival* was intended to explore "[w]hat's Canadian about Canadian literature" and why Canadians should care (11). Among the conclusions reached by Atwood is that:

> Literature is not only a mirror; it is also a map, a geography of the mind. Our literature is one such map, if we can learn to read it as *our* literature, as the product of who and where we have been. We need such a map desperately, we need to know about here, because here is where we live. For the members of a country or a culture, shared knowledge of their place, their here, is not a luxury but a necessity. Without that knowledge we will not survive. (18-19)

For Atwood (or at least the early Atwood), there is a direct connection between a national literature and a national landscape, the landscape that has shaped its writers. Indeed, collectively, the works produced by those writers ostensibly constitute a national map, both for themselves and their fellow citizens.

The phenomenal success of *Survival* can be attributed not only to what Atwood says, her formidable ability to capture the national zeitgeist, but also to the way she says it. Atwood manages to be simultaneously politically incisive and witty. For instance, as she discusses the failure of the bulk of early Canadian writing to convey the complexity of its geographical location, she writes: "A person who is

'here' but would rather be somewhere else is an exile or a prisoner; a person who is 'here' but *thinks* he is somewhere else is insane" (18). As she rightly points out, a main characteristic of colonial and diasporic writing is its lack of engagement with the local, the "here." Ironically, this lack of engagement with the "here" is also evident in much contemporary Canadian writing, not the least in Atwood's own work, such as the novel *Oryx and Crake*.

Published in 2003, *Oryx and Crake* is a dystopian meditation on the way humanity's love of technology in general and bio-engineering in particular culminate in an apocalypse that wipes out most of the world's human population. The bulk of the novel is set in what used to be North America. Yet while there are numerous references to U.S. history and places, such as the sinking of "eastern coastal cities" (75), the "interstate highways" that are being turned to sand by a tar-eating microbe (261), and the decrepit condition of "the Empire State Building" (268), there is virtually nothing about Canada. The author's homeland has been reduced to a handful of fugitive allusions, the most memorable of which are a popular soft drug called "Vancouver skunkweed" (104) and a "Gated Vacation" resort in Moosonee, on "the western shore of Hudson's [sic] Bay," where the new elites now travel in the summer to escape the heat (217). Some Atwood critics have tried to transform Canada's absence in *Oryx and Crake* into something positive, claiming that the fact "no Canadian city [is] listed in the catalogue of worldwide catastrophe" described in the text suggests Canada may have been spared (Howells 93). However, I am not persuaded that Canada's non-presence in a work by one of its best-known writers, and set over its historical territory, is a reason for celebration. Rather, I interpret Atwood's erasure of Canada as an acknowledgment that what transpires in the "here" of her homeland is of little consequence to the world, which is why she devotes most of the narrative to the United States.

One question that remains unanswered is why the author of *Survival* would come to write a novel about the near-destruction of the world, focus mainly on North America, yet elect not to explore how Canada is affected by the calamity. A possible explanation is the work's genre. Science fiction, as others scholars have pointed out, distrusts the national, since it is largely informed by "the political perspective of the dominant technopowers, for whom national cultural identity represents an obstacle to political-economic rationalization" (Csicsery-Ronay 218). As Istvan Csicsery-Ronay argues, until now "we have seen only the science fiction futures of the nations that think they are empires. We must wait to see whether the nations who think they are nations will imagine different futures" (237). Yet I suspect that the absence of Canada in *Oryx and Crake* has less to do with the generic demands of science fiction than with an authorial awareness of the nature, and spatial location, of her readership. Atwood clearly knew that her best-selling work until then had been *A Handmaid's Tale*, a text which happens to be both science fiction and set mainly in the United States. So she not only wrote *Oryx and Crake* for the United States, but she pretended to be a member of that national community. The consequences of her decision in terms of Canada and the Canadian literary "tradition" (Atwood, *Survival* 237) are inescapable. If a work of literature is either "a mirror" or "a map," as she used to contend (*Survival* 15, 18), it is hard to

imagine what Canada we are supposed to glimpse in *Oryx and Crake*, except one that is meant to remain invisible or unarticulated. No less significant is the matter of whether the erasure of the national is the price that writers from small countries must be willing to pay in order for their work to have a chance to attain universality; or, rather, if it simply reflects a global neo-colonialism and a failure of the imagination.

My temptation is to conclude that the tendency of Canadian writers to create the impression that their works are American is just a reflection of economics, of their trying to the appeal to the much larger U.S. market by disguising their (foreign) origins. However, I'm not fully convinced that this is the only reason for the phenomenon; or perhaps even the main reason. It is possible that one of the explanations why Canadian writers strive to pass as something other than Canadian is that they are uncertain about their national specificity. In her thought-provoking article "Ghost-National Arguments," which is written largely in response to Kertzer's *Worrying the Nation*, Sylvia Söderlind asserts that what is "fundamentally missing" in English-Canadian discourse is a recognition of "the role Quebec has played in English-Canadian thinking about nation" (674). According to Söderlind, Quebec is central to the way Canadians see themselves, since the presence of a sizable French-speaking population in the country is "the only thing that differentiates Canada from the United States." However, "this alien within, on which Canadian self-definition depends," cannot be acknowledged because of its essential foreignness (680). The inability of Canadian writers and critics to deal with the country's nature, she concludes, has produced "a sense of lostness" among Canadians, not only of having "gone astray" and not "know[ing] where you are" (687) but also of not being quite a real nation. As Linda Griffiths states in one of her famous exchanges with Maria Campbell, "[t]he lack of a sense of place makes you feel ghostly" (95). Perhaps this is the situation reflected by the texts discussed in this article, notably *Oryx and Crake*. In light of the continual challenges to the Canadian state by Quebec, Canadian writers (like their fellow citizens) have become uncertain about the political viability and legitimacy of their country. For some of them, the way they have elected to deal with this dilemma has been by pretending the country no longer exists as an autonomous entity.

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"THE NATURE OF MY BELONGINGNESS": DIASPORA IN M.G. VASSANJI AND THE SOUTH ASIAN NOVEL IN CANADA

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ABSTRACT

This essay deals with the changing concepts of diaspora and nation in the context of contemporary Canadian literature in English. The argument involves a revision of the notions of cultural identity as well as a rethinking and even questioning of South Asian fiction as part of Canadian writing. A contradiction lies behind its full integration in Canadian fiction in English and its progressively changing nature in the last thirty years. The concept of diaspora and the South Asian critical point of view towards Canadian multicultural society will also help explain the difficulty in facing the question of belonging to the host country.

KEY WORDS: Diaspora, South Asian literature, cultural identity, contemporary Canadian literature, postcolonial studies, belonging, cultural integration.

RESUMEN

Este ensayo analiza los diferentes conceptos de diáspora y nación en el contexto de la literatura canadiense contemporánea. Se plantea una revisión de las nociones de identidad cultural así como un cuestionamiento de la narrativa sudasiática como parte integrante de la narrativa canadiense anglófona y su naturaleza cambiante de los últimos treinta años. El concepto de diáspora y la propia crítica hacia dicha sociedad multicultural en la narrativa sudasiática ayudarán a explicar la dificultad que tienen el escritor inmigrante para su integración en dicha sociedad.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Diáspora, literatura sudasiática, identidad cultural, literatura canadiense contemporánea, post-colonialismo, arraigo, integración cultural.

During the last decade of the twentieth century, many notable changes took place in Canadian literature. This was a period of opening from what had been an emphasis on writers of the so-called canon, writers who bore mainly Anglo-Saxon names like Davies, Atwood, Munro, Callaghan, or MacLennan, to *other* writers of a different origin, as well as to aboriginal writers. This change began in the 1980s, and certainly in the 1990s such writers began to achieve a long-due recognition, not only with the general public in terms of book sales, but also by

winning major literary awards (Burke 97). Something quite unusual happened when, in 1990, Nino Ricci's *Lives of the Saints* won the Governor General's Award for fiction, garnered international acclaim and was on the best-seller list in Canada for over a year. Surprisingly, Ricci's text had its setting not in Canada, but in Italy, with protagonists that were Italians. This was a major breakthrough at the time, but by the end of the 1990s the idea of Canadian texts being set in other countries with little or no mention of Canada or Canadians had lost its novelty and become something of a norm. The immigrant novel, if indeed it can be termed so, had arrived to become a major force in Canadian literature. The writers of these novels were generally residents of Canadian cities and they could no longer be grouped together as having one discourse; the voices were as varied as the styles they employed.

One of these writers is Moyez Vassanji, an East Indian whose native land happened to be that of Tanzania, since he is a descendant of the diaspora of East Indians who settled all over the coast of East Africa. He arrived in Canada to teach physics at the University of Toronto after having received his doctorate in the USA. He then left university teaching after the publication of his first novel *The Gunny Sack* (1989), which won his first international award, the Regional Commonwealth Prize. Thus, as is frequently the case for a South Asian writer, he appeared in Canada as an educated member of the middle class who was already fluent in the English language. Vassanji was the founder of the journal *The Toronto Review of Contemporary Writing Abroad* which would allow the diversity in backgrounds and experiences of the writers to be reflected in "a dynamic and vital way" (Vassanji, "Editorial" 1). Arun Mukherjee cites Vassanji as the author who has played a major role in the development of South Asian Canadian literature in "his triple role as editor, theorist, and writer" (Mukherjee, *Postcolonialism* 30). Vassanji is a leading figure among these writers and has helped discover other South Asian writers and bring them to the attention of the Canadian reading public.

However, his work has not received, I think, the attention it deserves. A member of an acclaimed group of Canadian multicultural writers, Vassanji shot to fame only in 1994, when his third novel, *The Book of Secrets* (1997), a magnificent complex piece of fiction set in East Africa, was chosen as the inaugural winner of Canada's prestigious Giller Prize. In a subsequent novel, *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*, which snagged his second Giller Prize, Vassanji returns to Kenya, the land of his birth and once the pride of Britain's African colonies. The purpose of essay is to deal with the changing concepts of diaspora and nation in the context of Contemporary Canadian literature in English. My discussion will involve a revision of the notions of diaspora and cultural identity, as well as a rethinking and even questioning of South Asian fiction as postcolonial and "not quite Canadian" writing, yet fully integrated today in the concept of Canadian literature. A focus on the writings of M.G. Vassanji will serve as illustration of these contradictions as well as of the progressively changing nature of Canadian literature in the last thirty years.

Firstly the idea of diaspora itself has evolved in such a way that has radically changed the literary landscape of Canadian literature. The diasporic imaginary is crucially connected to the idea of "homing desire." Behind it stands the denial that

the homelands of diasporas are themselves contaminated. In a progressively multi-ethnic conception of the nation-state, diasporic theory bears testimony to the fact that we live in a world where multi-ethnic and multi-communal states are the norm. Against the discursive nostalgia, the material history of diaspora leads us to deterritorialized peoples with a history and a future. We thus place under erasure a narrative that requires a theory of homeland as a centre that can either be reconstituted or imaginatively offered as the point of origin. A people without a homeland or the "unhomely" is a cultural text of late modernity. In other words, the positive side of diaspora is a democratic ethos of equality that does not privilege any particular community in a nation; its negative side is virulent racism and endemic nativism. Homelands interact with other cultures over a period of time to produce diaspora. Against the fictions of a heroic past and a distant land, the real history of diasporas is always contaminated by the social processes that govern their lives.

Thus, diasporic identities are intimately connected to the concepts of cultural identity and nation. As Stuart Hall comments, identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps, instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think of identity as a "production" which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, representation. This view problematizes the very authority and authenticity to which the term "cultural identity" lays claim. There are two ways of thinking about cultural identity; the first position defines cultural identity in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective "one true self." Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as "one people," with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history. There is, however, a second, related but different view of cultural identity. This second position recognises that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute what "we really are" or, rather, "what we have become." We cannot speak for very long about one experience, one identity without acknowledging ruptures and discontinuities. Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of becoming, as well as of being. It belongs to the future as well as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. It is only from this second position that we can properly understand the traumatic character of the colonial experience (Hall 236-37).

The past therefore continues to speak to us. It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. Cultural identities are the unstable points of identification, which are made within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic, transcendental "law of origin." The diaspora experience is defined, not by essence or purity, but by

the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of identity which lives with and through difference, by hybridity.

This concept of cultural difference is deeply rooted in the evolving concept of national communities. Our belongingness constitutes what Benedict Anderson calls "an imagined community" (2). Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. Nations, Anderson suggests, are not only sovereign political entities but "imagined communities." How do we imagine their relation to home, the nature of their belongingness? How are we to conceptualize or imagine identity, difference and belongingness after diaspora? Since cultural identity carries so many overtones of essential unity, how are we to "think" identities inscribed within relations of power and constructed across difference, and disjuncture?

Across the globe, the processes of so-called free and forced migrations are changing the composition, diversifying the cultures and pluralizing the cultural identities of the older dominant nation states, the old imperial powers, and, indeed, of the globe itself (Appadurai). These diasporic minorities do not long remain enclave settlements. They engage the dominant culture along a very broad front. They belong, in fact, to a transnational movement, and their connections are multiple and lateral. They mark the end of a modernity, defined exclusively in Western terms. In fact, there are two, opposed processes at work in contemporary forms of globalization, which is itself a fundamentally contradictory process. There are the dominant forces of cultural homogenization by which Western culture threatens to overwhelm all comers, imposing and homogenizing cultural sameness. But right alongside that are processes that are slowly and subtly decentring Western models, leading to a dissemination of cultural difference across the globe. These days, the local and the global are locked together because each is the condition of existence of the other.

As a result, we need to rethink postcolonialism in dialogue with globalization (Brydon 691). Globalization, diaspora and cosmopolitanism have each emerged as contenders for describing a new problem-space that might replace the postcolonial. Despite the efforts of Edward Said, postcolonial analysis has not succeeded in changing media representations of non-Western cultures or in influencing the ways in which 9/11 and its aftermath have been understood. Postcolonialism does need to be revived and redirected through addressing the concepts of autonomy, cosmopolitanism and diaspora together. Postcolonial interrogations were dominated during the decade of the 1990s by the work of three thinkers: Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Edward Said. Despite their significant differences and the complexity of their individual work, Bhabha, Spivak, and Said have come to be associated with a brand of postcolonialism that valorizes exilic, cosmopolitan, and diasporic perspectives, and with literary modes of reading the world as text. They also agree in assigning a privileged role to the intellectual's position as exile (see, for instance, Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*; Said, *Blaming the Victims*). Bhabha's focus on the "transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities" seems typical (5). Although Bhabha notes "the changed basis for making international connections" in the late twentieth century, what

readers take in is his interest in cultural difference, migrant sensibilities, performances of identity, and the "unhomely" as "a paradigmatic colonial and postcolonial condition" (Bhabha 9). His recent work affiliates itself with border, diasporic, and cosmopolitan theories that sometimes seem to blur the distinctions between postcolonialism and US multiculturalism, even as his notion of "the politics of location" continues to animate contradictory positions of these matters (Brydon 699-700). Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* also helped to redirect analysis from nation-based study towards the consideration of multiple diasporic formations, travelling cultures and travelling theories in the 1990s (Clifford). Gilroy's theorization of the "Black Atlantic as a counterculture of modernity" based on diaspora resonates with a general shift within the postcolonial field towards privileging mobility and deterritorialization.

Yet our reading of the homeland must be placed alongside another truth about diasporas: as a general rule diasporas do not return to their homeland (real or imaginary). The modern Indian diaspora has a long history which is in fact continuous with an older wanderlust, the *ghummakar* tradition, that took the gypsies to the Middle East and to Europe, fellow Indians to South-East Asia and Sri Lanka as missionaries and conquerors, and traders to the litoral trading community around the Arabian Sea (Mishra 2).

Rethinking the argument that "it was poverty at home that pushed them [Indians] across the ocean [to Africa]", M.G. Vassanji writes in *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall*: "but surely there's that wanderlust first, that itch in the sole, that hankering in the soul that puffs out the sails for journey into the totally unknown" (17). This Indian diaspora is a complex social formation of collective memory which can be read by the terms "old" and "new." The subjects of the traditional concept of diaspora occupy spaces in which they interact with other colonized peoples with whom they had a complex relationship of power and privilege; the subjects of the modern diaspora are people who have entered metropolitan centres of Empire or other white settler countries such as Canada or the USA as part of a post-1960s pattern of global migration. The cultural dynamics of the latter are often examined within a multicultural theory. As is clear from Vassanji's treatment of "Shamsi" traders of Gujarat who migrated to East Africa, the binary of the old and the new is not meant to isolate communities or to situate experiences within non-negotiable or exclusive frames. It should be self-evident that the old has become part of the new through re-migrations and that the old has not been immune to a general electronic media culture that has tended to redefine the diasporic self.

The binary therefore has a strategic function: it recognizes an earlier phase of migration, the psychic imaginary which involved a reading of India based on a journey that was complete, a journey that was final. In contrast, the new subjects of diaspora surface precisely at the moment of postmodern ascendancy; it comes with globalization and hypermobility, it comes with modern means of communication and it comes, since 2003, with the gift of dual citizenship from India. In a thoroughly global world the act of displacement now makes of diasporic subjects travellers on the move, their homeland contained in the simulacral world of visual media where the 'net' constitutes the 'self' and quite unlike the earlier diaspora

where imagination was triggered by the contents in gunny sacks. Indeed, 'homeland' is now available in the confines of one bedroom in Vancouver or Toronto (Mishra 3-4):

> Even now, in this Canadian wilderness, I cannot help but say my namaskars, or salaams, to the icons I carry faithfully with me, not quite understanding what they mean to me. But I am convinced they represent some elemental force of nature, some qualities of it, gravitation and the electric force and all other entities conjured up for us by scientists from our mundane existence. (Vassanji, *Vikram Lall* 20)

Nostalgia is less important than the posterior re-subjectification and re-structuring of the subject that is the consequence. Whenever the nation-state is perceived as racist or imperialist and the therapy of self-representation is denied to diasporic peoples, a state of melancholy sets in precisely because the past cannot be constructive, interpreted, the primal loss cannot be replaced by the new object of love. Mishra suggests that the diasporic imaginary is a condition of an impossible mourning that transforms mourning into melancholia. In the imaginary of diasporas "both mourning and melancholia persist, sometimes in intensely contradictory ways at the level of the social" (Mishra 9). Diasporic melancholia is related to a moment of trauma "deeply tied to our own historical realities." The exact dating of the historical moment of trauma is less important than its posterior re-subjectifications and the restructuring of the subject that is the consequence. For Indians in East Africa, the trauma is often connected to demands for their repatriation to India by African nationalists, even though most are at least second-generation Indo-Africans. The Kenyan expulsions and, more dramatically, Idi Amin's declaration that Asians were no longer welcomed in Uganda are cases in point. For Indians from India living in the diaspora, that moment could be the tragedy of partition which Salman Rushdie continues to try to come to terms with, or which the histories of the Parsis evince in the works of Rohinton Mistry (Mishra 13).

Another kind of homeland trauma may be discussed with reference to the lives of those members of the East Indian diaspora in Canada who see themselves as twice-displaced. Although there is no single moment of trauma, the literature of writers such as Bissoondath or Vassanji is marked by both a different memory of the homeland and a different kind of accommodation with their new land. We can talk of an 'unfixed self' (Mishra 154) who moves from one locale to another, who comes from an earlier space where foundational narratives are constructed, where the metaphors of 'living' have their origins. In this type of writings, movement from one country to another creates a consciousness about one's past and produces the dilemma of unfixed selves. How does one writes about these selves? How does one negotiate living in Canada and writing out narratives invaded by earlier memories?

Thus, what does it mean to be a South Asian Canadian writer? How are South Asian Canadian writers received in Canada? Finally, how are they received in the countries of their origin? (Mukherjee, *Postcolonialism* 30). It is clear that they frequently share culture, memory and a repertoire of linguistic signs. However, the South Asian group of writers does not form a community as such, but it is composed of many communities. They also differ from many other immigrant groups

by the fact that they are not generally "political and economic refugees," "exiles," or "peasants" (Mukherjee, *Postcolonialism* 33). Rather, they are usually economic migrants, and as such, they lack the anti-colonial stance as well as the critique of racism often found at the basis of postcolonial texts. Instead, these writers often focus on memory —of Bombay and the middle class Parsi community in the case of Rohinton Mistry and of the fictionalised Shamsi community of Vassanji's texts, to provide two examples (Burke 97-99).

But, is there, then, a South Asian Canadian literature? (Vassanji, "Is There?" 1). For Vassanji the term South Asian is perhaps a little unfortunate as South Asia refers to the Subcontinent -India, Pakistan, Bangladesh- and Sri Lanka. South Asians come to Canada from these countries ultimately, but also from East and South Africa, the Caribbean countries, Fiji, and elsewhere, mostly from a former British colony. This "meeting of streams," as Vassanji himself would call it (Vassanji, *A Meeting*), did not begin in the 1960s and 1970s, but it "began with the presence of the British in our countries" (Vassanji, "Is There?" 1). In this context, we note an important diasporic meditation in his novel *The Book of Secrets*:

> We were intensely aware of our essential homelessness. Our world was diminishing with the Empire. We were all travellers who had on an impulse taken off, for all kinds of personal reasons... We were now aware that we would have to choose: to return home ... but what was home now? to take up a new nationality ... but what did that mean? to move on to the vestiges of the Empire, to the last colonies and dominions, or perhaps to retreat to where it all began, London. I of course had chosen to throw in my lot with the new nation; being a solitary man without close attachments has been a help in living up to this resolve. But for the others, even after they had opted to stay, the question always remained to plague them —to stay or to go, and where to go? (Vassanji, *The Book of Secrets* 274)

The world of the South Asian immigrant is a large one, a geopolitical world whose boundaries are arbitrary and even unreal. For the writer, this has important consequences in order to define his literary identity and his audience. One question would be: Can a body of work be naturalized together with the writer? There are fiction writers such as Selvadurai, Ondaatje, Bissoondath and Mistry who are published by the big presses, and who have no choice but to write in English, speaking only English or having been brought up to be literate only in it. But there is a choice of audience these writers write for, the English-speaking world primarily. Others, like Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, write in Kikuyu and translate their work. Ultimately, all these writers, like Vassanji, have a private world they write about, be it Sri Lanka, Dar es Salaam, or a fictional and symbolic one like Bissoondath's Casaquemada. But there is a trust in the readership, the audience, if not always in the publishing empires (Vassanji, "Is There?" 5). The South Asian Canadian experience has therefore two aspects, a public and a private one.

Bringing a private world into public life, for Vassanji, the postcolonial writer is a mythmaker and a folk historian as he preserves in his fiction the collective tradition: the past is evoked in specific historical events (as in Ondaatje's recreation of the Sri Lankan Civil War in *Anil's Ghost*) or in evocative scenery and imagery (as

in Rohinton Mistry's *Tales from Firozsha Baag)*. We have many individual Canadian writers of South Asian origin playing their individual trades but not a clear and unified trend (Vassanji, "Is There?" 8). These writers loosely hang together, like segments of an unfinished jigsaw puzzle: not quite fitting but belonging together as they complement each other in time and space, and together they span the literary record of a collective experience (Vassanji, *A Meeting* 63).

Despite the critical stance by which a writer matures when he begins to talk of his "Canadian experience," these South Asian writers have shown the opposite. Diasporic writing is not, however, a narrative of heroic deeds. Nor is it a narrative of oppression and victimization, the narratives privileged these days. It is a narrative about mundane things, about day-to-day lives of people who did not 'resist' but colluded with the empire. And to the extent that it does not position itself as the voice of the colonized, it is written from a hard place:

> When one is positioned as the wronged party and can write about generations of oppressions, it is a position of moral rightness. And there is nothing more powerful than this kind of writing. It is the position that rightly belongs to those Fanon called "the wretched of the earth." It is the position that belongs to African Americans and the aboriginal people in North America. It is the position that Afro-Caribbeans and Indo-Caribbeans seem to be fighting about to determine who has suffered the most. (Mukherjee, *Oppositional* 172-73)

Vassanji and other writers write about unheroic people and this requires an understated style that stays clear of lyricisms and tragic events. These characters usually show allegiance to the colony, his narratives speak from that space of collusion and collaboration. His Indians admire the British might, and he brings it out, however embarrassing it sounds. In *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall,* we read:

> It was 1953, the coronation year of our new monarch who looked upon us from afar, a cold England of pastel, watery shades, and I was eight years old They had rather refined accents, their language sharp and crystalline and musical, beside which ours seemed a crude approximation, for we had learned it in school and knew it to be the language of power and distinction but could never speak it their way. Their clothes were smart; their mannerisms so relaxed. (Vassanji, *Vikram Lall* 9)

Vassanji writes of conflicting interests and divided loyalties but he refuses to participate in the heroic narratives of freedom struggles. Unlike many other African and Indian novelists, he writes about the distinct ethnic groups, the Arabs, the Swahili, the Masai, the Shamsis or Khoja and so on. His special take on the master narratives of freedom struggles reminds us that much too often they wipe out embarrassing realities whose memories might make us less self-righteous (Mukherjee, *Oppositional* 178). As the narrator, Vikram Lall, comments:

> I have wondered sometimes if I took the easy way out, but always come out with the answer, No. To the African I would always be the Asian, the Shylock; I would never escape that suspicion, that stigma. We lived in a compartmentalized society; every evening from the melting pot of city life each person went his long way

> home to his family, his church, his folk. To the Kikuyu, the Luo were the crafty, rebellious eggheads of Lake Victoria, the Masai awkward naked nomads. The Meru prided themselves on being special, having descended from some wandering Semitic tribe. There were the Dorobo, the Turkana, the Boran, the Somali, the Swahili, each also different from each other. And then there were the Wahindi-the wily Asians who were not really African. (Vassanji, *Vikram Lall* 287)

The new diasporic subject reflects and wonders about his own identity, about his possible failure in integrating as an invisible other, always remaining in-between. Narrated by Vikram Lall, a disreputable middle-aged businessman, from his new home on the shores of Canada's Lake Ontario, *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* is an epic tale of modern Kenyan history, mapped out amid the major transplantations of the Lall family. In the course of about five decades, three generations of Lalls have migrated across three continents in a westward movement followed by a growing number of African-born Asians. As a young man, Vikram's grandfather Anand Lall is shipped from British India —along with tens of thousands of other indentured laborers— to an alien country across the seas to work on the grand Mombasa-Kampala railway. In this adopted land, Vikram's father, Ashok Lall, runs a grocery store in Nakuru before moving to the capital, Nairobi. But the bloodshed engulfing this troubled land has yet to touch the 8-year-old Vikram, growing up in Nakuru. Every Saturday morning, in a parking lot near his father's grocery store, Vikram plays with his little sister, Deepa, their English friends, Bill and Anne, and Njoroge, the black grandson of the Lalls' loyal Kikuyu gardener. By naming his main Kikuyu character Njoroge, Vassanji seems to recall Kenya's preeminent postcolonial writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o. But in his complex, politically ambivalent portrayal of African's Asian community, Vassanji appears to be mocking Ngugi's depiction of Kenyan society through the manichean prisms of class struggle and nationalism (Jacinto 31). Indeed Vassanji's view of Kenyan Asians appears as ambivalent as his "in-between" protagonist's identity crisis. There's Mahesh Uncle, a veteran of the Mahatma Gandhi's Indian Freedom struggle and a Mau Mau supporter, and Ashok Lall, a stereotypical Punjabi, loyal to the Queen and a member of the Asian Home Guard troops used by the British to suppress the blacks. And by far the most racist character, Vikram's mother, whose vicious squashing of Deepa's romance with Njoroge mixes the worst Hindu traditions with the nastiest elements of colonialism.

For Vikram, the ambiguity of his identity will morally and emotionally cripple him in later years as he turns—impassively and without too much reflection—into a money-changing middleman. In the newly independent Kenya, where power has shifted to a group of black elites headed by Jomo Kenyatta, the country's first president, Vikram's community has suddenly slunk from protected colonial collaborators to potential victims. Wealthy, apolitical and intentionally keeping themselves culturally and economically apart from black Africans, the Indians face two possibilities: pack up and flee to Britain or survive amid political corruption. In this climate, Vikram is the ideal invisible go-between, the middle-man who can be trusted to transfer slush funds and hold awkward secrets. Years later, while snow-

bound in his Canadian home-in-exile, Vikram is dispassionate about the moral choices he has made:

> I am actually quite the simpleton. I long believed that mine were crimes of circumstance, of finding oneself in a situation and simply going along with the way of the world. I've convinced myself now that this excuse is not good enough [...] that's what many of the killers in Rwanda would also say. Thank your stars you did not find yourself there during the genocide, going along, as you say [...]. There are different ways of killing Mr Lall. (Vassanji, *Vikram Lall* 372)

While Vikram has sought refuge in Canada, this new country seems to barely impinge on his consciousness, intent as he is on recording his past in a distant, dangerous land. Vassanji's Africa is an inhabited space, where the baggage of history jostles with the actions (or passivity) of its inhabitants, and where hope, generosity and personal responsibility wrestle with despair, greed and corruption. Its people are in-between, the feelings of belonging and not belonging are very central to the book: "and so the years pass and before you know it you've lived here decades and unwillingly, unwittingly, belong. *Belong*, I echoed her word and asked myself, Can I too learn to belong here?" (Vassanji, *Vikram Lall* 370). The question of what it is to be home arises when he presents the experience of the South Asian diaspora as a life of dislocation seeded in a history of transplantings. The landscape of memory becomes a more significant place of habitation than the real place and the South Asian's existence is characterized by ambivalence.

A number of key questions are elicited at this point. When a Canadian writes a novel primarily about Africa from the perspective of a South Asian, to which national literature does the text belong? Is Vassanji's text, then, postnational, crosscultural or a part of Canada's quest for nationhood in the literature of its writers? Just as the concepts of history and home are found to be shifting, unfixed and constructed, 'nation-ness' and national literatures are problematized as well (Bucknor 15). Is there any danger involved in the inclusion of these other writers as part of the national literature of such countries as Canada? As Mishra suggests,

> diasporas may be romanticized as the ideal social condition in which communities are no longer persecuted. But diasporas also remind settler nation-states in particular about their own past, about their own earlier migration patterns, about their traumatic moments, about their memories, their own repressed pain and wounds, about their own prior and prioritized enjoyment of the nation [....] We need to look at people's corporeal or even libidinal investments in nations (as denizens or as outsiders); we need to read off a modernist 'transcendental homelessness' against lived experience... and we need to think through critically the effects of the aesthetic (as dialogic expressions, discrepant discourses or as 'minor' literature) on both diasporic and host citizens. (Mishra 21)

The remains of the past are also frequently assembled by the imagination to form a new, and kaleidoscopic, design, one which, in Homi Bhabha's words, "does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the

performance of the present" (7). It is Stuart Hall who most effectively sums up this point in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora":

> Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference [...]. It is because his New World is constituted for us as place, a narrative of displacement, that it gives rise so profoundly to a certain imaginary plenitude, recreating the endless desire to return to the "lost origins" [...]. And yet, this "return to the beginning" is like the imaginary in Lacan – it can neither be fulfilled nor requited, and hence is the beginning of the symbolic, of representation, the infinitely renewable source of desire, memory, myth, search, discovery. (Hall 235-36)

Our interest in Vassanji's novels centres not on the liminality of the Indian settler, on his anxieties of ethnicity, but, rather, on his continuous crossing of ethnic and cultural boundaries; the Indians who have made Kenya and Tanzania their home, whether Hindu or Muslim, may be deeply rooted in their individual cultural traditions, which originated in India, but they themselves do not look back at India (Barat 90). Nowhere in these novels do we see a present that is unmarked by the past. It serves primarily as a frame that the narrative throws around a multilayered recollection of the event being described. No place is significant except insofar as it is like or unlike other places.

Vassanji's use of the multigenerational saga is a crucial manifestation of the immigrant narrative's continuous project of straddling several times, spaces, and languages. As the narrative maps the lives and travels of several generations, it also marks the changing political map of the world in which these generations live. The Shamsi sect, though invented by Vassanji, is similar to existing organizations. The sect has a worldwide network that serves as a support system for wanderers or immigrants who need to be made at home in an unfamiliar place. Immigrants articulate a sense of home amid homelessness by building on familial and communal ties, ties that intrude on the individual's sense of independence and self-interest in ways that only family is allowed to do. Vikram Lall comments in first person:

> I simply crave to tell my story. In this clement retreat to which I have withdrawn myself, away from the torrid current temper of my country, I find myself with all the time and seclusion I may ever need for my purpose. I have even come across a small revelation —and as I proceed daily to recall and reflect, and lay out on the page, it is with an increasing conviction of its truth, that if more of us missing verb? Our stories to each other, where I come from, we would be a far happier and less nervous people. (Vassanji, *Vikram Lall*, n. pag.)

Partly a novel of exile, of longing for a home where one was not fully at home, partly a *bildungsroman* charting an increasing loss of innocence and idealism, this novel also talks about corruption, violence with the Mau Mau uprising, producing fear and insecurity. The 'in-betweenness' of the title is more than that between a Kenyan past and a Canadian present: the Asian was the brown presence between the white rulers and the Africans. *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* is

"political and historical, social and moral: public immorality finally is also private – that is, of the individual" (Sarvan 84). The parallels with V.S. Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* are obvious. Like Naipaul's Ralph Singh, Lall is caught in violent events beyond his emotional and psychological capacity to respond to. Lall is, however, a much simpler character than Singh; he has been formed by two experiences: as a member of a racial minority that does not rule, he has always felt that the colonizers and the natives must be more at home in their bodies and in the world than he himself is. He is certain that Indians in India must also be more real than he is. Lall has suffered trauma as well: he is unable ever to know love because, when he was eight, he had given his heart to a white girl who was murdered by the Mau Mau. The children's friendship symbolizes the promise of the nation on the verge of independence:

> I call forth for you here my beginning, the world of my childhood, in that fateful year of our friendships. It was a world of innocence and play, under a guileless constant sun; as well, of barbarous cruelty and terror lurking in darkest night; a colonial world of repressive, undignified subjecthood, as also of seductive order and security –so that long afterwards we would be tempted to wonder if we did not hurry forth too fast straight into the morass that is now our malformed freedom. (Vassanji, *Vikram Lall,* n. pag.)

Love in nationalist novels leaps across politically unbridgeable chasms, such as intercaste, interclass, and interrace marriages and sexual unions. Though such "impossible loves" are doomed to fail, according to Anderson, their presence in the nationalist novel serves to eroticize the nation by making its narrative one of love and passion. Vikram's sister, Deepa, in love with the African Njoroge personifies this frustration when their parents reject their union:

> What do you mean you will marry anyone whom you want? Apa exploded. We are not Europeans, remember that, we are desis, Indians. Proud Indians, we have our customs, and we marry with the permission and blessings of our parents!... She and Njoroge had declared their love and committed themselves to each other the previous morning. When she revealed that declaration to me [...]. I recall a shiver at the back of my neck, a quiver of excitement, of fear for them both.... She did not seem to understand the seriousness of her offence, not to me but to the values of our times and people. We did not marry blacks or whites, or low-castes or Muslims; there were other restrictions, too subtle for us of the younger generation to follow: Hindu Punjabis were the strong preference always. Times were changing, certainly, but Deepa in her typical impulsive way had leaped ahead of them. [....] Get this in your head, Deepa, he is an African, Papa said. He is not us. Not even in your wildest dream can you marry an African. What do you mean? What's wrong with an African? I am an African. What hypocrisy!... Mother took a deep breath and replied, there's nothing wrong with being an African or Asian or European. But they can't mix. It doesn't work. (Vassanji, *Vikram Lall* 185-89)

Vassanji emphasizes the racial dynamics of the country, especially the degree to which the Indian diaspora in Kenya created an exclusive world from which

outside entry was impossible. Even then, though, one of Vassanji's key characters, Deepa, never breaks off from her African lover Njoroge and is finally rejected by her people. Vikram himself marries Shobba, daughter of the owner of Javeri jewellers, as a mere formality and seeks love elsewhere. Against the backdrop of the Mau Mau rebellion, Kenya gets its independence, and its first president, an ex-Mau Mau himself, is Jomo Kenyatta. The latter's ascendancy as the leader of all East Africans is short-lived as corruption spreads ad the economy begins to collapse. Still, interesting as the political and economic contexts are, they are not significant to the craft of Vassanji's fiction. Two matters emerge in Vassanji's version of the twice-displaced diaspora. First, the East African Indian diaspora in Canada cannot replicate the vibrancy of life in Africa where, in the end, even Vikram Lall's conservative father ends up with an African mistress. Second, there was in the racial/sexual dynamics of life in East Africa an emotional substratum that can only be captured in art (Mishra 171-72).

As Rocío Davis comments, the negotiation of place and the attempt to recreate a home through memory and writing have been a common undertaking for many writers in the new literatures in English (323). It is the fragmentary nature of these memories that makes them evocative for the 'transplanted' writer who is concerned with either developing or recovering an appropriate identifying relationship between self and place. For these writers, setting is of particular value, since their home locations have been historically constructed as peripheral (Davies 324), and thus "the intersection of language and place is at the very centre of post-colonial identity politics [...]. [Writers] from these locations struggle to construct a viable representation of the 'self' as a located 'self'. At stake here is [...] a landscape against which the 'I' can authentically figure" (Warley 25).

The themes of Vassanji's discourse are indeed frequently a concern for many other South Asian writers as well as is nostalgia for the past which must be recaptured in memory, one with which the protagonists also must come to terms. There is also the desire for a future, unknown, promising, yet also intimidating, in a setting where the discourse changes from the familiar to the strange. In many of Vassanji's texts there is an acculturation process at work, and the pain involved in it is described with particular insight in his second novel, *No New Land* (1991), a text set both in Canada and in Dar es Salaam, peopled with characters who live between two worlds (Burke 99-100): "We are but creatures of our origins, and however stalwartly we march forward, paving new roads, seeking new worlds, the ghosts from our past stand not far behind and are not easily shaken off" (Vassanji, *No New Land* 9). However, usually the conflicts in the narrative between the protagonist's memory of true community in the past and his desire for a new life are never really resolved through the events of the plot line. What Vassanji seems to be expressing, with a gentle pessimism, is the difficulty of achieving integration for the first generation. Such desires will be accomplished by the children, but at a price as well. The immigrants are discouraged from looking back, but when they do it all news is bad.

If the construction of nations must remain open, then literature which presents myths of those constructions is likely to be dynamic. The new Canadians who write participate in that construction even if, at first or for the rest of their

lives, they write with their attention elsewhere. Yet, according to Frank Birbalsingh, "[i]f Canadian literature is defined as literature written about Canada, most South Asian Canadian writers tend to become more Canadian the longer they stay in Canada" (94).

While it is clear that nations emerge and literary traditions change, there has been scepticism regarding the acceptance of both immigrants and their literature as integral to Canada. As Birbalsingh points out in the context of South Asian Canadian writers, despite Canada's own projection as a multicultural space, "the citizenship of their characters is less full-fledged than promised, partly because of their own reluctance to give up the cultural baggage they have brought to Canada, and partly because of the hostility or inhospitality they encounter here" (94). Arun Mukherjee also constructs the 'ethnic writer' as 'melancholy lover' and establishes Canadians as anxiously afraid to accept the foreignness in themselves. Neither writer makes an explicit connection between the pull and push factors. Perhaps the two reasons are not unrelated, but the problem is not a simple one. Birbalsingh and Vassanji outline South Asian writing in Canada as preoccupied with alienation and displacement. Other immigrant writers like Dionne Brand expose racism, and Canadian dub poets have complained about the exclusionary practices of the literary establishment. Immigrant writers do not support an image of Canada as the great mosaic. Moreover, Vassanji argues, individualism predominates. The fact that "there appears to be no cross-cultural movement in the writing; no borrowing, no cross-reference as South Asian and as Canadian" (Vassanji, "Am I?" 12) supports his claim. But perhaps it is too soon to see the cross referencing. When higher levels of integration arise, the literature and the criticism may begin to reflect it.

Vassanji's own works might be seen as taking a step forward, since the acceptance of diasporic literature as Canadian literature may contribute to the myth that multiculturalism is somewhat effective. If immigrant literature participates in the construction of the nation, then it may help people accept an emerging Canadian society made up of peoples of different colours and backgrounds. It is clear that the sense of unbelonging is not the same for all groups; for some it is a function of landscape, for others it is culture, for yet others it is race: "Belonging in any one place requires a judicious balancing of remembrance and forgetting. Writing on the discourses that inscribe the modern nation," Bhabha states: "It is this forgetting […] that constitutes the beginning of the nations's narrative .... It is through this syntax of forgetting –or being obliged to forget- that the problematic identification of a national people becomes visible" (Bhabha 310).

Nevertheless, Vassanji's point above foregrounds the need to assess the extent to which Canada's great promise of inclusion is effectively operating (Bucknor 24-5). The inclusion of Vassanji's texts in Canadian courses reveals a desire to break with the institutional perpetuation of rigid categories and indicate the role that literature can play in moving 'beyond' such limits. On the one hand, the construction of Canadian literature as an *inter*-national body levels the field for writers and recognizes a commonality that is always differently expressed. As Canada continues to evolve, the inclusion of all kinds of immigrant writings (not only literary prize winners like Ondaatje, Mistry and Vassanji) may indicate the arrival of the great

mosaic. On the other hand, the shifting nature of the South Asian diaspora has drawn new and rigid borders sometimes impossible to trespass. Where is home? What is a nation? What ought to be considered national literature? These questions remain significant in Canada today.

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"SPACE" INVASION: JEWISH CANADIAN WOMEN WRITERS AND THE RESHAPING OF CANADIAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Almost as quickly as the Canadian canon was put together with land as its central motif, it began to be dismantled in favour of new approaches to "space." The (ab)use of land in Canadian writing became quickly linked to patriarchal and imperialist systems of control masked behind a guise of "universalism." Jewish Canadian women writers provide an excellent example of space's advantageous provision of unfixed, renewable literary images and a shifting environment within which one can work out complicated questions of identity. By setting fictional works in "Jewish chronotopes," writers such as Anne Michaels and Nancy Richler in *Fugitive Pieces* and *Your Mouth is Lovely* demonstrate that a multicultural Canada will function when the spaces —even those outside of Canada— belonging to all its citizens are represented in Canadian literature.

KEY WORDS: Jewish Canadian Women Writers, Canadian literature, Canadian canon, Anne Michaels, Nancy Richler, multiculturalism, chronotopes.

RESUMEN

Casi al tiempo que se construía alrededor de "la tierra" como motivo principal, el canon canadiense empezaba a ser desmantelado por posiciones derivadas de los nuevos acercamientos al concepto de "espacio". El (ab)uso del motivo de la tierra en la escritura canadiense se asoció rápidamente a sistemas de control patriarcales e imperialistas disfrazados de "universalidad". Las escritoras canadienses de origen judío nos proporcionan un ejemplo excelente de la capacidad de propuestas literarias que se pueden establecer a través de la metáfora espacial, así como de la actual atmósfera cambiante en la que se pueden negociar complicadas cuestiones identitarias. Al ambientar sus trabajos de ficción en "cronotopos judíos", escritoras como Anne Michaels con *Fugitive Pieces* y Nancy Richler con *Your Mouth Is* Lovely demuestran que un Canadá multicultural será posible sólo cuando todos los espacios —incluso aquellos fuera de Canadá— que pertenecen a todos sus ciudadanos estén representados en la literatura canadiense.

PALABRAS CLAVE: escritoras canadienses judías, literatura canadiense, canon canadiense, Anne Michaels, Nancy Richler, multiculturalismo, cronotopos.

1. INTRODUCTION: CONQUERING CANADIAN LAND

Images of Canada in the popular imagination inevitably include a vast wilderness and infinite, uninhabited areas. W.H. New, in *Land Sliding: Imagining Space, Presence and Power in Canadian Writing,* observes: "Canadians, of course, have long thought of themselves in connection with the land. As scores of writings indicate, they are fascinated by distance and scenery, park and farm, property and region, river system and mountain range, 'cottage country,' [...] —all this in a largely urban society" (New 17). When Canadians began to think about who they were with the passing of the *Canadian Citizenship Act* in 1947,[1] it was assumed that one's *Canadianness* came from adopting the characteristics of the landscape. A Northerner, a Maritimer, a Torontonian, then, became assignations that brought with them certain connotations. With such a picture of itself and in a country so great, it naturally followed that Canada's regional variation became one of the factors in its (now notorious) lack of a coherent national identity.

All nations are constructs; they are comprised of a fragile web of mythologies representing the "truths" of how they wish to be perceived (see, for example, Francis). Canada is, to use Anthony D. Smith's term, a "nation by design." Its conscious attempts to rise above its marginality —and the sense that its people did not know who they were— became evident when the creation of a literary culture and the institutionalisation of Canadian literature in schools and universities began to take place. Canadian nationalism of the 1960s and 1970s was marked by the country's centennial, the Montreal Expo in 1967, economic security, a disdain for America's attempts at cultural imperialism, and the refusal of first-generation immigrants who felt more at home than ever in Canada to get less than their due. The opening up of the gates for "non-preferred"[2] sources of immigration and the rights demanded and achieved by non-white immigrants gave Canadians a feeling of a promising future and the sense they were a fair, just, and peaceful society.

Despite the different ways people were living, writers and literary critics embraced this hopeful period and tried to uncover the Canadian identity by articulating through cultural products the Canadian "way of life." What the ever-increasing body of Canadian works seemed to share was a recognition of the influence of land and landscape. Well-suited to the national consciousness that was in want of being developed, titles such as *The Mountain and the Valley, Who Has Seen the Wind,*

[1] As an invader-settler society, Canada was given the British nation as a provisional, temporary source of nationness until it achieved its own. Questions of nationalism arose after the passing of the 1947 *Canadian Citizenship Act*, and were then further exacerbated over the next two decades by other factors such as post-World War II immigration, Quebec nationalism, fear of American imperialism, and growing demands from peoples of the First Nations.

[2] "Non-preferred" immigrants included Asians, Blacks, Jews and some Southern Europeans, as opposed to the "preferred" British, American and Northern European immigrants. To learn more about Canada's closed immigration policies, see Abella and Troper.

The Stone Angel, People of the Deer, and *The Last Barrier* were promptly compiled in a canon by chiefly white male professors, bureaucrats, editors, publishers and critics who, in trying to advance their own careers and justify their roles as canon-makers, were necessarily conservative (Lecker 5). Nonetheless, contextualising Canadian literature in order to define the national identity was considered crucial. The result was a rather quickly established canon, created within less than two decades.[3] Consequently, Canadian wilderness and the need to take control of it became inseparable from the nation's literary products and, thereafter, with Canadian identity. Northrop Frye's "garrison mentality," describing all models of Canadianness as defensive ones,[4] or Margaret Atwood's theory of survival which proposes that the underlying theme of all Canadian fiction is that of colonial victims trying to survive (Atwood), came to describe this consciously chosen collection of Canadian works.

Land in literature is never neutral, however; it is a reflection of how people choose to identify it. Meant only as a means to confirm a Canadian identity, New argues that it is retrospectively evident that the works collected into the Canadian canon began to (ab)use land as a medium through which plays for power could be enacted. Land was the battleground where the centre exuded its hegemony over the margin in struggles between men/women, European/First Nations, clearings/wilderness, property/nature and East/West. It was thus only a matter of time before land would be challenged as the central trope in Canadian literature. Necessarily, the works in the WASP male-dominated canon were contested by minority and First Nations authors by writing from the specificity of their community's experience and questioning the supposed universalist stance paraded by canonised voices (Mukherjee 164). What was once called universalist has since been deemed "white."

In 1971, Canada became a multicultural nation,[5] an official recognition that there is not one way to be Canadian. The conventional treatment of land in

[3] Publishing houses were also conspicuously involved in its codification. For instance, McClelland and Stewart's *New Canadian Library* series began in 1957 under the direction of Malcolm Ross. This is a collection of paperbacks specifically designed for accessibility in the classroom and was from its inception a means to teach the Canadian classics (a selection which was not yet made). The first four titles chosen for printing were Grove's *Over Prairie Trails*, Morley Callaghans's *Such is My Beloved*, Stephen Leacock's *Literary Lapses*, and Sinclair Ross's *As for Me and My House*. (Please note the flavour of the authors' names). This series, as the first of its kind, defined which works would henceforth be deemed classics. The irony, however, was the backwards reaction that it enlisted, for the more unknown something was, the more it sold when it was eventually included in the series. Inclusion did much for profitability and ensured for the author a place in the canon. See: Lecker 187.

[4] Frye describes the Canadian imagination as consisting of "small and isolated communities surrounded with a physical or psychological 'frontier' [...] such communities are bound to develop what we may provisionally call a garrison mentality (Frye, 829).

[5] In Pierre Trudeau's famous speech to the House of Commons in 1971, he proposed the concept of multiculturalism, to be lodged within a bilingual framework, in order to include the ever-increasing minority populations in the idea of what it means to be Canadian. In 1982, multicultura-

Canadian literature was recognised as a stifling means of containment, a subtle subscription to patriarchal and imperial systems of control. New literary images that were unfixed, renewable, and flexible were being demanded by those who had truly begun to envision a Canada as a multicultural mosaic, a nation of belonging and equality for all groups. Almost as quickly as the Canadian canon was put together, it began to be dismantled in favour of new approaches to "space."

Out of this desire to find a shifting environment within which one can work out complicated questions of identity, Jewish writing in Canada always provided a challenge to the tenuous hold Canadian literature had on land. Defiantly urban, works by early Jewish writers such as Mordecai Richler and Adele Wiseman addressed their Jewish communities in Montreal and Winnipeg, focussing on the immigrant experience of navigating through the new world burdened by old world values. Although it can be argued that the Jewish ghettoes were somewhat "garrisoned," the city is a text, amenable to revision, and therefore never stopped contesting the static image of wilderness as a foe to be conquered.

For the next few decades, the trend whereby Jewish writers textually explored Canadian cities as a means of understanding a hybrid identity continued. More recently, however, the spaces required for this investigation seem to belong to other times and places; subject matter is being replaced with stories from a past even older than arrival. Jewish Canadian women writers in particular have begun to sift through Jewish history in the hopes of "re-creating places of origin that have since been erased from the world" (Burstein 801). However, as Henri Lefebvre argues in *The Production of Space*, no place ever completely disappears. The result is what can be called, to play with a term from Mikhail Bakhtin, "Jewish chronotopes." These can be defined as socio-historical space-and-times, such as the *shtetl*, the Shoah, pre-Inquisition Spain, or, as in the following examples, the Russian Empire and a Canadian city, where there was once a Jewish presence that in literature becomes the site for an examination of Jewish life as valuable and intrinsic to that time and space. Situating their works in Jewish chronotopes, Jewish Canadian women writers preserve the collective past and create an identity for the present by participating in the continual revision of Jewish historiography. In so doing, they reveal layered histories and allow multiple voices to be heard.

By illustrating through their overlapping and stratified understanding of space how there are innumerable ways of being Jewish, these women writers also indicate that there are a myriad of ways to be Canadian. Jewish Canadian writers such as Anne Michaels and Nancy Richler treat space in their novels as something to be transgressed, reshaped, and shared. Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces* (1996) is comprised of Shoah survivor Jakob Beer's fictional memoirs, relaying his path of healing that began with his rescue and subsequent adoption as a child by the Greek

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lism was officially adopted into Canada's constitution in the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Bill C-93, the official *Multiculturalism Act,* followed in 1988.

archaeologist Athanasios Roussos (Athos). Jakob and his surrogate father move from Poland to Greece and finally to Toronto, a city harbouring a wealth of histories. The Jewish chronotope of post-war Toronto demonstrates that, as a place of refuge for some of the Shoah's survivors, the only way to compete with those who "devoured time as well as space" (Michaels 104) with their concept of *Lebensraum* is to recover repressed memories (Criglington 13). In Nancy Richler's *Your Mouth is Lovely* (2002), Miriam, a young exiled Jewish revolutionary, in hopes of giving her child a sense of identity and personal history, tries to find her voice by composing her life story. Miriam's quest parallels Canadian literature's own struggle to come into its multicultural literary voice; it is a slow realisation that a single story —of a life or a national identity— can be told in a number of ways, drawing from diverging, competing, interwoven and often contradictory narratives.

2. THE JEWISH CHRONOTOPE IN *FUGITIVE PIECES*

Jewish Canadian women writers such as Anne Michaels have demonstrated that space has replaced land's centrality in Canadian literature. As a group, their understanding of space is manifested in Jewish chronotopes, thus requiring a brief explanation of this literary phenomenon. Mikhail Bakhtin suggests in his theory of chronotopes that it is through each "genre" —a tool for perceiving reality through a particular socio-historic setting[6]— that a distinctive understanding of time, space and human action is conveyed. When this understanding is conceptualised in literary expression, it becomes a chronotope. Chronotopes suggest that the ever-changing present alters the relationship to the past; the present is re-orientated when looking backwards.

Literary chronotopes, as ideal sources of memory, propose a similar method of looking backwards through time. Rather than passively recording histories, they present "history as a permanent reactivation of the past in a critique of the present, and at the level of content offers a textual anamnesis for the hitherto ignored, unacknowledged or repressed pasts marginalised by the dominant histories —feminist narratives, ethnic narratives, non-heterosexual narratives" (Middleton and Woods 77). The chronotope is thus a realm of memory rooted in a real socio-historic time-space that offers a podium for the hushed voices of the past and, in Walter Benjamin's words, "blast[s] open the continuum of history" (Benjamin, "On the Concept of History" 396). Meredith Anna Criglington demonstrates how Anne Michaels's novel, *Fugitive Pieces*, through its idea of "spatial consciousness" which is in direct opposition to the nineteenth-century conviction of an accumulating past, also rejects the idea of inevitability and suggests instead the existence of space and simultaneity

[6] Examples of quotidian genres are telephone conversations or shopping lists.

(Criglinton 11). By engaging in memory and employing chronotopes, the goal of novels such as *Fugitive Pieces* is to recover the pasts that have been silenced and subdued.

The function of chronotopes is that they materialise time and space. Michaels's work also demonstrates time made palpable in what she has called the "gradual instant." In *Fugitive Pieces*, Jakob explains: "Just as the earth invisibly prepares its cataclysms, so history is the gradual instant" (77). Defining the concept in an interview, Michaels elaborates on how the tangible evidence of change only appears sudden: "[...] in the present moment, a mountain seems permanent, static, but is, in fact, part of a geological narrative, even though the process is infinitesimally slow" (Gorjup 2). The earth, too, is not immutable as time and space were once considered.

Einstein's theory of relativity, where space and time are woven into a single fabric and space-time is always a variable, is thus introduced as leitmotif in the novel. Indeed, as Yi-Fu Tuan demonstrated in the 1970s, "place [is] time made visible" because one's experience determines how space will be perceived (Yi-Fu Tuan 179). In *Fugitive Pieces*, Athos gives Jakob hope by teaching him to look to the ground, backwards through vertical time: "Redemption through cataclysm; what had once been transformed might be transformed again" (101). Michaels seems to be rooting her concept of possible redemption in the philosophy of Walter Benjamin. When history is viewed as progress, then the past is necessarily sacrificed to the future, an idea to which Benjamin is opposed. For Benjamin, history is the interruption of time, not its culmination. He objects to the Enlightenment's idea of progress and believes continuity in history to be merely an illusion. His aim is to save the past from the one-dimensional interpretation of the victorious side. Bakhtin's theory, like Benjamin's, by giving equal significance to space as well as time, also suggests multiple pasts and a plurality of voices. Each past has as much right to be voiced as any other. In literature, the chronotope becomes a channel for Benjamin's "messianic time"—the redemption of history—because it gives the past a chance to speak. The opportunity for restitution is thus presented through rectifying former silencing.

3. *FUGITIVE PIECES* AND THE MULTICULTURAL CITY

Time is the fourth dimension of space, so when Jakob in *Fugitive Pieces* says: "I was transfixed by the way time buckled, met itself in pleats and folds" (30), Anne Michaels entreats her readers to see the *pasts* that history's winners left unwritten. It is not just space and time that are essential to a chronotope, but also the memory attached to them; it is dedicated remembrance that breathes life into chronotopes. As Bakhtin suggests, all temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable, influenced by emotion and values (Bakhtin 243). Michaels's view of memory is thus an ethical one: "History is amoral; events occurred. But memory is moral; what we consciously remember is what our conscience remembers" (138).

What individuals choose to remember determines who they are. It is how one works with the raw material of space-time that an individual's identity begins to take shape. Since "space and time have gained subjectivity by being oriented to man," this fabric can be worked and reworked to construct an identity (Tuan 123). By portraying post-war Toronto as a Jewish chronotope —a city with a lively Jewish population embracing the wave of arrivals knowing far too much death— Michaels demonstrates that the multicultural Canadian city is one of many spaces in which a Canadian identity can be rewritten.

When Jakob and Athos move to Toronto where Athos has accepted a job in the geography department of the University of Toronto, they take weekly walks which are to them "escapes to ideal landscapes; lakes and primeval forests so long gone they could never be taken away from us" (102). During their walks through ravines and to ancient First Nations sites, Athos and Jakob "collapse time" (159) as they look through the earth's layers towards the past. As a chronotope, the city of Toronto bears concealed and "forsaken worlds" (89), and it is there that Athos decides to write *Bearing False Witness*, "his conscience" (104), the work that will come to define him. *Bearing False Witness* exposes the atrocious actions of the *Ahnenerbe*.[7] He writes the academic treatise, "thick as a small dictionary" (209), in order to right the wrongs of abused history and provide reconstructions of the now-vanished landscapes and cities that were victims of Nazi *Lebensraum*. Athos and Jakob understand this need to prevent the loss of the past and are what Benjamin has dubbed "subjects of knowledge," that is, one who recognises that "*even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he is victorious" (Benjamin, "On the Concept of History" 391). In *Bearing False Witness,* Athos fights against linear historiography by exposing repressed memories. Meanings and interpretations become important to this hermeneutics of the past. Jakob finds a twin sufferer in Athos, bound by their compassion for landscapes that expose a history of affliction and which encourage them to reveal hidden pasts. It is their spatial explorations of many places' layered narratives, stories and memories that allow Jakob and Athos to investigate their own identities.

In *Fugitive Pieces*, memory is at morality's front because it acts as a realm of intercession. Memory is a spatial form that indicates the possibility of simultaneity, of multiple frames of reference, and of the coexistence of the past and present (Criglington 18). In *Fugitive Pieces*, Michaels exposes, through use of physical metaphors, the power of the earth's memory. She explains the need to turn the earth's deposits into analogy:

> I think metaphor also has to be firmly, firmly grounded in physical reality. So for me, an abstract metaphor is a useless thing. It has to be concrete, physical. It has to work as a concrete, physical image first, and then move into the abstract. And it's

[7] The Ahnenerbe was the "Ancestral Heritage Research Group" formed by Nazi Heinrich Himmler in 1935 to prove the superiority of the Aryan race through archaeology and other sciences.

> a way of ...it gives more of a chance to find some, in this case, some peace, or some way of living with certain events. For Jakob, the idea that the earth or stones can actually hold memory physically —concretely hold memory— provides a certain respite for him, because in a way he knows if he's not carrying it, it will be carried elsewhere. (Michaels, personal interview)

As Jakob Beer's memoirs that form the first two-thirds of the novel make evident, the present is never free of the past. Athos's gift to Jakob is that he "confirmed that there was an invisible world, just as real as what's evident. Full-grown forests still and silent, whole cities, under a sky of mud." (49). However, land is important to *Fugitive Pieces* only in so far that it is affected by time, memory and one's relationship to it. In other words, land in *Fugitive Pieces* is the physical representation of spatial history, a retainer of countless stories. The land that manages to heal Jakob is not the majestic but also terrifying wilderness of the early Canadian canon; it is a space within which one can assert an identity by selecting stories to retrieve from the past.

Toronto, as a chronotope of a city, is a space that bears traces of repressed or "failed" histories (Criglinton 13). The cityscape, "an endlessly layered urban space," is a material form of memory and its ruins make readers consider the invisible worlds that were destroyed in the course of history-making (Kandiyoti 322). Toronto is not just a "new world," but also a very old one (Kandiyoti 324). Toronto's pasts, its revealed spaces of buried and abandoned voices, become part of Jakob's history. When Athos helps him review the Hebrew alphabet, he explains to Jakob that: "It is your future you are remembering" (21), and the same happens when they search through Toronto's layered history. Not only does Jakob take on Toronto's pasts, but Toronto also adopts his. Toronto, as the chapter heading suggests, is "The Way Station." It is a port city necessarily marked by its comings and goings, a space that supports exchange, negotiation, mediation and fluidity.

What the theme of space-time relativity in Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces* means for multiculturalism in Canada is a recognition that immigrants and members of various ethnic or minority communities have a differing experience of Canadian space. Canadian women writers in general have traditionally been known to display a "multivoiced aspect of Canadian fiction" in order to metaphorise Canada's "problem of identity [that] may not be the problem of having no identity but rather of having multiple identities, so that any single national self-image is reductive and always open to revision" (Howells 126). Chronotopic literature such as *Fugitive Pieces* thus reveals otherwise suppressed histories and memories belonging to those who were long denied a voice. If Canadian literature comes to accept all cultural or national spaces of memory, articulating space as a part of a multilayered Canadian history, then a truly "unified" national identity of multiculturalism will emerge. *Fugitive Pieces*, a novel that crosses the borders of three nations and digs deep through the earth to find hidden meanings, demonstrates that a multicultural Canada needs space as its central literary motif precisely for its subjective, inclusive, and unfixed qualities.

4. FINDING A VOICE IN *YOUR MOUTH IS LOVELY*

Novelist Nancy Richler also employs Jewish chronotopes in her fiction, thus substantiating space's relevance and predominance over land as the chief trope in Canadian writing. Richler's *Your Mouth is Lovely* recounts the fictional memoirs of the political convict Miriam in the wake of the failed revolution of 1905. As she wastes away with tuberculosis in Maltzev, a prison in Siberia, Miriam is determined to write out her life story for her daughter, whom she barely caught a glimpse of after delivering her while in police custody. Miriam undertakes this arduous task so that the child can one day understand the mother she will never meet. Growing up in the 1890s, Miriam is an intelligent but lonely girl in a Ukrainian shtetl, whose frail bird-like frame can barely sustain the weight of the cursed stories that comprise her past. As a result of her mother's suicide by drowning the day after her birth, she is raised by a superstitious wet-nurse until her widowed father remarries and finally reclaims her. In Aaron Lev's and his new bride Tsila's home, Miriam enters a house full of love and knowledge, a space of comfort and calm drastically juxtaposed to the shame and alienation she is made to feel in the town. A series of accidents lead her to join the revolutionary movement in Kiev.

Richler's *Your Mouth is Lovely* features the revisioning of narratives —biblical, cultural, familial and political— that shape its characters while they fight to have their voices heard. Even the novel's title is part of a prayer for eloquence and wisdom, for a "smooth [...] tongue" (Richler 61). Miriam's need to write her life story as she sits in a Siberian *katorga* seems to be an admission that people can only understand themselves when they know where they come from. One revisits the past in order to root his or her identity in a particular space and time; identity is who people are, and historiography is how they came to be (Gilman 3). That Miriam's life is a constant struggle to resolve and understand both mimics how the novel is the product of a writer who, from her position in twenty-first century Vancouver, seeks to connect to a cultural past she only knows through narratives. As Richler explores the Russian Revolution as a Jewish chronotope, she is contributing to a Jewish identity for a Canadian present by providing one of many possible histories. She also confirms that questions of Canadian identity need not be solved in a strictly Canadian space.

Throughout the novel, Miriam is guided by an irrepressible need to discover her voice and thus a means to tell her story. As a small child, lost amidst a crowd of noisy children in the wet-nurse Lipsa's house, she is virtually anonymous. Significantly, the day she moves in with her father and stepmother Tsila, she develops a sore throat that prevents her from speaking. As her illness worsens, her voice threatens to disappear altogether, until Tsila promises: "'Your daughter will speak, Aaron Lev. I will lead her to words.'" (34). One of Tsila's offerings to Miriam is to teach her how to defy the narratives of the past that threaten to silence and disfigure her. As Tsila restores her to health and helps Miriam find her voice —physically and emotionally— she also heals Miriam of her debilitating past by uncovering some of its buried truths. What Miriam learns is that a single story can be told in a myriad

of ways. Miriam also ascertains that the voice she has found is not hers alone. It encompasses the call of those who have disappeared, those whose voices were once unjustly suppressed by the Czarist regime.

The most important moral that Tsila teaches Miriam is that "'The beauty of life is not always obvious.' [...] 'But it must be found. That is our task here. To find the beauty of His work and make it manifest'" (166). Tsila's wisdom comes in direct conflict with the revolutionary motto that inverts a kabbalistic maxim in its efforts to justify "necessary" political assassinations: "destruction births creation" (4, 180). Ominously, the dynamite Wolf gives his new friend Miriam to hide is "[o]nly seven pounds, but powerful," (180) —exactly the weight of a healthy newborn baby. Miriam is at first unable to believe in Tsila's love of life. When she sees a window of opportunity, she spontaneously runs off to Kiev in an attempt to get rid of the burden of her past in the anonymity of a big city. The stories she has chosen to see are the family's tales of death and disappointment, their miscarried dreams. Yet the more destruction Miriam witnesses while in Kiev, the more she comes to value Tsila's words and her stories of faith. In her memoirs, Miriam tells her daughter, whom she has named Hayya, which means "life": "It was life I turned my hopes to [...] which I placed all my faith and dreams for the future. Remember that, if not my name" (145). Miriam is explaining to Hayya that to truly honour someone's memory, one must commemorate the deceased's life and all it contained, not just that person's death.

5. NARRATIVE FREEDOM

The Jewish revolutionaries in *Your Mouth is Lovely* want to rewrite history and thus become a part of it. They know that "there was another life beneath the one that was obviously visible" (187) and they plan to unbury it. In order to uncover the layered pasts, which will reveal the lives and stories of the marginalised, the Jewish *narodniki* need to rework the narratives that have, until then, shaped their people. For example, it is explained to Miriam that even though it is said Jews stay up all night on the holiday Shavuot to study the Torah, in order to demonstrate a devotion that was not shown when they fell asleep at Mount Sinai, the Jews have never really woken up: "As a people we've tended to dwell in the past and ignore the future. For centuries we've done that, and where has it gotten us?" (105). To rewrite history, they know, these revolutionists need to forge a new future by rebuilding society. They echo Walter Benjamin, who insists that "[t]he concept of progress must be grounded in the idea of catastrophe. That things are 'status quo' is the catastrophe" (Benjamin, "N9a,1" 473). The utopian society they hope to achieve will refuse the imperial interpretation of history and accept different readings of the past. Revolution will not bring progress, but it has the potential to create subjects of knowledge who will continually look to save from the past stories that will benefit the future. When the voices of the revolutionaries cried out in unison for change, these voices also included those of the starved, the oppressed, the incarcerated and the murdered that had once been so unceremoniously silenced.

Miriam knows that consumption will conquer her in the end,[8] an inevitability of loss that haunts the pages of *Your Mouth is Lovely*. Though she has spent several months preparing her life story, she forces a fellow inmate to promise that she will burn it after Miriam is dead. Miriam feels the letters to her daughter will be safer "unfastened from the static order I've imposed on them, free to form and reform all the truths of who I was, I am. And then you'll understand," she appeals to her daughter Hayya, "If you'll just remember to raise your eyes to look" (336). Miriam is liberating her memories of narrative form so that in the future they can be sought out, put together, and revealed. A linear account of her life as recorded in her Siberian memoirs could never divulge an "official" truth. It would be better, as in the legend Tsila once told her about, to set the words free. She describes this tale:

> When the temple was destroyed the letters of the Holy Scrolls flew into the sky. Tsila didn't tell me what the letters did up there, or if they sprouted wings, but I imagined that they did sprout wings and then turned into birds. I would watch the birds that wheeled and dove in the marshes and fields around me and know that they were the scattered letters of the Holy Scrolls, the secret of creation, *forming and reforming* in the sky, and we just had to lift our eyes to see it. (emphasis added, 306)

Narratives have the power to create and to destroy lives. Writing one's life and family stories may "coalesce in a single act," as Paul John Eakin suggests (179), but Miriam's act of sabotage on her own life story also emphasises the importance of retrieval from absence. Retrospectively, one can see that Miriam's entries have been leading up to her decision to burn the memoirs:

> I had hoped, when I started, to create for you what my own mother denied me. An understanding of who I was, how I lived, how you came to be. A voice from the silence of death. But as I've put my pen to paper, day by day, week by week, I see only the gaps in what I've written, the distortions, the falseness of trying to impose one version of truth on a life. / Here, for example, are several versions of one moment, each one as true and as false as the next: your father was faithless, but I was taken with him anyway. I had no love for your father but took pleasure in his touch. I was a girl and your father violated my innocence. I took pride in luring your father from Bayla. (335)

There are always many versions of the truth; if one moment cannot be judged as finite, then how can an entire history? Miriam does not want to fix and contain her life. She does not want the responsibility of imposing shackles onto her story. She never really felt as though she were the author of her life as she lived it, and though she knows she must take responsibility for her actions, hers is a complex tale made up of a web of relations.

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[8] In 1912, as Miriam writes her memoirs, she is suffering from consumption. It can be assumed that, due to the poor prison conditions and lack of treatment, she will not live long enough to see 1917's general amnesty that would have freed her of her life sentence.

Miriam changes her mind about presenting her daughter with a written life because she learns in exile that she does not need a printed testimony to prove that she exists —she needs only to be remembered. Although Miriam believes that people can only know who they are if they know where they come from, she concludes that she is not denying her daughter a historiography, but rather creating for her a space of interpretation within which she is to unravel her roots. It is only within absence that buried truths can be found. Mothers and daughters may be bound by family stories, but a mother's story does not equal a daughter's destiny, because, though these narratives influence a child's life, they do not forbid being read in a variety of ways. Miriam will die in Siberia, but she will not be forgotten due to the stories about her that Hayya will want to salvage from the past. To properly honour the dead, one must seek out the stories of their lives. Hayya will then have the choice of which stories to adopt. In this way, though the revolution may not have brought restitution, in Walter Benjamin's terms, there is still the chance of messianic redemption by saving the past from obliteration.

Miriam's longing for a voice and her choice to destroy its written incarnation symbolises Richler's attempts with *Your Mouth is Lovely* to tell only one of the many pasts that belongs to Jewish history. Miriam's story, like any story in a Jewish chronotope, can be told in a thousand ways. It is also interdependent with the stories of others: the female prisoners in Miriam's cell, the Russians alongside whom she fought, the Canadian reader moved by her account. If identity is who people are and historiography is how they came to be, it must be noted that the suffix "graphy" suggests that what is written needs to be *read*, underscoring the importance to identity of narrative. Community is not bound to place, and the identity of a place is also unfixed (See, for example, Massey). There is no solitary story behind the present Canadian identity, and all the times and spaces of Canadians' various pasts are valuable since they belong to those included in the definition of a multicultural Canada.[9] Land as the focus of Canadian literature is limited to its constructed, human-made borders. Canadian literature therefore needs to represent the identity provided to Canada through its constitutional multiculturalism by including the varied spaces that are important to its people.

6. CONCLUSION: REDEFINING CANADIAN SPACES

Canada has a spatial history because its pledge of multiculturalism has replaced a static view of the past by allowing immigrants and ethnic or cultural groups to inhabit —through their narratives— more than one space. That Anne Michaels

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[9] I have taken this argument up in more detail in "Adopting Canada: The Multiculturalism Debate and the Writing of Michael Ondaatje," *Zeitshrift für Kanada-Studien* [*Journal of Canadian Studies*] 27.2 (2007): 43-57.

and Nancy Richler employ Jewish chronotopes in their novels is an expression of their comfort with straddling time and space. Since collective memory greatly informs collective life in the present, Jewish Canadian women writers who engage in Jewish chronotopes are helping to create a Jewish-Canadian identity for the present. In turn, Canada's multicultural identity is further enriched by their cultural contributions.

Space allows for deviations from what was once seen as universal because it defies the laws of physics where land cannot: space allows stories to be non-linear, multilayered and intertwined with those of others. To be Canadian by the alleged stipulations of multiculturalism is to house and encourage a range of competing voices, preventing dissolution into a single monologic truth. The support of numerous voices includes those that may be spoken in a space outside of Canada and beyond the present age. Multiculturalism encourages dynamic contact with former ancestral spaces as perceived in the collective memories of its various communities. In so doing, it accentuates that identity is fluid and relational, and informed and shaped by selected narratives. Identity is never monolithic, nor are the narratives that influence it. Land at the centre of Canadian literature has thus been forced to shift; the "universality" of the canon has been challenged.

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MARGARET ATWOOD'S METAFICTIONAL ACTS: COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING IN *THE BLIND ASSASSIN* AND *ORYX AND CRAKE*

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary Canadian authors appear to find self-reflective fiction a powerful tool to explore a variety of issues. Margaret Atwood's latest novels continue her exploration of the dynamics of story telling. In *Negotiating with the Dead* (2002), Atwood discusses the writing triangle (i.e. the interconnection between the writer, the reader, and the text) as "communion," and she stresses the importance and singularity of the reader in the process. The aim of this paper is to describe the writing triangle in her latest novels and to discuss its implications in the context of Atwood's own production. In them, two lovers live out their passion in closed rooms while they tell each other tales. The storyteller has the ability to keep the listener enthralled, but the audience is far from powerless, since for them listening becomes an act of (psychological versus physical) possession, whereby they appropriate and 'consume' their loved ones.

KEY WORDS: Metafiction, storytelling, Margaret Atwood, *The Blind Assassin, Oryx and Crake.*

RESUMEN

La narrativa contemporánea canadiense continúa haciendo de la metaficción una herramienta para explorar gran variedad de temas. Así puede apreciarse en las novelas más recientes de Margaret Atwood, que enfatizan la dimensión metanarrativa. En su ensayo *Negotiating with the Dead* (2002), Atwood define el triángulo literario, es decir, la interrelación entre quien escribe y lee mediante el texto literario, como una "comunión" en la que el público juega un papel fundamental. El presente artículo procede a describir dicho triángulo en *The Blind Assassin* y *Oryx and Crake*, contextualizándolo en la amplia producción de Atwood. En las dos, unos amantes disfrutan de su pasión a puerta cerrada mientras se cuentan relatos. Si bien narrar constituye un acto de seducción en ambas obras, el público posee la capacidad de apropiarse del texto y su trasmisor, bien psicológica bien físicamente, y por tanto de "consumirlos."

PALABRAS CLAVE: Metaficción, narración, Margaret Atwood, *The Blind Assassin,* O*ryx and Crake.*

Margaret Atwood's latest novels, *The Blind Assassin* (2000) and *Oryx and Crake* (2003), display a striking number of commonalities in subject matter and technique. In both of them, Atwood's sustained interest in the generic forms of dystopia and science fiction has surfaced again after a while. One might argue, for instance, that to a certain extent *Oryx and Crake*'s vision of the future of humanity derives from the embedded story "The Blind Assassin," a fantasy tale of faraway cities, sacrificial victims, child slaves, and everlasting love. Whereas in the former novel the flight of fancy shared narrative space with a framing tale that revisited the past (Ontario in the first half of the twentieth century), in the latter the future holds its own ground.

Furthermore, a closer reading reveals that both works continue Atwood's relentless exploration of the dynamics of storytelling and the literary act. Atwood has engaged with these issues on several occasions, not only in her fiction but also in her critical writing, most recently in *Negotiating with the Dead* (2002). There she has discussed the writing triangle in a chapter that stresses the importance and singularity of the reader in the process. Under the title "Communion: Nobody to Nobody" and with the subtitle "The eternal triangle: the writer, the reader, and the book as go-between" (*Negotiating with the Dead* 123-51), this chapter sets out to answer the following questions:

> First, for whom does the writer write? And, secondly: what is the book's function—or duty, if you like—in its position between writer and reader? What ought it to be doing, in the opinion of its writer? And finally, a third question arising from the other two: where is the writer when the reader is reading? (Atwood, *Negotiating with the Dead* 126)

Atwood answers the third question straight away: "when you are reading, the writer is *not in the same room*. If he were, either you'd be talking together, or he'd catch you in the act" (*Negotiating with the Dead* 126). Although Atwood would seem to subscribe to the Barthian notion of "the death of the author," I would contend that the one quoted above is nevertheless the very situation enacted in a number of scenes embedded in the main plot of her latest works of fiction. In them, two lovers live out their passion in closed rooms while they tell each other tales, variously labelled as "real" or "fantastic." Alex and Iris in *The Blind Assassin* and Jimmy and Oryx in *Oryx and Crake* enjoy their clandestine relationships for a limited time, but their frantic lovemaking is only equalled by their need to tell (or to listen to) each other's stories. Writer and reader, or rather, storyteller and audience, share their bodies as well as their tales. Both acts are shown to be equally intimate. Both are part of an act of communion by means of which the lovers try to 'possess' each other. Even though the attempt itself is condemned to fail, because possessing someone is extremely unlikely in Atwood's fictional *ethos*, the trope itself highlights the self-reflective nature of both novels.

The aim of this paper is to describe the writing triangle in these two relationships and novels and to discuss its implications in the context of Atwood's own production. To that purpose, I will be drawing insights from Bakhtin's theories of

dialogism, from narratological taxonomies of narrative levels in fiction, and from postmodernist accounts of the self-reflexivity of the genre.[1] First of all, it seems to me that Atwood's peculiar blending of conversation and storytelling in these scenes endows the text with a multi-voicedness that can be best analysed with some of the tools provided by Bakhtinian thought. In particular, I would like to define the structural manifestation of the writing triangle in both Atwoodian novels as a chronotope in Bakhtinian terms, since it functions as a recurrent device with specific temporal and spatial coordinates.[2] Such a chronotope, which I will call "the lovers' room", establishes a dialogical situation in a completely separate time and place from the rest of the unfolding narrative, and becomes the site of complex ideological negotiations between competing voices and world views, thus constituting both a challenge to and an amplification of those posited by the main work. Very importantly, the analysis of the chronotope of the lovers' room should take into account the different authority of the voices and their struggle for or against a dominating discourse. As Peter Hitchcock has convincingly reminded us in *Dialogics of the Oppressed*, "without struggle dialogic discourse is heteroglossia without limits: one only has to utter to become part of the great democratic dialogue" (7). There is no such thing as equal linguistic exchange.

However, it is important to note too that in these Atwoodian novels two different narrative levels are established. In *The Blind Assassin*, the framing and the embedded story stand at opposite extremes on a scale of reliability and realism. The framing story is told by Iris Chase in her old age, in a last effort to set the record straight. It is meant to disclose the secrets of the past, some of them shameful and shocking, and to challenge the public record, as collected in the newspaper clippings interspersed here and there in the novel. The confessional discourse of a character that is soon to die reinforces for readers —perhaps deceptively— the reliability of this intradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator, as does the historicity of the events she describes.[3] Marta Dvorak has examined the overlapping of geopolitical events with 'domestic' history in a novel that has "a profoundly metatextual Russian doll story-within-a-story structure" (65) and that makes use of "the device of hybridisation that feeds fiction with fact" (60). The familiarity of those historical events, together with interspersed pseudo-factual texts such as extracts from Canadian newspapers, strengthen the trustworthiness of the narrator's story in the framing narrative. In contrast, in the chapters entitled "The Blind Assassin" we find a reversal of the dichotomy truth/lie. In them, a man and a woman construct a tall tale, a wild

[1] Like other feminists, I believe Bakhtinian theories can be fruitfully deployed for a feminist politics of reading. In Shumway's words, the "celebration of diversity —of heterogeneity (feminist theory) and of heteroglossia (Bakhtinian theory)— allows for a rich dialogue between the two theoretical systems" (153).

[2] Bakhtin defined the chronotope as one in which "spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole" (*The Dialogic Imagination* 84).

[3] In Genette's terminology, this defines a narrator that is a character in the novel and whose story involves herself (*Narrative Discourse* 227-262).

lie that may help them escape from the sordidness of their situation and move away from the real.

I say "a man and a woman" because they are consistently identified in these sections simply by the pronouns "he" and "she." Their names are not used, and in fact we can only infer them by connecting the dots, by collating the information provided in these episodes with the events in Iris's confessional frame, as Staels has done (150-51). In a way, though as characters they are very much represented in their corporeality, in terms of narrative structure and rhetoric they function as disembodied beings. They are truly —to echo Atwood's title above— "nobody" talking to "nobody." Likewise, as lovers secretly meeting in seedy rooms across Toronto, they leave outside the door their family, social respectability, wealth, etc, and they stand truly naked. They are Everyman and Everywoman, Adam and Eve. Or they try to be, for reality creeps in when they least expect it.

The tale is originally meant by the writer, Alex, to capture his audience, Iris, and to draw her into a magic circle:

> What will it be, then? He says. Dinner jackets and romance, or shipwrecks on a barren coast? You can have your pick: jungles, tropical islands, mountains. Or another dimension of space —that's what I'm best at.
> Another dimension of space? Oh really!
> Don't scoff. It's a useful address. Anything you like can happen there. ...
> There are other people around... It's all very proper. Nevertheless she feels that the two of them are alone; as if the apple tree they're sitting under is not a tree but a tent; as if there's a line drawn around them with chalk. Inside this line, they're invisible.
> Space it is, then, he says. ...Agreed? ...Good, he says. Now I have to think. He keeps his voice casual. Too much urgency might put her off. (Atwood, *BA* 9-10)

Once the listener accepts the narrative pact, this becomes their joint way to escape from reality and to hide away in a faraway land of make-believe. This is, according to Hutcheon, one of the four recurrent models internalized in "narcissistic narratives." Fantasy "provides the freedom —or the 'escape'— of an ordered vision, perhaps a kind of 'vital' consolation for living in a world whose order one usually perceives and experiences only as chaos" (*Narcissistic Narrative* 76).

The teller consistently behaves as a magician, an illusionist, or, in Stein's term, "a trickster" (169-70). Alex wields a magic wand that allows him to retain his lover and to keep the real world at bay. For instance, in a later rendezvous, he takes hold of her wrist and covers the face of her watch before offering a new instalment of the tale, thus signalling the shift from fact to fiction, from "real" time to an *Alice*-like Wonderland (Atwood, *BA* 112). But equally consistent is his fear that "he won't be able to hold on to her, not for long. She'll melt, she'll drift away, she'll slide out of his hands" (Atwood, *BA* 120), an attitude that Staels has described as that of "a male Scheherazade" (150). Thus the act of communion, whether it is love or literature, can only happen while the other is willing to partake of the experience.

However, the tensions arising from the situation of the lovers in the real world surface from time to time and make ripples in their story. Narrative control is

then fought over, with the narratee challenging the power of the hypodiegetic narrator, or even temporarily taking over from him.[4] They tend to argue about the politics of some aspects of the tale. For instance, when she complains that the slave children of the story have become assassins, he retaliates with half-disguised accusations.

> They didn't have much choice, did they? They couldn't become the carpet-merchants themselves, or the brothel-owners. They didn't have the capital. So they had to take the dirty work. Tough luck for them.
> Don't, she says. It's not my fault.
> Nor mine either. Let's say we're stuck with the sins of the fathers.
> That's unnecessarily cruel, she says coldly.
> When is cruelty necessary? He says. And how much of it? Read the newspapers, I didn't invent the world. Anyway, I'm on the side of the throat-cutters. If you had to cut throats or starve, which would you do? Or screw for a living, there's always that. Now he's gone too far. He's let his anger show. She draws away from him. (Atwood, *BA* 23)

Later on, her challenge will reach the point of attempting to provide an alternative ending for the story he has been telling her. These different endings —the happy ending she would like to believe in and the unhappy one he created— highlight their diverse ideology, expectations, and even reading experiences. Thus, though not unaware of the demands of an audience, it is ultimately the writer's politics that are shown here to shape the story and its impact.

Moreover, this helps us ascertain that the relationship established by both narrative levels is thematic, and not actional or explicative.[5] As told by Alex, the metadiegetic tale of the kingdom of Sakiel-Norn bears a striking resemblance to events described in Iris's intradiegetic story, and therefore the parallelism amplifies the symbolism and the power of the novel as a whole:

> In pointedly connecting the traumatic sexual sacrifice of the two sisters, Iris and Laura Chase, to the sacrifice of the virgin in "The Blind Assassin" science fiction tale, Atwood, through repetitive retellings of the story of women's sexual victimization, probes the cultural—and historical—repetition of sexual violence against women, showing the link between institutionalized misogyny and the sexual traumatization of women. (Bouson 251)

The strong analogical relationship thus established between both narrative levels brings the effect fairly close to a *mise-en-abyme*. In *The Blind Assassin*, Atwood

[4] By "hypodiegetic" I refer to a second-degree narrator, also called a metadiegetic narrator by Genette (Rimmon-Kenan 91), that is, the one in the embedded tale.

[5] Genette ascribes three main functions to a subordinate narrative level: actional, explicative and thematic (227-62). They are very aptly summarised by Rimmon-Kenan, who explains that a thematic function relies on analogy, i.e. similarity and contrast. When analogy becomes identity, we find a *mise-en-abyme* effect (92-93).

lays bare the "bones" of storytelling and extradiegetic readers can watch the very process by which the text emerges from the interaction of writer and audience, storyteller and rapt listener. In Hutcheon's words, this would be the kind of self-reflective novel in which "the act of reading becomes a creative, interpretative one that partakes of the experience of writing itself. These fictions are about their own processes, as experienced and created by the reader's responses" (*Narcissistic Narrative* 144). But that was not Atwood's last word on writing or reading. Her next novel, *Oryx and Crake*, uses once more the chronotope of the lovers' room in order to raise even more paradoxical questions about the writing triangle.

Oryx and Crake reverses the relationship between framing text and embedded tale in *The Blind Assassin*. Here the diegetic level consists of a futuristic tale, and thus is understood as basically untruthful or far-fetched, while in the hypodiegetic sections Oryx tells her life story in ways that resemble Iris's tale in the previous novel. Like Iris, Oryx seems to be a reliable narrator despite some reluctance to disclose certain shameful parts of her past. It is also striking that this kind of story of child slavery that sounded so unlikely in *The Blind Assassin* acquires here credibility simply by virtue of the form. But Atwood's handling of the fictive confession, as Nathalie Cooke has rightly pointed out, is a powerful rhetorical strategy that never fails to lure the reader (224-25).

Jimmy and Oryx resemble Iris and Alex in that as part of the metafictional trope they lose corporeality and reality and become fairly disembodied and seemingly neutral voices while at the same time they are obviously discussing and performing bodily functions. Even though they are enclosed by the walls of a bedroom, they are free-floating characters, signifiers for larger and more abstract processes. In part this results from the fact that the dystopian frame places them at a distance from our empathy. But Oryx's true name, like Offred's in *The Handmaid's Tale*, remains unknown, and her life story is at best extremely vague, whereas Jimmy's double nature as Jimmy and Snowman, before and after the genocide, turns him into a kind of Everyman too, or a twenty-first-century Robinson Crusoe.

While *The Blind Assassin* put the storyteller in the spotlight, and he stood out as a charmer and a magician luring his audience into a magic circle, in *Oryx and Crake* it is the reader's role that becomes more prominent. Jimmy appears to be the one who feels an urgent need to know everything about Oryx. His personal involvement and investment in the tale is proportionally much larger. He continually presses Oryx for details, and his participation is more intrusive than in *The Blind Assassin*, perhaps because the realistic tone of the tale deceives him into believing that its truthfulness can be checked and verified:

> 'There were canals in this city?' Jimmy asked. He thought maybe that would give him a clue as to which city it had been. In those days he'd wanted to know whatever it was possible to know about Oryx, about anywhere she'd been. He'd wanted to track down and personally injure anyone who had ever done harm to her or made her unhappy. (Atwood, *O & C* 135)

Generally, the storyteller herself skilfully fends off this kind of attempt to pin her down and retreats into ambiguity:

> 'Tell me just one thing,' he'd say, back when he was still Jimmy.
> 'Ask me a question,' she'd reply.
> So he would ask, and then she might say, 'I don't know. I've forgotten.' Or, 'I don't want to tell you that.' Or, 'Jimmy, you are so bad, it's not your business.' Once she'd said, 'You have a lot of pictures in your head, Jimmy. Where did you get them? Why do you think they are pictures of me?'
> He thought he understood her vagueness, her evasiveness. 'It's all right,' he'd told her, stroking her hair. 'None of it was your fault.'
> 'None of what, Jimmy?' (Atwood, *O & C* 114)

Oryx's evasiveness helps her retain some control of the story against her demanding narratee, but at other times she retaliates in a similar vein to *The Blind Assassin*. She accuses Jimmy of naiveté concerning the issue of sexual slavery, very much as Alex did to Iris when she expressed her distress that children should become assassins: "'Oh Jimmy, you would like it better maybe if we all starved to death?' said Oryx, with her small rippling laugh" (Atwood, *O & C* 119). Here as well the storyteller (Oryx) is the more experienced and mundane of the pair, the one who has knowledge and insights, and perhaps even a touch of cynicism, to transmit.

Yet, Jimmy/Snowman broadly exerts a will to dominate and control that goes far beyond the realm of discourse and the walls of the room. He is typically shown in the act of surveillance and in the attitude of the voyeur. In fact, Jimmy's narcissistic will to discursively and visually "possess" Oryx can be read as deriving from the loss of his mother that he suffered as a child. Although she abandoned her family, Jimmy's mother remains elusively but stubbornly alive in images, either in the postcards he occasionally receives or in the news clips he gets to watch. He first spied the image of the person he identifies as Oryx while surfing on the web, and this started him on an endless but ultimately elusive search for her, for Oryx proved at first as unreachable as his mother. Later, when he finally meets her, he watches her through the camera as she interacts with the Children of Crake during her teaching sessions with them. His obsessive surveillance of Oxyx's explicitly sexualized body (practising sex in the early images and naked among the Children of Crake later on) is structured as the empowered "male gaze" defined by Laura Mulvey:

> In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. (19)

Consequently, the hypodiegetic or second narrative level of Atwood's novel appears to actualize the erotic or sexual metaphor described by Hutcheon for narcissistic texts, in which the act of storytelling seduces and lures, whereas "[r]eading becomes... an act of possession, of control" (*Narcissistic Narrative* 85).

Bound by Jimmy's obsessive desire, Oryx's voice is less powerful than Alex's, and the narrative act of communion less successful here than in the previous novel

because they are performing the literary act less collaboratively and more hierarchically. In *The Blind Assassin* Alex and Iris, as writer and reader but also as characters, were similarly placed in a position of relative disempowerment. A subversive writer on the run and a victimized wife managed to come together in the neutral space of a succession of rented or borrowed rooms, and colluded in a wilful act of fictionalizing their lives and their worries. However, in *Oryx and Crake* Jimmy/Snowman is comparatively more empowered both as reader and as character, perhaps stemming from the combination of visual and aural control. A male voyeur that subjects the female object of his obsession to scrutiny and a sole survivor to a global holocaust with the status of a demi-god or high priest among the Children of Crake, Jimmy/Snowman attempts to impose phallocentric order in the midst of the utter chaos he is living through. As described above, he exerts (or tries very hard to exert) a double kind of power on the female object/narrator, as voyeur and as narratee. Concerning voyeurism, in *Oryx and Crake* the computer and the TV screen enhance the terrifying feeling of secret surveillance being carried out over individuals and the possibility of its being used for violence against them. In true dystopian fashion, they behave very much like the TV screens in Orwell's *1984* and the slogan "Big Brother is watching you." Atwood's interest in visual technology has been long apparent in her writing. Typically, mirrors and cameras in earlier Atwood's texts allowed her to explore issues of distortion and ways of seeing as well as recording and transmitting what is seen. Although the objectifying gaze remains an issue, Wilson has argued that in this later phase Atwood has turned towards the related problem of physical or symbolic blindness, and that "[b]oth Crake and Jimmy are monsters in their contrasting ways of seeing without seeing" ("Blindness and Survival" 187). Concerning narrative dynamics, Jimmy the reader resists Oryx's telling of her story and denies her the wilful suspension of his disbelief. It is also significant that the lovers' room in this novel is Jimmy's room, which further suggests the stronger power of the reader as interpreter of the text and as the ultimate repository of meaning.

This brief analysis of the writing triangle as cast in the chronotope of the lovers' room in both novels has attempted to show how the storyteller (Alex, Oryx) has the ability to keep the narratee enthralled, but the audience is far from powerless, since for them (Iris, Jimmy) listening becomes an act of (psychological versus physical) possession, whereby they appropriate and 'consume' their loved ones. They can prompt the narrators, interrupt and sometimes redirect the story, or challenge its verisimilitude, and in the process they highlight the constructed and polyphonic nature of narrative. Thus the interaction of the lovers entails a kind of communion of the soul and the body that mirrors that of the literary act, though neither is deprived of tensions or struggles for power.

This in itself is not so much a novelty in the context of Atwood's writing as it is yet another example of her postmodern treatment of fiction. In The *Canadian Postmodern*, Linda Hutcheon pointed out that:

> Her novels are thematically and formally obsessed with the tension between art as kinetic process (its writing and, again, its reading) and the final result —'Art'— as inevitably a fixed and final product. And this tension remains unresolved. There is

> no dialectic or even real dichotomy, just postmodern paradox. (Hutcheon, *The Canadian Postmodern* 138)

Among the many previous instances of this paradox in Atwood's writing, perhaps the closest one to those under analysis today is the short story "There Was Once", where the tension between process and result is embodied by the dialogical friction between a bedtime storyteller and an opinionated narratee who disrupts the flow of the tale and tries to modify it. Patricia Merivale has described this story as "a metafictional fairy tale on narrative method, which demonstrates the difficulties of carrying on with a story that is being interrupted and corrected one word at a time" (259). In the story, Atwood is certainly at pains to show the importance of the collaboration of the reader for literature to exist at all.

One might argue that this issue features prominently as well in the 1996 novel *Alias Grace*. There an eager young doctor, Simon Jordan, has long interviews in a secluded room with the convicted murderess Grace Marks, whom he attempts to draw into telling her own story, but he consistently fails to obtain from her the revelations he so fervently expects. As Ingersoll has remarked, *Alias Grace* is a metafictional novel because of "its foregrounding of Grace as a storyteller, or author, standing in for her creator. Time and again, the narrative licenses Grace to reveal her own craft in choosing to tell or not to tell what she is presumed to know" (394). Moreover, as a close antecedent of the two novels under discussion here, *Alias Grace* displays early insights into the power differential between narrator and narrate and how it can be re-negotiated, and it conveys once more the impossibility of the discovery of "truth" in Simon Jordan, an earlier draft for Jimmy/Snowman.[6] However, *The Blind Assassin* and *Oryx and Crake* have a much more complex narrative structure than those two earlier works as well as their own distinctive scope and goals, since in them Atwood is not overtly concerned with the impact of political correctness on literature and neither is she tied down by the weight of true events. Rather, the paradox becomes enhanced by the way in which the framing and the nested tales build a dialogue of sorts, and give the lie to each other.

Nevertheless, Atwood's agenda in these recent works deserves further probing, particularly regarding the treatment of race. *The Blind Assassin*'s self-reflective strategies are put to the service of a liberal feminist position that portrays the historical victimization of white middle-class heterosexual women by means of what Bouson has called "the traumatic sexual sacrifice of the two sisters, Iris and Laura Chase" (251). In *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood's metafiction ushers in the problematics of race, both in the character of Oryx and in the creation of a new human species, the Children of Crake. Yet, her handling of this topic is less than satisfactory. It is

[6] In her article "'That is what I told Dr Jordan,'" Siddall has described in some length the strategies of control deployed by Grace in her conversations with Simon in order to redress the power imbalance between them. Lovelady in turn has connected narrative issues to the gendered spheres of public and private speaking in "'I am telling this to no one but you.'"

important to note that Oryx is the only person whose race is even obliquely alluded to. She is isolated from siblings or friends. The two other main characters, and the ones she mostly interacts with, Jimmy/Snowman and Crake, are raceless, and therefore implicitly part of the Caucasian norm. Snowman/Jimmy became fascinated with Oryx many years before their actual meeting, as he and Crake came upon her image as they were browsing a sex website. A little girl of around eight, on her knees and licking whipped cream off a naked adult male, this Asian child is positioned as the pliable sex object of heterosexual male fantasies. Pliability and mystery, those two clichés of the Asian woman's stereotype, are the features that Snowman seems to value in her.[7] In contrast to this orientalist portrayal of Oryx, in the Children of Crake Atwood imagines a new race that comes in all skin colours, and that has been engineered not to register skin colour at all. Thus, we are led to imagine a society in which no racism exists. But this utopian resolution of difference and its ensuing inequalities is in fact only an erasure of difference. It is noteworthy that the absence of racism does not result from a higher amount of human tolerance over difference, but from the genetically engineered choice of sameness, which amounts very much to the absence of 'race' while maintaining a range of skin colours. After all, racism springs not merely from colour, but from its connection to social (dis)advantages. Moreover, the fact that hierarchical stratification is non-extant at present does not rule out that they might not develop later on.

These two novels attest to the strong currency of metafictional approaches in Canada's contemporary literature.[8] "Metafiction" was an ever-present buzzword in academic circles of the 1980s that has lost most of its fashionable appeal by now. Yet, Canadian authors appear to continue to find self-reflective fiction a powerful tool to explore a variety of issues, but most remarkably the role of author and reader in the literary act. As described above, and despite a certain inability to move beyond the script of liberal feminism, Atwood has created in her recent novels a fragile and complex structure that highlights heterogeneity and dialogue, where truth and lies need each other, just as the two lovers do, just as the writer and the reader do too. The text thus created surely becomes a shared act of love.

[7] One might even go further and contend that the orientalist portrayal of Oryx is the result of the power differential established within the nested tales (as described above) as well as the one established between both narrative levels, that is, between her voice in the nested tales and the Eurocentric, masculinist memories of Snowman in the frame. By choosing Snowman to control the narrative, Atwood is endowing him with authority and simultaneously denying Oryx's.

[8] Indeed, other interesting examples of self-reflexive fiction have been published in Canada in the last fifteen years. A case in point is Hiromi Goto's first work, *Chorus of Mushrooms* (1994), a novel in which dialogism, genre hybridization and collaborative storytelling also feature prominently. Thus, Ty has remarked that "[t]he multiple narrators and the fictional documents create a multilayered perspective, which has the effect in the novel of what Mikhail Bakhtin calls 'heteroglossia'" (154).

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LINGUISTIC FRAGMENTATION AS POLITICAL INTERVENTION IN CALGARIAN POETRY

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ABSTRACT

This essay deals with how poets Jordan Scott and ryan fitzpatrick reject the conservative prairie representation in favour of a poetics informed by urbanity and Sianne Ngai's "poetics of disgust." Using fragmented dictions, Scott and fitzpatrick create unmovable interruptions to the consumable, constructing language which disrupts typical representations of rurality and geography. As Calgarian poets, they are constrained ideologically by the political emphasis on growth and oil exploitation and distance themselves from the Modernist urge to construct either structure or meaning.

KEY WORDS: Contemporary Canadian poetry, disgust, prairie, negative utterance, stutter, raw matter, urbanity, fragmentation.

RESUMEN

Este artículo trata sobre cómo los poetas Jordan Scott y ryan fitzpatrick rechazan la representación de corte conservador de las provincias de "las praderas" canadienses, y abogan por una poética de lo urbano y por lo que Sianne Ngai ha llamado "poética del desagrado". A través del uso de una dicción fragmentada, Scott y fitzpatrick crean interrupciones insalvables de lo consumible, construyendo así un lenguaje que desbarata las representaciones típicas de lo rural y lo geográfico. Como poetas de la ciudad de Calgary, se sienten constreñidos ideológicamente por el énfasis político en el crecimiento y la explotación petrolífera, distanciándose a su vez de la urgencia modernista por construir estructuras y significados.

PALABRAS CLAVE: poesía canadiense contemporánea, desagrado, praderas, expresión negativa, tartamudear, materia prima, urbano, fragmentación.

In the face of the conservative politics rampant in Alberta, and the cultural embracing of rurality, geography, and place, there is a coterie of poets in Calgary whose work rejects these aspects in favour of what Sianne Ngai categorizes as a "poetics of disgust" (98). These poets —as typified in the work of Jordan Scott and ryan fitzpatrick (and others loosely gathered around *filling Station* and *dANDelion* magazines[1])— push against the modernist tropes of "prairie poetry" in favour of a more urban, linguistically disruptive form in order to articulate their dissatisfaction with the politics forwarded in historically "typical" representations of Alberta.

In *Surviving the Paraphrase*, Frank Davey argues against poetry used as "a tool employed not for its own intrinsic qualities but for the expression of ideas and visions" (2), opposing a poetic based on "messianic attempts to define a national" —and in this case, a regional— "identity" (3). Davey's 1983 essay continues to be a defining note in literary studies for Canadian poetry —or at least for poetics which continue to challenge nationalist and regionalist representations of "Canadianism." Prairie poetry, a form promoted as representative of Albertan writing, concentrates, through lyrical humanism, on the rural experience, a dependence on geography and a focus on familial history as a means of concreting regional expression.

Despite Robert Kroetsch's claim that Canadian poetry did not have a Modernist period —that it slid directly from Victorianism to Post-Modernism (111)— prairie poetry's concentration on the romanticism of settlement and exploration, and on presence and narrative belies an underlining linguistic support of a type of manifest destiny. Kroetsch's own poetry, as typified in *Seed Catalogue* and *The Ledger*, operates as an example of the constraints of a poetic discourse based on exploration, development and the primacy of the individual:

> Shaping the trees.
> Into shingles.
> Into scantling.
> Into tables and chairs.
>
> [...]
> (specimens of the self-made
> men who made Canada
> what it is.)
> (Kroetsch 14-15)

To write of geography, "the lovely new land / where we now stand" (McKinnon 15) in Alberta, and especially in Calgary, is to endorse an ideological support for economic growth and expansion, and a reiteration of the dependence on oil and gas resources. Calgary —with an estimated population of 1.2 million— popularly represents itself through its rural ties (the white stetson, the Calgary Stampede, the Pengrowth Saddledome), by oil and gas revenue and by right-wing politics; all of which foreground Calgary as a traditional, conservative, basically *rural* environment. Despite burgeoning oil and gas revenue, the city of Calgary invests less in

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[1] *dANDelion Magazine* has been published in its current form by the University of Calgary since 2000, and *filling Station*, a volunteer-based non-profit magazine has been independently published since 1993. Both magazines are based in Calgary and are key areas of exploration for younger, emerging poets who challenge the hegemony of the humanist, confessional poetic voice. *dANDelion* and *filling Station* are both named ironically —a dandelion is an obsequious weed rampant in Calgary, and a filling station is where travelers can fill the gasoline tanks of their vehicles, thus participating in the oil and gas revenue prioritized by the province.

arts and culture than other major cities. Alberta defines itself not in terms of a cultural growth, but in terms of potential (and realized) economic growth.[2]

Turning with disgust from this trend, some Calgarian poets emphasize left-wing social politics, radical linguistic structures and an inner-city urban environment as compositional and theoretical frameworks for poetic discourse. For this inner-city community "[t]he only cure [...] is dismemberment" of traditional, conservative forms, where, as Julia Williams writes, "city grows here *despite* / scale and weed" (83, emphasis added). In this community of writers, the defining node is no longer the writing of geography and the landscape; rather the community is more unsettled and outside of geo-economical structures. There is a tacit refusal to participate in "established" economies (which in Calgary means fossil-fuel development and dependence), the social majority as it is formed in Albertan politics, and the rural, industrial-based models of social history. By refusing these tropes, these poets have carved uniquely urban, non-"prairie," fluid spaces composed of what Louis Cabri refers to as "Words / outworn / outwards [...] to / city / folk / with / no / cowboy / lore" (76).

The political emphasis on growth and exploitation in Alberta places ideological restraints on poetic response, for as Sianne Ngai states in "Raw Matter: A Poetics of Disgust," "the bourgeois morality endemic to capitalism imposes a limit on our ways of expressing outrage [and] *has the effect of deliberately curbing any potential to articulate our abhorrence to it*" (98, original emphasis). Unwilling to "discover, to trace / the lineage, to claim [...] innocence" or to "inherit this earth from their journey" (McKinnon 54), the response by poets like Jordan Scott and ryan fitzpatrick is to distance themselves from the Modernist urge to *construct* either structure or meaning.

In *blert* —a manuscript in progress (and slated for publication by Coach House Books in Spring 2008) published to date primarily by micro-presses[3] —Jordan Scott engages what Ngai, once again, refers to as the "negative utterance" (103) as a means to articulate a poetry of the body, the voice, and geography. *blert* is Scott's "articulate expression of his [...] own inarticulateness" (Ngai 104), cleaving a space outside of the normative constructions, where to speak means participating in the "interac tracheal / soundtrack" of capitalism and conservatism. Incorporating a vocabulary of biological and geographical language, Scott resists normative constructions of narrative, and "thwarts close reading" (Ngai 102) by engaging

[2] Calgary's investment in the arts is only $2.56 per capita —far behind Toronto ($6.42), Vancouver ($4.01), Winnipeg ($3.88) and even Edmonton ($3.88) ("Arts Granting"). The provincial Heritage Fund —built from taxation on oil and gas revenue now stands at over $4000.00 per capita (at $14.4 billion) (*Heritage Fund*)— is kept in reserve, while the provincial debt and deficit have been completely eliminated. Alberta's government currently ranks last among Canadian provinces in per capita arts spending, and has recently built upon that record by reducing the provincial arts budget from $70-million in 2006/07 to $65.9-million in 2007/08 (Hirsch 38).

[3] As both *blert* and ryan fitzpatrick's *hounds of love / lost leaders* have been published solely in unpaginated editions by small press, all references to those texts will also be unpaginated.

with a "jaw arctic" eliding his "poetics of the stutter" with the capitalist limitations on the articulation of abhorrence. Throughout *blert* the vocabulary becomes unhinged from a narrative construction, and lines like "bladderwracked glottal / woofer snorkel / the syllable pinballed" work as unmovable interruptions to consumable, constructing language. Ngai argues that "despite cultural limitations, poets do have recourse to a language for articulating disgust" (104), that obscenities and outbursts work to point ambiguously to unanchored signifieds: "[o]ort cloud blort oompah. Oospore bore b-boy, boomboxed".

The *Sapir–Whorf Hypothesis* —which argues that linguistically "the structure of our language in large measure effects the way that we perceive the world" (Trask 63)— is a useful tool in exploring the problematic of Scott's poetic, and some of the larger concerns within Calgarian poetics. Sapir argues against the inarticulate statement as language (and thus, as poetry), where "under the stress of emotion, say of a sudden twinge of pain or of unbridled joy, we do involuntarily give utterance to sounds that the hearer interprets as indicative of the emotion itself" —as speech (and one could extend that resistance to poetics), as, "there is all the difference in the world between such involuntary expression of feeling and the normal type of communication of ideas that is speech" (Sapir, n. pag.).

Charles Olson's 1950 essay "Projective Verse" —a key document in North American poetics— argues in favour of a voice-based poetic which could more accurately reflect an American process of mechanistic economic development. To Olson, if poetry is to be of "*essential* use" it must "catch up and put into itself certain laws and possibilities of the breath, of the breathing of the man who writes as well of his listenings" (239, original emphasis). Olson's emphasis on the breath-line and "the workings of his own throat [...] that place where breath comes from, where breath has its beginnings [...] where [...] all act springs" (249), while meant to be liberating, is in fact isolating and alienating to Scott and fitzpatrick.

Unchallenged Olsonian poetics —"the necessity of a line or a work to be as wood is [...] to be as shaped as wood can be when a man has had his hand to it" (247)— supports (through the use of continued metaphorical construction of poetry as harvest and industry), consumption, patriarchy and a dominion over landscape and geography. Olson links landscape and geography with a narrative drive: "By landscape I mean what "narrative"; scene, event, climax, crisis, hero, development, posture; all that meant —all the substantive of what we call literary [...] you say 'orientate me' Yessir! Place it!" (Olson 252).

"Projective Verse" — and in particular Olson's theory of "composition by field" (239) as a tool and poetic is implicitly tied with consumption and industry —a poetic defined around "force" (240), "use" (240), "process" (240), "machinery" (241), and the fall of the "hammer" (240). While Olson suggests that "it is time we picked the fruits" (245), this expansionist, frontier-besting poetic —a poetic linked to narrative— when written in Alberta, politically supports the status quo of unlimited growth. Olson's industrial vocabulary compares poetic innovation with mechanistic growth, poetry is equated with a capitalistic expansion.

In direct contradiction, therefore, with Charles Olson's poetic demand to "get on with it, keep moving, keep in, speed, the nerves, [...] speed [...] the whole

business, keep it moving as fast as you can, citizen" (Olson 240), Scott arranges syntax to purposefully interrupt Olson's poetic drive for (and semantic expectation of) "energy-discharge" (240) in favour of the awkward, the mal-formed and the tongue-tied. Scott assembles lines around the very syntax which is most difficult to pronounce by an adult stutterer —thereby directly linking a political alienation with a bodily interruption of Olsonian "Projective Verse." Ngai categorizes this kind of unmovable syntax as "raw matter, at times flowing and at others deliberately obstructing flow —yet always insistent" (112), so that turning away from Olson's drive to "USE USE USE" (240), towards a "[p]rofanity of [f]ormless ([n]on-representational) [l]anguage" (Ngai 104), Scott proposes to "rehearse in verse. horn spat. rest. speedbag glottal. rise. bumblebee yodel [...] again."

While Jordan Scott's *blert* confronts geography and writing of the body in a means which both is politically astute and fraught with his own stutter, ryan fitzpatrick's manuscript in progress *hounds of love / loss leaders* articulates a poetic based around industrial-waste and an economically marginalized community. fitzpatrick's poem *cum* manifesto "A Quick Note on Poetry" consists entirely of the statement: "I Will Not Bring Beauty Into The World," a position taken up in both the form and the content of fitzpatrick's *oeuvre*. Jordan Scott's awkward syntax forms around his engagement with an inability to physically speak in confrontation with the breath line, geography and economic marginalization; fitzpatrick's fragmented lines form around his engagement with the language of marketing, consumerist expectation and, once again, economic marginalization. By turning away from "Beauty" as a classical trope of poetry and artwork, fitzpatrick politicizes language by interceding into what constitutes proper grammatical construction:

> Fan nub
> Nex homusch
>
> Apprais catalo
> stack plasma.

fitzpatrick's earlier suit of poems, "The Ogden Shops," interrogated the development and degradation of urban landscape by re-imagining it through a narrative which explored the Canadian Pacific Railway's heavy repair facility in South-East Calgary. Having written a more normative long-poem suite with "The Ogden Shops," fitzpatrick has since transitioned to shorter poetic lines consisting of fragments of consumerist language —"[e]gg spread sale rain"— juxtaposed against fragments of recognizable words —"lectric ergie sire samp creen." fitzpatrick's reply to consumer choice is a poetic of dispersal, fragmentation and disruption of meaning:

> letter an ouring
> rope evange
>
> dash wood
> jell lustrate

vocate tonque
corps on comp

By working with fragmented language, fitzpatrick obstructs the construction of normative meaning in favour of a disjointed "negative utterance" (Ngai 103) which wedges between the typographic and the "useful;" an attempt to "Diefinbox pipdream stifle" the power in consumerist language. As Charles Bernstein notes in "Optimism and Critical Excess (process)," there is no way of assuming an authoritative voice, no way to work to swerve without reproducing and furthering that linguistic oppression (153). Through the use of fractured language détourned from normative spelling, fitzpatrick's poetic is "laming claim" on the "micro custom" of "buy[ing] direct." Consisting almost entirely of "raw matter" (Ngai 112) —quite literally so, as fitzpatrick continues to explore the boundaries of 'meaning' in this unfinished manuscript— *hounds of love / loss leaders* has no accumulated normative meaning except that of constant interference.

While the poet cannot control how the reader will approach —or even perform a text— fitzpatrick and Scott step away from semantic 'meaning' in these poems in order to further complicate the exchange value of poetry. While 'value' and 'commodity' are never completely escaped, its transferal can be troubled by the removal of the fluid semantic transferal from the communication equation:

> Communication 'occurs' by means of a sole instantaneous circuit, and for it to be 'good' communication must take place fast —there is no time for silence. Silence is banished from our screens; it has no place in communication. Media images [...] never fall silent: images and messages must follow one upon the other without interruption. But silence is exactly that —a blip in the circuitry; a minor catastrophe, a slip which [...] becomes highly meaningful— a break laden now with anxiety, now with jubilation. (Baudrillard 13)

The performative "minor catastrophe" operates as an economic *clinamen*; a swerve away from the normative creation of a spoken text.

Ngai suggests that one of the articulations of disgust is the "inarticulate sound" where "[n]o words are used in the expression of disgust and thus the question of what words 'mean' is simply irrelevant to this particular type of utterance" (Ngai 103). Both *blert* and *hounds of love / loss leaders* treat language as "raw matter" without a reinforced referent as a means to briefly interrupt capitalist exchange–based signification by "insisting on the disappearance of the referent while at the same time refusing to defer to other terms. It won't coagulate into a unitary meaning and it also won't move; it can't be displaced" (Ngai 114). The 'inarticulate sound' ultimately expresses a poetics of disgust and exclusion, where its language "only covers a space; the reader cannot fix it metaphorically, assign a concept to it, nor send it on a metonymic voyage along a chain of other terms" (Ngai 114).

Ngai's "inarticulate sound" can be linked to Lev Vygotsky's differentiation between inner and external speech, where "inner speech must be regarded, not as speech minus sound, but as an entirely separate speech function" where "[i]ts main distinguishing trait is its peculiar syntax. Compared with external speech, inner

speech appears disconnected and incomplete" (Vygotsky, n. pag.). Vygotsky's description of inner speech provides an apt approach to these fragmented, disjunctive forms of poetry which "[show] a tendency toward an altogether specific form of abbreviation: namely, omitting the subject of a sentence and all words connected with it" (Vygotsky, n. pag.). He categorizes external speech in terms of a capitalist, growth-oriented structure, as "the turning of thought into words, its materialisation and objectification." But, in describing the language acquisition process, Vygotsky once again uses words which are tied —much like Olson— to terms of production: "[s]emantically, the child starts from the whole, from a meaningful complex, and only later begins to *master* the separate semantic units, the meanings of words, and to divide his formerly undifferentiated thought into those units" (Vygotsky, n. pag., emphasis added).

Ngai's formulation of the "inarticulate sound" works outside of this narrative of mastery and domination . Where she does align with Vygotsky —and where the poetry of Scott and fitzpatrick also align with him— is around his summarization of Frederic Paulhan's idea of the fluidity of meaning:

> [t]he sense of a word [...] is the sum of all the psychological events aroused in our consciousness by the word. It is a dynamic, fluid, complex whole, which has several zones of unequal stability. Meaning is only one of the zones of sense, the most stable and precise zone. A word acquires its sense from the context in which it appears; in different contexts, it changes its sense. Meaning remains stable throughout the changes of sense. The dictionary meaning of a word is no more than a stone in the edifice of sense, no more than a potentiality that finds diversified realisation in speech. (Paulhan, qtd in Vygotsky, n. pag.)

While *blert* explores the "bottlenecking of the physical body —the stopping of words and syllables in the throat of the speaker" thus undermining Olsonian poetics— fitzpatrick's *hounds of love / loss leaders* works at the moment of "emotional strangulation" (fitzpatrick, correspondence with the author). Subtitled as "notes towards a selective mutism," *hounds of love / loss leaders* is an attempt to communicate the moment where the speaker is at a loss for words, where language fails to articulate the anger and disgust at the "sum of all the psychological events aroused in [his] consciousness by the word" (Vygotsky, n. pag.). fitzpatrick's writing foregrounds the Paulhanian "zones of unequal stability" as language is othered inside ingrained pathways, what fitzpatrick refers to as "a language of schizophrenic flow, of arrested development, of fear, of misunderstanding" (fitzpatrick, correspondence with the author). In fitzpatrick's obstruction of normative grammar, a rejection of Paulahn's declaration that meaning is "the most stable and precise zone" of sense, the "utterance is indeed instinctive, but it is non-symbolic; in other words, the sound of pain or the sound of joy does not, as such, indicate the emotion, it does not stand aloof, as it were, and announce that such and such an emotion is being felt" (Sapir, n. pag.). As language has been co–opted by a power–dynamic which undermines fitzpatrick's political position, this "schizophrenic flow," "[s]erve[s] as a more or less automatic overflow of the emotional energy; in a sense, it is part and parcel of the emotion itself" (Sapir, n. pag.).

The fact that for Sapir, once again, these inarticulate exclamations "hardly constitute communication in any strict sense. They are not addressed to any one, they are merely overheard, if heard at all, as the bark of a dog, the sound of approaching footsteps, or the rustling of the wind is heard," further marginalizes fitzpatrick's work. The extra-semantic exclamations in *hounds of love / loss leaders*, like Scott's in *blert*, are categorized as animalistic and abject; but also under threat from the "approaching footsteps" of semantic expectation. As exclamations "convey certain ideas to the hearer, it is only in the very general sense in which any and every sound or even any phenomenon in our environment may be said to convey an idea to the perceiving mind" (Sapir, n. pag.) and "[b]reath is man's special qualification as animal. Sound is a dimension he has extended" (Olson 248), poets who work outside of semantic sense, eschewing this "special quality" become "merely overheard" —not participating directly in a linguistic exchange.

Both Olson and Sapir reinforce the superiority of normative syntax, and marginalize the non–semantic as sub–human. N.S. Trubetzkoy, in his *Principles of Phonology*, theorizes that language also includes a series of phonemes which "occur in interjections, onomatopoetic expressions, and in commands or calls directed toward animals. Words of this type do not have a representative function in the proper sense" (208). Scott and fitzpatrick move their phonemics towards the "alien character" and the lack of "representative function in the proper sense" of these animalistic sounds, and, as Trubetzkoy reaffirms, even these non-semantic exclamations contain a "special familiar expressivity" (208).

Jordan Scott states that his engagement with language was troubled by his physical inability to even state his own name. Scott's stutter fractures his proper noun, making his semantic position within narrative ineffable. Words become markers of non-being, "improper sense" and inappropriate action. *blert* as a poetic project is formed entirely out of language used inappropriately, for "[t]hey learned to mumble —not to speak— and it was only after paying attention to the increasing noise of the century, [...] that they acquired a language" (Scott, personal interview). As fitzpatrick believes that language has been completely co-opted by production, so Scotts argues that language was only possible after listening to "the increasing noise of the century."

fitzpatrick works at the edge of emotional strangulation, exploring the English language's *duality of patterning* —the manipulation of smaller "meaningless" elements into patterns of meaning. While Sapir argues that a "definition of language, however, that is so extended as to cover every type of inference becomes utterly meaningless," it is precisely that extension of meaning, and the exploration of the fragment as compositional unit which is the focus of *hounds of love / loss leaders*.

W.J.T. Mitchell states that "[l]andscape is an exhausted medium, no longer viable as a mode of artistic expression," and that "[l]ike life, landscape is boring; we must not say so" (5). When fitzpatrick does refer to landscape, the vocabulary of reference is unhinged through an alienating context: does a "rivat river rival" geographically drain into, or flow from, a "[f]orce serv trict / ducat lake?" By noting the "hold and discurse" inherent in the "boring," fitzpatrick finds a way to "say so"

through "unanchored" signifiers. His words —fragments, neologisms and nonce words— are recognizable as pieces of language, but only pieces. They are semantically reminiscent. This unanchored language works both as a criticism of "boring" landscape and the "boring" life of consumerism.

The poetic ontological "boredom" of fitzpatrick's *hounds of love / loss leaders* troubles the relationship between speech, thought and language —just as spam email includes a vocabulary purposefully inserted to out-maneuver filtration programs, fitzpatrick's poetry avoids censure by capitalist morality by evoking a vocabulary outside of normative construction. His texts may bear resemblance to familiar constructions, but *hounds of love / loss leaders* is a "[n]eon suite / poem [...] fake" that dwells in the elision of the (un)familiar —alienating language from itself, and the reader from the language of meaning through the "[p]rofanity of [f]ormless ([n]onrepresentational) [l]anguage" (Ngai 104):

> intime struct
> paper stroke
>
> digits lost
> umble

Jon Paul Fiorentino (himself a prairie writer, having been born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and the co-editor of *Post-Prairie: An Anthology of New Poetry* in 2005 with Robert Kroetsch, whose very involvement in the collection creates both a cultural caché and a discourse between the established representations of prairie and younger voices who are attempting to trouble traditional representations) argues that

> [t]he inability of many readers and literary scholars to see an emerging poetics of a new prairie, the post-prairie, should not be surprising —there is a reason the prairie is thought of as the domain of the rural, the wheat field and the grain elevator. [...T]he persistence of this imagery [...] has something to do with cultural capital —that is, there is a marketplace-based reason many people continue to think of the prairie as a fixed notion of "traditional" landscape (Fiorentino and Kroetsch 9).

Jordan Scott and ryan fitzpatrick actively attempt to disrupt this "cultural capital" (9) by abandoning the narrative-drive in order to critique the conservative politic in Alberta. This linking of narrative and consumerism does, as Bernstein notes, limit the options available to articulate "disgust." By favouring the awkward and refusing to "[b]ring [b]eauty [i]nto [t]he [w]orld," Scott and fitzpatrick —like many poets currently writing in Calgary— distance themselves from the traditional tropes of "prairie," finding an "articulate expression of [their ...] own inarticulateness" (Ngai 104). With marketplace-driven culture rampant in Alberta, Scott and fitzpatrick turn with disgust to the "negative utterance" (Ngai 103) —for "[h]ow can these institutionalized logics *not* make stomachs turn?" (Ngai 98). Like other members of the collectives working on *filling Station* and *dANDelion* magazines —and their circle of contemporaries— fitzpatrick and Scott use the fragment and

other non-normative poetics as a means of eschewing the cultural stranglehold "prairie poetry" has upon perceptions of Albertan writing.

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WHERE HAS "REAL" NATURE GONE, ANYWAY?: ECOCRITICISM, CANADIAN WRITING AND THE LURES OF THE VIRTUAL*

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ABSTRACT

This essay offers an approach to ecocriticism in the context of contemporary English Canadian literature and culture. It analyzes definitions of the national identity in the past three decades in connection with Canada's real and/or imaginary wilderness. Following a period of dismantlement of such associations, a period characterized by the rise of a fundamentally urban multiculturalism in Canadian literature, the ascent of ecocriticism in the 1990s might be interpreted as a conservative move towards the recuperation of the unified national metaphor the country's association with the wilderness seemed to provide. But, is there anything Canadian about ecocriticism? What could Canadian writers and critics contribute to it? To answer these questions, the essay will scrutinize various moments of the metaphor in criticism and fiction, along with changing concepts, in the age of technology, of nature and of our relation to it.

KEY WORDS: Ecocriticism, Canadian literature, nation, wilderness, technology, feminism, post-colonialism, aboriginal writing.

RESUMEN

Este ensayo ofrece un acercamiento a la ecocrítica en el contexto de la literatura y la cultura anglocanadiense contemporánea. Analiza las distintas definiciones de la identidad nacional en las últimas tres décadas en conexión con la naturaleza canadiense real o figurada. Después de un período de desmantelamiento de estas asociaciones, período caracterizado por el auge de un multiculturalismo fundamentalmente urbano, la aparición de la ecocrítica en los años 90 pudiera ser interpretada como una reacción conservadora para recuperar la metáfora de unidad nacional que la naturaleza proporcionaba. Pero, ¿hay algo intrínsecamente canadiense en la ecocrítica? ¿Cuál sería la contribución de escritores y críticos canadienses al campo? Para responder a estas preguntas, el ensayo escruta varios momentos en el uso de la metáfora en la producción crítica y creativa, frente a conceptos cambiantes sobre el medio natural y nuestra propia relación con él en la era de la tecnología.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Ecocrítica, literatura canadiense, nación, naturaleza, tecnología, feminismo, post-colonialismo, escritura aborigen.

In his interesting essay, "Beyond Nature/Writing: Virtual Lanscapes Online, in Print, and in 'Real Life,'" H. Lewis Ulman discusses the limits between the real and the virtual dimensions of contemporary life, presenting a challenging view of the real *as* virtual, and arguing against the common perception of virtual *reality* as a threat to *real* reality. Drawing on Braudillard's notions of hyper-reality, Ulman argues that VR is increasingly becoming part of our daily life to the point of defining our contemporary experience of it. Moreover, the transformation of the physical world into a virtual one has been for long a common practice of any culture: "After all," he writes, "belief in magic has in many cultures and times transformed the natural world into a magical place, occupied by the real (that is, material) talismans and (to those outside the belief system) imaginary presences" (344). This view, Ulman continues, has important implications for ecocriticism, since technology

> behooves us to discover what imaginative and conceptual resources we need to construct ethical and healthy relationships between digital and material worlds, just as ecocritics have been working to establish such relationships between textual and material worlds. Indeed, the blurring and interanimation of symbolic and material worlds raises important questions for ecocriticism [...]. How do our experiences of material landscapes inform our experiences of symbolic landscapes —and vice versa? How do we distinguish virtual landscapes from real ones and establish ethical relationships in or to both? In sum, how can our symbolic approximations of the material world help us sustain relationships to that world that avoid disastrous or oppressive consequences for ourselves and the other species with which we live?" (Ulman 345)

By explicitly connecting the discourses of technology and ecology, Ulman is dismantling radical ecology's typical claim to material reality, and therefore to the authenticity of experience, as well as probing technology's frequent association with virtuality, and thus with a second-order dimension of experience. This conscious blending of ontological categories seems especially relevant in the case of Canadian literature and culture, where definitions of the national identity in the 1970s were often attempted in connection with Canada's real and/or imaginary wilderness. Following a period of dismantlement of such associations, a period characterized by the rise of a fundamentally urban multiculturalism in Canadian literature, the ascent of ecocriticism in the 1990s might be interpreted as a conservative move towards the recuperation of the unified national metaphor the country's association with the wilderness seemed, at least for some, to provide.

Yet, given the universal tone of much ecocritical thinking, it soon became unclear whether such an approach should retain a national focus. Or, in other

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words, is there anything Canadian about ecocriticism? What could Canadian writers and critics contribute to it? On the one hand, it may be argued that the rise of this critical school in Canada replicates the country's conflictive relationship with the United States. As Susie O'Brien has expressed, ecocriticism as such, despite (or because of) its globalizing impetus, *is* an American invention. On the other, the existence of a rich ecocritical tradition in Canada, which is in turn radically linked to the national, cannot be underestimated or denied: "By exploring this conjunction in a comparative framework," O'Brien argues, "it is possible to consider not just why some nationalist mythologies nurture ecocritical thinking more effectively than others, but also how the principles of ecocriticism might be adapted to reflect the importance of cultural context" (18-19). The aim of this essay is to analyze possible ways in which ecocriticism can provide a useful discourse to address, read and interpret literature and culture in contemporary Canada. I will scrutinize various moments of the wilderness as metaphor in criticism and fiction, along with changing concepts, in the age of technology, of nature and of our relation to it.

Twenty eight years have already gone since D.M.R. Bentley, in his famous essay "A New Dimension: Notes on the Ecology of Canadian Poetry," called for an ecological approach to the national poetic forms and techniques which would "cast into a new relief its fabled 'mapleness' and 'mooseness,' to demonstrate that poetry written in Canada, like the flora and fauna (not to say the people) that have migrated, survived, and evolved here, displays morphological qualities that are both distinctively regional and distinctively Canadian" (Bentley 4). At the time, such a proposal meant both a continuation of and a reaction against Northrop Frye's well-known construction of Canadianness in terms of the fear of the landscape. It implied a continuation in that Bentley's argument seemed to stress and confirm the validity of the search for a national(ist) identity and to acknowledge the centrality of the Canadian landscape in such a project. Like Frye's notion of the national identity, Bentley's was based on an intrinsic connection between the country and its nature: the Canadian wilderness in a *real*, literal or material, sense. Most importantly, it acknowledged the great power of a mythical dimension of Canadian nature, a dimension that has proved tremendously productive for the national culture and literature and often more powerful than the real one: the Canadian wilderness in a *virtual*, figurative or metaphorical, sense.

It is at that level of the virtual or metaphorical, where Frye's well-known conclusion identifies "a tone of deep terror" in Canadian poetry's recurrent representations of nature, a fear which is not produced by the actual dangers and discomforts of the wilderness (of which there are, I am sure, many), but rather by the poet's emotional response to it, "a terror of the soul at something that these things manifest" (1965, 830). And in this, Bentley's call for an ecological approach to Canadian literature may have represented a radical break with the dominant discourse about the national, putting forward an altogether new relationship to the Canadian wilderness based as much on confrontation and survival as on the possibility of identification with the natural landscape. The central question was: How do we define Canada other than as a country of "vast and empty spaces"? (Gorjup).

In his search for alternative metaphors to approach the Canadian mind, yet without losing sight of the real and metaphorical powers of Canadian nature, Bentley may have initiated the discourse of ecocriticism in Canada. Preceding Bentley, although often unacknowledged, were the works of very many Canadian writers who did not contribute to create an image of Canadianness as either void of meaning or filled with unknown threats. Following him, works by younger authors, and especially by women (Thomas, Marlatt, Michaels) and aboriginal peoples of Canada (Armstrong, Brant, King, Robinson) are consciously writing against that tradition in ways that escape the paradox (Gorjup). In fact, the 1980s marked the beginning of a new Canadian production that clearly moved away from the strong nationalist import and into international, transnational or even post-national arenas.[1]

Against hierarchical and oppositional models of relationship with nature, then, critical, creative and theoretical alternatives have sprung in the past three decades that point to a reconfiguration of the national literature. And in that context, ecocriticism, a discourse that searches to break the anthropocentricism leading to the commodification of nature, has become unquestionably prominent. As an approach to literature, it would involve not only the study of the representation of nature in literary works, but also the application of an ecological perspective to literary studies.[2] Additionally, ecocriticism can be located right at the center of the discourse of sustainability that is becoming central to all disciplines, including politics and economics. Today, as Linda Hutcheon suggests ("Eruptions of Postmodernity"), Frye's fear of nature has turned into a fear for nature, and the literary and artistic production of contemporary Canada shows a high degree of ecological concern, often enacting self-conscious discussion of environmental issues and proposing different alternative ways towards nature. Finally, its advocacy of a spiritual approach to the environment has placed it in the foreground of alternative forms of thinking both nature and literature other than as resource. It is by definition a hybrid form of criticism and calls for high interdisciplinarity.

In the larger context, a number of difficulties, however, need to be addressed. In the first place, one must admit that the question of methodology is still a soft point, and it is rather unclear whether ecocriticism should be associated with a "unified, ecological field theory" for literature (Bentley 4), with identifiable interpretative procedures and techniques. Most importantly, does ecocriticism imply, by

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[1] Yet, for some critics, the 1980s represent the end, rather than the beginning, of an era. In his edition of Jack McClelland's letters, Sam Solecki, for instance, regrets the post-nationalist mood of the period and mourns for the nationalist impetus of the 1960s, which had by then become "either a spent political force or had been co-opted by the feel-good North American multiculturalism" (260). From this perspective, Bentley's proposal could also be interpreted as a conservative move to rescue a dying nationalism from the rising multicultural force.

[2] Many critics have recently demonstrated ways of thinking ecocritical practices other than in purely thematic terms (see, for instance, Laurie Ricou, *The Arbutus/Madrone Files* and *Salal*).

definition, a rejection of the post-structuralist tenets? Does it mark, as some critics have argued, "the return of the referent"? These questions are of special interest in Canada, where it was the irruption of postmodernism that finally brought its literature to (inter)national recognition (Hutcheon, *The Canadian Postmodern*), and where the most prominent instances of ecocritical writing in the country seem to embrace postmodern indeterminacy and have often adopted a deconstructive tone (Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, Marlatt, *Taken*, Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*). In looking at the possible encounters between ecological thinking and literary studies, Dominic Head identifies an initial incompatibility between the principles of deep ecology (essentialist by nature) and post-structuralism (with its anti-essentialist thrust). Head concludes that ecocriticism "can intervene only in current debates about literary studies through a direct response to the implications of postmodernity". Yet this happens at a price, for "such a response would seem to necessitate a compromise on ecocentric values" (38). Head's view, however, is based on a common but arguable identification of postmodernism as complicit with environmental degradation in its abandonment of the "real" and its exclusive focus on the textual, an argument to which I wish to turn briefly.

The concept of "textual pollution" provides an interesting pivotal point to discuss the possible associations between ecocriticism and postmodernity, since many well-known ecocritics have accused the latter, and post-structuralism, of having provoked it, with its tendency to textual narcissism (see, for instance, Buell, *The Future*): "This aspect of semiotic excess," writes Will Slocombe in this regard, "buries the real world under a pile of words" (493). Slocombe elaborates further:

> To use a parallel from economics, the 'referential' market has been flooded by an unrestricted supply of symbols until all symbols are devalued: the distinction between sign and referent collapses into a rampant textuality that no longer signifies anything. This is 'symbolic pollution', not in the sense that the pollution is not real, but in the sense that it is very real and symbols cause it. (Slocombe 495)

From that perspective, the assumption that ecocriticism is free from producing sign pollution seems as naïve as the belief in its unobtrusive access to essence, authenticity, to the "real" thing. Ecocriticism's self-claimed connection to the real world, Slocombe maintains,

> fails to account for the fact that academic literary discourse —the practice of writing about texts— is always already a second-order image in Baudrillard's terms, masking and 'de-naturing' a profound reality. Relating ecocritical literature to 'socially-constituted systems', a recurring tenet of ecocriticism, therefore ignores the fact that nature is itself reified within those social systems, and that ecocriticism is merely another social (academic) system and merely another reification of nature. We do not access the truth through academic discourse; we merely theorize another, better model of simulating it. (Slocombe 502)

There is no other way, that is, but the way of language. Besides, given its undeniably interdisciplinary nature, ecocriticism could (and *does*) swiftly draw for

its methods on other contemporary critical discourses. That is in fact the case in Canada, where much ecocritical production is linked to theoretical discourses that, although stemming from and exploiting the postmodern dissolution of the Cartesian subject, thus representing a challenge to anthropocentrism, intersect at the same time with social movements which vindicate a revaluation of otherness, and thus, at least implicitly, move towards biocentrism. Ecofeminism, seen as the confluence of ecology and gender issues, occupies one of those positions. Ecological postcolonialism, especially in these times of postcolonial "descent" (Slemon), and particularly as it relates to aboriginal approaches to nature, represents another. They make two of the various contesting grounds from which contemporary writers and critics are exploring notions of nature and Canadianness.

That Northrop Frye's construction of the national identity was fraught with his own biased reading of Canadian poetry has been sufficiently discussed and well argued by feminist and ecofeminist critics today. According to Diana Relke, for instance, Frye's almost total reliance on Canadian poetry by men, and particularly on E.J. Pratt's, marked by the poet's harsh childhood in an isolated turn-of-the-century Newfoundland village, determined his seminal theory of Canadian identity. "As a young man," Relke notes,

> Frye fell under the spell of Pratt's work and regarded it as the sum of all that had gone before it; as the years passed he also began to see it as the prophecy of all that came later. However, Canadian poetry by women tended overwhelmingly to refute Frye's terrifying view of nature as "other" and irreconcilably opposed to human consciousness; hence the work of women poets either remained on the peripheries of Canadian myth criticism or was subjected to the imposition of this dualistic way of knowing nature. (Relke 25)

A gender perspective of Canadian literature would have definitely revealed a different approach to nature and, therefore, alternative national myths. Relke's proposal consists of an archival exercise of looking back at the Canadian tradition with an open mind to rewrite it, searching for the rich ecological projection of the works of such poets as Isabella Crawford, Dorothy Livesay, Phyllis Webb, and the more contemporary Daphne Marlatt:

> In short, these poets offered intersubjective ways of seeing and knowing the world and new ways of resolving the conflict that arises out of a perception of reality as turning on an infinite series of hierarchically arranged oppositions, the most fundamental of which is the opposition between male and female and, by extension, between culture and nature. In this way, these poets are the inheritors of a tradition that began with Crawford. (Relke 33)

In fiction, I would add, female writers in Canada from all regions and backgrounds, from Marian Engel to Aritha van Herk, from Daphne Marlatt to Kristjana Gunnars, from Gail Anderson-Dargatz to Eden Robinson, have repeatedly and very self-consciously undermined the oppositional, androcentric model of the "Canadian imagination," articulating, in its turn, a myriad of possible ways of

thinking the (female) human as natural and in nature.[3] This, however, does not necessarily imply an uncritical celebration of "women in/as nature." Most of the writers I have mentioned seem aware of the dangers of feminist practices that idealize the natural/maternal connection, as well as of the possibility of inadvertently reproducing patriarchal patterns of relationship with nature. It is interesting to point out, in this context, how a novel such as Marian Engel's *Bear,* initially celebrated by nationalist critics as paramount instance of such an identification between women (as the national subject) and the Canadian wilderness, is now rather seen as conveying the very impossibility of such an ideal identification, since the protagonist, Lou, and the bear ultimately fail to build a satisfactory relationship of equality. Instead, a gender reversal of roles happens between them which ironically replicates the abusive patriarchal/imperialist rapport to woman and nature: "He served her. As long as she made her stool beside him in the morning, he was ready whenever she spread her legs to him. He was rough and tender, assiduous, patient, infinitely, it seemed to her, kind" (Engel 119).

Already in the 1980s, women writers and critics were rereading the initial interpretations of Engel's book, writing back with further ideas, footnoting and opening the enigmatic novel up to different meanings about the foresaid relationship between women and nature. A radical contribution to this debate, Aritha van Herk's *No Fixed Address*, for instance, plays a metafictional game by introducing a woman and a bear in its plot. The novel follows the life of its protagonist, Arachne, in her different phases of breaking with patriarchal structures/strictures of behaviour and thought. The argument moves from the social to the natural as Arachne escapes from her urban existence and drives to a wilderness setting whose description resounds with a platonic identification between the female and the natural, and whose climax is found in the episode of the Wild Woman, a woman-shaped stone "spread to infinite sky, to a prairie grassland's suggestion of paradise, a woman open-armed on the highest hill in that world" (van Herk 232).

Everything seems to point out to a profound, unquestionable connection between the female protagonist and the wild landscape, explicitly symbolized by the woman-shaped stone. Yet the fusion is just momentary, Arachne moves on and drives north until she disappears from the story, literally becoming the missing subject of the novel's four "notebooks." With this radical ending, the novel breaks not only the reader's expectations about the above identification but also its underlying binarism. It is time, the novel seems to argue, to look for alternative ways of approaching female subjectivity in society, nature and beyond.

Ecofeminism may well represent one of those alternative options, and, in fact, the alliance between ecology and gender issues has proved to be one of the

[3] The essays contained in the groundbreaking collection *A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women Writing,* edited by Shirley Newman and Smaro Kamboureli, and published in 1986, represented such an incredible variety of feminist approaches to nature within the national literature.

most fruitful in recent years, producing an important body of theory, criticism and artistic practice aimed at dismantling the structures of (and the subtle complicities between) imperialism, anthropocentrism and patriarchal thought (see Garrard 23-27). In Canada, the recent publication of works such as *This Elusive Land: Women and the Canadian Environment* (Hessing, Raglon and Sandilands) has set an incredibly rich ground for the combined analysis of gender and the environment across a wide range of disciplines and fields. As the editors affirm in their introduction:

> In the midst of an environmentalist critique of resource exploitation and toxic imperialism, then, feminists have an important role to play in issuing a reminder about the complex gendered dimensions of Canadian environmental history, literature, and economics. An understanding of the complex and diverse relationship between women and the natural environment will contribute to a deeper understanding of the environmental challenges facing Canada. (Hessing, Raglon and Sandilands xii-xiii)

Many contemporary texts by Canadian women contribute to this type of research by scrutinizing the gendered dimensions of environmental history. Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure for Death by Lightning*, for instance, a novel about the life of a homestead family in the British Columbia interior during World War II, probes to its very exhaustion the patriarchal approach to both women and nature in pioneer societies as "'resources' for male exploitation, overused, undervalued, and denied full subject status" (Hessing, Raglon and Sandilands xiii). The idea is clearly expressed in the text through the character of the father, his view towards his wife, daughter and farm animals. By warning his daughter to stay away from bulls and male dogs at the time of menstruation, his animalization of the female body turns against himself and becomes a sign of his own wild uncontrollable impulses. But the most graphic instance of the aggressiveness of his farming methods, as well as of his reduction of the female species to the reproductive function, is to be found in the painful episode leading to the death of the cow Gertrude, an episode, moreover, which illustrates well the environmental implications of misogyny, uncannily foreshadowing the risky manipulations of nature into which the meat industry has entered today.[4]

If the confluence between ecology and feminism promises to become a productive field, so has the potentiality of a convergence between postcolonial and ecological projects in the specific Canadian context been put forward with convincing arguments (see, for instance, Hutcheon). On the one hand, an ecocentric perspective on past and present forms of colonialism would push the traditional

[4] For a more detailed analysis of these implications in Anderson-Dargatz's novel, see my essay "Blood Road Leads to Promise." Additionally, a remarkable fictionalized account of such manipulations can be found in Ruth Ozeki's *My Years of Meat*, a must-read for those of us interested in the intersections between ecology, feminism and literature.

postcolonial anthropocentrism to the consideration of often-ignored biocentric issues. On the other, approaching ecocriticism from a postcolonial position would introduce a much-needed cross-cultural understanding of environmental issues, as well as undermine the potential neo-imperialist intention often hidden behind ecology's universalistic claims (Huggan). The sound success in the market of two relatively recent Canadian novels, Yann Martel's *Life of Pi* (2001) and Barbara Gowdy's *The White Bone* (1998), may be symptomatic of the public acceptance of such a biocentric turn in postcolonial studies. Set in India, in the Pacific Ocean, in the African plains or in Canada, these novels directly aim at the anthropocentric system of thought by introducing the narrative point of view of animals as the central characters (Godwy) and/or as central plot-makers (Martel).[5]

Recent postcolonial-oriented research on aboriginal cultures has also contested the traditional vision of Canadian literature, unveiling it as the mark of white male anxiety about feeling constantly out of place in the new territory. Frye's garrison mentality has been seen, in this context, as a metaphoric way of expressing the white settler's sense of alienation from the land, and probably, the sense of guilt derived from it (see Francis 233). And in this issue, both Frye *and* Bentley, who talks exclusively about imported and transplanted forms, display at least a telling obliviousness, if not a clear bias against, the cultures that preceded them and that had figured the wilderness before them. Today, we are gradually learning how the different aboriginal cultures of Canada approached nature in their own terms. In the metaphorical plane, traditionally unfamiliar with a Cartesian division of the world between subject and object, or with the Enlightenment separation between nature and culture, they have always lived by a holistic, pantheistic notion of life *in* nature. In the material plane, the present debates about Canadian natural resources, about sustainability and the preservation of the environmental richness of the country are not only economic debates, but have also become moral issues, especially after the consideration of aboriginal demands for self-government and land rights (Hutcheon, "Eruptions" 147).

Whether they choose to represent the aboriginal subject in a perfect harmony with nature, thus sometimes playing with and/or reproducing (white) stereotypes of aboriginality, or to figure the Canadian wilderness as a rich ground for gothic possibilities, with which they write back to and rewrite the so-called foundational myths, the number of First Nation writers who self-consciously include an ecocritical perspective in their work has always been outstanding. They are "writers who, either through mythic, psychic, or geographic channels, have identified a landscape or environment as intrinsic to their own conceptualization of the self" (Dreese 2002, 3). This process has to do with the external as well as with the

[5] Still, whether they are effective in their attempt to destabilize anthropocentrism, or rather achieve a postcolonial-oriented revival of the fabulist genre could be a matter of discussion elsewhere.

internal, with the real and with the imaginary place. Accordingly, they "have initiated a movement toward a form of literary decolonization and environmental awareness in which the healing process involves remapping external and internal terrains" (Dreese 21). Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach* (2000) is worth commenting at some detail in what follows, since it offers a rich example not only of this alliance between the literary and the environmental, but also of the possibilities presented by transcending the Manichean conflict between Natives and colonizers and focusing on a land-based transcultural approach to contemporary aboriginal identities. "Eden Robinson is not writing back," argues J.A. Wainwright in this sense, "but *on*" (117).

On the one hand, with its analysis of gender relations within a small Haisla community of the West Coast, this novel works from the local to the global to reveal the extent to which women in traditional rural cultures have a privileged knowledge of the natural environment they live in, since, as Carolyn Merchant has explained:

> As producers and reproducers of life, women in tribal and traditional cultures over the centuries have had highly significant interactions with the environment. As gatherers of food, fuel, and medicinal herbs; fabricators of clothing; planters, weeders, and harvesters of horticultural crops; tenders of poultry; preparers and preservers of food; and bearers and caretakers of young children, women's intimate knowledge of nature has helped to sustain life in every global human habitat. (Merchant 16)

Through the character of the narrator's grandmother, Ma-ma-oo, who teaches the narrator the secrets of wild berries, medicinal plants and oolichan grease, the transmission of traditional knowledge seems guaranteed. Thimbleberries, Lisa learns form her grandmother in her berry picking trips, come out a little later and have a sharper smell than salmonberries, which have "[s]errated, raspberry-like leaves unfurled as the shoots became stalks, then bushes" (Robinson 76). On the other hand, Ma-ma-oo ancestral ecological knowledge lives side by side her addiction to popular North American TV serials, "The Young and the Restless," "All My Children" or "Dynasty," the passing of botanical information or traditional cooking tips often interspersed in the narration with comments on the televised plot:

> "Lauren," [Ma-ma-oo would] shout at the TV, "leave him, he's no good for you! *Na'*. What a crazy woman."
> "Mother," Mick would say. "It's only TV. Everyone's stupid on TV."
> "I know. I know. *Wah.* She's taking him back." She shook her head sadly.
> After picking out the bugs, leaves and twigs, Ma-ma-oo would transfer all the berries to a clean bowl and mulch them all together. She added a few tablespoons of oolichan grease, stirring all the time, then added a sprinkling of sugar. She'd leave the bowl in the fridge for another hour to let the flavours meld and we'd watch some more TV until the salmonberry stew was ready, then we'd go into the kitchen and Ma-ma-oo would give me a little dessert bowl. We'd eat in respectful silence, Ma-ma-oo closing her eyes in ecstasy as she ate. The grease makes the

> berries sinfully rich, as thick as cheesecake. We'd split the stew, and I'd take my half home, so full I felt sleepy. (Robinson 77-78)

Written from the point of view of its 19-year-old narrator, the narrative consciously avoids essentialist reifications of the aboriginal subject, for the recuperation of a nature-based Haisla way of life happens only inasmuch as it is counterpoised by the acceptance of the "white" attributes as well as the incorporation of technology in contemporary Native life: Robinson's are characters who go berry picking and oolichan fishing when in season, who use the traditional methods to smoke sockeye salmon and make oolichan grease, who travel by motorboat, eat Kraft dinner, popcorn, have TVs and DVDs. The required contact with nature appears therefore ambiguously represented, as Lisa's description switches back and forth between the ideal and the co-opted. Paradigm of such indecisiveness, the figure of the *b'gwus* or Sasquatch appears as the object of both spiritual/mythical significance and commercial profit, since "[h]is image is even used to sell beer, and he is portrayed as a laid-back kind of guy, lounging on mountaintops in patio chairs, cracking open a frosty one" (Robinson 317). That this b'gwus invariably fails to meet the characters' and readers' expectations could be symptomatic of a failure to perform as stereotypical aboriginal subject, and thus appears connected to the narrator's own failure to interpret the signs of her culture (Appleforth 96). Similar strategies are deployed in the transformation of *Weegit,* the Raven, into a "respectable" urban bachelor, living in a comfortable downtown condo: "Yes, he admits, he did steal the sun and the moon, but he insists he did it to bring light to humankind even though he did it so it would be easier for him to find food[...] As he sips his low-fat mocha and reads yet another sanitized version of his earlier exploits, only his small, sly smile reveals how much he enjoys pulling the wool over everyone else's eyes" (Robinson 295-296). The textual place occupied by the above extract in the novel, opening the part entitled "In Search of the Elusive Sasquatch," contributes to its intended confusion of expected images of aboriginality, sending the reader to look for meaning elsewhere.

Disappointing as the text may result for a reader keen on finding cultural authenticity behind the author's signature, the protagonist is not familiar with Haisla traditional knowledge or even the language (much of the novel's movement is her own journey into the culture she had forgotten), and when she asks her mother or grandmother, they disown their tradition, refuse or are unable to give her useful information or guidance in the culture maze: "'All the people knew the old ways are gone,'" the grandmother tells a thoroughly disappointed Lisa, "'[...]Best not to deal at all if you don't know what you're doing. It's like oxasuli. Tricky stuff'" (154). Lisa thereby doubts and fails to interpret the significance of her visions, with which their cultural significance, if any, is relativized or even lost:

> Robinson demonstrates, and exploits, to poignant effect on the level of plot and character development, the desire and fear the contemporary Aboriginal subject experiences as she confronts what she cannot (but feels she must) know. Thus, Lisamarie's ultimate failure to "really" discover the fate of her brother Jimmy on

> Monkey Beach is also the failure to engineer Haisla culture, to discover its certainty amidst the confusing signs that forestall such a discovery. (Appleforth 96)

Monkey Beach provides us with a move forward in its approach to aboriginality as *essentially* hybrid (Howells 183-198), filled with uncertainty (Wainwright), and thus breaking expectations and stereotypes of the kind Kateri Damm complains about when she writes: "In Canada, First Nations writers are often expected to write about certain issues, to share certain values, to use certain symbols and icons, to speak in certain ways [...] And when we write, we are expected to draw on this knowledge in writing poetic "tales" about shamans and tricksters and mighty chiefs" (15). I would further argue that, in its self-conscious dismantling of cultural stereotypes, Robinson's novel transcends received as well as self-assigned definitions of aboriginal literature as a writing of "resistance."[6] Paradigm in this context of stereotypical thinking, the "traditional" connection between Natives and Nature (capitals intended) is addressed and probed in the novel to unsuspected limits.

That an uncritical support of that connection between aboriginals and the wilderness may contribute to a reproduction of the very colonialist discourse it intends to overthrow has been amply documented by postcolonial critics. Past and present official definitions of the Canadian wilderness take this element (the human presence) into account, and picture aboriginal peoples as an integral element of the wilderness, and thus subject to colonization and exploitation. Besides, the contemporary lives of aboriginal peoples in Canada may be conditioned as much by technology as it is by nature. It is unquestionable that much of Canada's natural spaces are home to First Nations and that they may often enjoy a harmonious non-intrusive relationship with the environment —in fact, they are often upheld by ecological groups as example to follow. "However," Atkinson objects, "this begs several questions, for should their technology change, so that the impact on the habitat or species becomes 'enduring', then wilderness will be threatened. Thus the use of high-powered rifles, spotter planes, snowmobiles and power-boats in hunting by Aboriginal Peoples would be a matter of concern" (236-7). At present, the "traditional" connection, therefore, should not be taken for granted.

In *Monkey Beach*, the natural environment does not only provide the most powerful rhetorical elements but also becomes, in true naturalistic fashion, central to narrative plot and characterization. As Bridgeman suggests:

> Life in Kitamaat Village is evoked beautifully and honestly, without being prettified. The incredibly beautiful land and seascapes, places where worlds entwine, are not merely backdrops or stages for action. Alive, home to other living creatures, the place is a breathing character, fully integrated with other elements of the novel.

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[6] Texts, according to Armand G. Ruffo, which are written "from an Aboriginal perspective and address colonialism in all its guises [...], rais[ing] difficult textual questions with far reaching social-political-cultural implications" (8). Very many critics seem to agree with this definition of aboriginal literature (see also Emberly, Angus).

> Lisamarie's world teems with life, including the life of supernatural beings who communicate with her in dreams, visions, soundings and sightings. (Bridgeman, n. pag.)

Yet the importance of the natural world does not imply, by any means, the novel's buying into the *Natural Native* stereotype. The title, *Monkey Beach*, already sends the reader a clue in that direction, for as Wainwright observes: "what have monkeys to do with Indians?" (115). In a less humouristic tone, J.M. Bridgeman complains that Robinson's title is misleading, for it "sends the reader in the exact opposite direction, away from Haisla territory, with a name from other cultures centered elsewhere. It must be a trickster's inside joke" (n. pag.). That the novel is titled after a place name, Monkey Beach, "a reputed sasquatch hang out," seems no coincidence in this context, since it refers to the place of the narrator's childhood and, thus, stands for the lost origin, the initial moment that needs to be revisited, for Lisa thinks that by returning physically there, she will be given the answer to both the disappearance of her brother and her own identity search. However, neither plot materializes at the end, the much expected and sought-after Sasquatch never turns up, and nature fails to produce any meaningful signs. Hence the extremely ambiguous ending, in which (the illusion of?) the sound of the Sasquatch's mythical howl is muffled by the very real sharp sound of a speedboat: "The howl echoes off the mountains. In the distance, I hear the sound of a speedboat" (Robinson 374).

How are we to interpret this enigmatic ending? What does it make of the relation between the aboriginal subject and the land? The threat of meaninglessness seems a strong possibility at this final moment, especially when the novel comes to the difficult project of representing aboriginal cultures between co-option and essentialization. Still, Lisa's motorboat trip in the last chapter reads like a modern version of the Spirit Canoe to the Land of the Dead of traditional west coast mythologies and could even be interpreted as a homage to them (Bridgeman). In that context, the superimposition of sounds that close the novel, rather than implying the triumph of technology over traditional belief, may argue for the changing hybrid nature of traditions and cultures, putting forward the impossibility of constructing aboriginality as "transcendental truth" (Appleforth 85). "So what is it that Lisa is holding on to through her Weegit irony?" asks Wainwright in this regard. And he answers: "an empowered interaction with that 'larger social complex' where history and myth, in all their techno-variety and complexity, can shape-shift faster than a raven can fly" (Wainwright 121)

Accordingly, the threat of cultural extinction as figured through the elusive Sasquatch is parodically undercut by its virtual (albeit false or inexact) location, the narrator tells us, at www.sasquatch.com.

At the centre of the debate is our access to and interpretation of the natural world. Robinson's novel implicitly argues for the constantly shifting character of our experience of the "real" world. "The fact that the world exists is beyond dispute to all but the most ardent nihilists (which postmodernists and post-structuralists are not)" Slocombe explains; "what that world means, however, is another question

—one that we can never answer. Perhaps this is the real 'lie of the land': in literary terms, the land is itself untrue, the real itself unreal" (504). This by no means implies or justifies the abandonment of responsible engagements with the natural environment. Rather, the awareness of the virtual (metaphoric) character of all our experience should prompt us in the search of larger than the self connections and identifications between human and non-human worlds, a crucial recognition that would facilitate the shifting of the anthropocentric basis of our approach to nature (Rozelle 1).

In literature, as I have been arguing, ecocritical practices may in fact contribute to that necessary change. In the specific Canadian context, the question still remains, as I mentioned at the beginning of this essay, of whether the very application of an ecocritical framework would diffuse the national category pushing the analytical focus towards the more global issues affecting climate change. However, some critics have contended, while ecology in fact transcends and must transcend national borders, the territories in question are always circumscribed within their national governments, with their very specific environmental laws and regulations (O'Brien 21). In Canada, for instance, the global trend for environmental sustainability has resulted in a federal economic policy under the *Canadian Biodiversity Strategy* (1995), that proposes a Canadian "society that lives and develops as a part of nature, values the diversity of life, takes no more than can be replenished and leaves futures generations a nurturing and dynamic world" (quoted in Wylynko 128). Whether the practical implementations of the Strategy still need to be developed and improved, a blurring of national borders into the global melting pot (pun intended) may run the risk of effacing such important initiatives and thus erasing the different national approaches towards the environment.

A further issue to be considered regarding the possibilities of combining ecological and national interests would be the increasingly urban nature of Canadian life today, the fact that most of the population, Canadian-born or recent immigrants, lives in cities or large towns. On the one hand, these numbers would seem to overthrow the traditional connection between the country and its wilderness, be this real or imagined, figured as terror or as pleasure. On the other, this reality is pushing the subject of ecocriticism towards the encompassing notion of *urban nature*. Already in 1995, Lawrence Buell argues that a truly ecocritical work is that in which "the non-human environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history" (*The Environmental* 7-8). The environmental in this scheme, as developed by Buell in a later work, should include the natural as well as the human-made realities, the artificial or the transformed natures (Buell, *Writing* 3).[7] Timothy

[7] In the last work of his ecocritical trilogy, *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, Buell develops this idea, unquestioningly extending the notion of environment to human-made habitats (see also Heise's discussion of Buell's contribution to ecocriticism).

Taylor's novel *Stanley Park* comes to mind as an excellent instance of the possibilities of the contemporary negotiations between the urban and the wild. Significantly, for Taylor, the city of Vancouver and the wilderness, figured by Stanley Park, are not opposed categories, but each is contained within the other, overlap with and advance on each other in such a way as to create in the reader an awareness of their strong interconnection. The city and the park are both real and virtual landscapes, spaces of the mind whose metaphorical power relies on our shifting definitions of the urban and of the wild.

A further effort to break our structures of thought is needed, though, in ecocritical practice to finally reverse the rhetoric of fear and exploitation and embrace the lures of the virtual/real wild. We must resist what Wylynko calls "the quest of permanence", at work, for instance, in the common act of fencing natural landscapes (137). Wylynko's argument is worth quoting in full:

> The alignment of trees, for example, into ordered, manicured rows represents a human fear of the change that occurs naturally in a true forest. In place of such fear, ecocriticism offers the alternative of approach literature in such a way as to bring human understanding to the enjoyment of nature's evolving character and diversity, and to enhance the pleasure of those vital moments that include an awareness of the earth. Many writers and critics have already shown the way down this path. It remains for Canadian literary scholars to embrace and foster the methodology that asks whether artistic works show an appreciation, or scorn, for nature's attributes. To reveal how a work of literature renders the sound of the loon's haunting cry in the spring, the taste of fresh wild fruits in the summer, the sight of the changing colours of fall, and, yes, even the feeling of winter's biting chill, is to assist no only in the protection of animals and plants, landscapes and sky, but also in the liberation of the human spirit itself. Stories of environmental decay continue to mount —horror stories of closed beaches, undrinkable water, polluted air, and converted landscape. With each wound nature endures, the mission of ecocriticism becomes ever more critical. It is time to heed the call of the wild. (Wylynko 137)

In this essay, I have showed some moments in which ecocriticism in Canada can be effective in the above sense. My argument has tried to avoid essentialist views of nature while retaining the social and political bases of ecology and literature, assessing the possibilities for land and language to *virtually* become one. In Anne Michaels's poem "What the Light Teaches," a writer's notebook, buried in the garden, grows orchids and weeds. It is to that reversibility of process, land into language, language into land, to the unthinkable or the *virtually* impossible that we need to turn. After all, the word *virtually* in the above sentence introduces a nuance different from the technological usage to refer to something not physically existing as such, but *appearing* to do so. Here, it shifts the meaning of *impossible* towards the *possible*, although just barely so. The recent release in book and film format of *Being Caribou*, in which, in order to raise awareness of the threats to the caribou's survival, environmentalist Leanne Allison and wildlife biologist Karsten Heuer follow a herd of caribou on foot, across 1500 kilometres of rugged Arctic tundra, repre-

sents a striking instance of the potentiality of the unthinkable. The authors describe their goal as follows:

> [T]o go beyond the quick visits of past media coverage and arm's length science to live life as a caribou for seven months. We will swim the same rivers, plow through the same snowdrifts, and endure the same clouds of insects, cold nights, and miles of endless travel on an annual migration. We will go deep into the life of the herd, encounter the same grizzly bears, wolves, and eagles that they do, and witness the daily struggles that lead to birth and death. And when we return from the experience seven months later, we will have a truer understanding of what's at stake. (Allison and Heuer, n. pag.)

It seems to me that the possibility of being caribou, of becoming animal, in a very literal sense, opens up an incredibly fresh perspective on our relationship with the non-human world, turning it inside out, and melting the iron-framework of the binary division between subject and object. It is to those ideas, with their potential for transformation, that we should turn our attention to in the years to come, for it is "time for crossing barriers, for erasing old categories—for probing around" (McLuhan and Fiore 10).

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TWO VOICES FROM NEWFOUNDLAND: HISTORY AND MYTH ADDRESSED BY MAURA HANRAHAN AND PAUL BUTLER

Two interviews by
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The following interviews originated in a long conversation held with both authors in St. John's, Newfoundland, on October 12, 2007, which later crystallized in written form. Maura had just published her book *The Alphabet Fleet: The Pride of Newfoundland Coastal Service* (Flanker, Sept. 2007) on the Newfoundland boats which served to connect the province's coastal communities. This book weaves together historical documents and personal stories of the ships' crew and passengers. Paul was then about to launch his *St. John's: City of Fire* (Flanker, Oct. 2007), a study of the three major fires which destroyed the city in the nineteenth century. In this book Paul includes archival records and eye-witness accounts and he reflects on the ways the catastrophes affected the people who normally did not make it into history. Maura is an anthropologist who has explored, among others, the paths of creative non-fiction, and Paul is a novelist who has refashioned foundational myths of Newfoundland and tapped into the power of its historical figures. Through their different approaches to the realities, the literature, and the culture of Newfoundland, we will be able to discover various aspects of a society that has over five hundred years of independent history.

The interviews roughly follow a pattern in which Maura and Paul talk about: A) the relationship between their cultural context and their sense of creativity, then, B) about their work (the authors give a bit of background about their books, especially for readers to whom they might be new or fairly new), and C) about the issue of Newfoundland identity. Although there are common questions for both authors (they are marked with an asterisk), each author has answered them independently and each interview is given a separate and autonomous format. Maura's interview is presented in the first place.

INTERVIEW WITH MAURA HANRAHAN

A) Context and Creativity

MJH: Does a novel/a book start in your head or in the archives?

MH: It starts in my head, definitely. It grows out of things that have been inhabiting my head for a long time, things that won't go away, that nag at me and want to be expressed somehow. Usually these are stories I heard as a child. *Tsunami*, for instance, began in my childhood when my grandmother told me how the floor shook beneath her feet one evening. She was holding the baby, my father, and said in her deadpan way, "There'll be weather tonight." Then she went on doing what she was doing. But the waves came and people's lives were changed forever. How could I forget this story? It was a story she told many times, as did other elders in my life. And I realized it was a story that had never been told the way I wanted to

tell it —in book form, as it was. There were a couple of novels that might have been inspired by it (Ken Harvey's *The Town that Forgot How to Breathe* and Margaret Duley's *Highway to Valour*) but then departed from it.

MJH: How does your memory absorb the history of your island? Is it always personified (legends, historical figures, ancestors, relatives) or does it come to you in a more vague shape (generations of people that succeeded each other in time)? Have you found a way to combine the two?

MH: I think it is about the place where people and nature merge, the confluence, if you like, of the two. When I was growing up this was still an oral culture, very rooted in our rural history, especially my own South Coast family but this is even true of St. John's, I think. The fishery still shaped and defined people's lives. We still lived and died by the sea. Nature teaches you who's boss and I think that people who live and work in this particular geography and ecology cannot get too "uppity". Nature, the teacher, is always present. This idea might be heightened in my case because my father's side is part-Mi'kmaq, and Mi'kmaq values persisted to a remarkable degree in the lives of some of my paternal relatives.

MJH: Are you intensely aware of history because you are a Newfoundlander? (in the sense that the past has "lasted longer" here?) Do you need to recover the past because Canada's attitude toward Newfoundland has been one of neglect?

MH: It is not obvious to me that this is the case, although my husband (who is not from here) tells me that Newfoundlanders seem to be very aware of their history. I'm not writing with any overt political purpose. I'm not writing with Canada or Newfoundland's place in Canada in mind. After I wrote *Tsunami*, an Ottawa journalist asked me about Ottawa's and Canada's role in the disaster and I realized that it didn't have one. I just hadn't thought of Canada until then; it wasn't part of the story, it didn't turn up anywhere in the research. The relationship between Newfoundland and Canada was not a strong one until it was formalized in 1949; the island's important political links were to Britain, and our economic links to the Iberian peninsula, the Mediterranean, New England, the West Indies, etc.

As for our history being old, it isn't old really. When you think of the age of the earth and human habitation, Newfoundland is very young, as is Canada, and even "Old World" countries, like Spain. When you live in such close proximity to Mistaken Point and the Tablelands, when you live at the wild intersection of the Labrador Current and the Gulf Stream, alongside Iceberg Alley, you cannot help but be aware of how small we are and how old the earth is.

MJH: How does the sense of place (the idea of Newfoundland, its landscape, its past and present vicissitudes) filter into your sense of who you are as a writer?

MH: I think maybe my reply to your second question answers this to a degree. However, I've noticed that sense of place is important to me; growing up

somewhere with a strong sense of place has shaped the way I interact with the world. Wherever I go, I react strongly, one way or the other, to the place. I felt an instant connection to Greece when I got there (we lived there for a year) —it wasn't the usual tourist attractions like the sea (this was December up north) but something created by the people, the land, the air, and the sky altogether. I can't describe it. I feel that Coastal Labrador is almost a holy place and I always return from there refreshed, healthy and happy. Then there are places I just cannot stand and I react so badly to them I can't stay there any length of time, not even for a week; I once cut short a Florida vacation for this reason, renting a car and driving through the Georgia night to escape.

I have written about other places I loved —Greece, Mexico, Haiti, etc.— but only in short form because I don't have the knowledge to write more fully about them.

B) Your Works

MJH: Your latest book, *The Alphabet Fleet: The Pride of Newfoundland's Coastal Service* (2007), has been classified in libraries as sea stories, and it is a mixture of documentary, letters, telegrams, interviews, photos. What were your goals when you started your research? What kind of book did you want to create? What kind of satisfactions has it given you? Do you think that you, and writers like you, who dig up the past and give it a more personal shape, are managing to generate a different notion of history, one in which a more abstract/depersonalized idea of omniscience is ruled out as irrelevant? It seems to me you are managing a middle way between history and story, and so modifying conventional definitions of both these terms within a non-fictional context. Could you comment on the advantages or disadvantages of writing creative non-fiction?

MH: Well, I wanted to tell a story that had not been told and that was in danger of being lost. As we move from being an oral culture to a multi-media culture, almost skipping a literature-based phase, we are rapidly losing memories and our understanding of our history; we are becoming ahistorical, like many people in the world, and this has political and cultural dangers. This is something I am realizing just by writing this to you. Very little of one's motivation is conscious. However, I did know that if I did not speak to the crew members and passengers of the Alphabet Fleet soon, there would be none left and their perspectives would be gone.

The lives of ordinary people are very important but often neglected in history and that is something I want to correct in a small way. When I wrote *Tsunami* and *Domino*, I wanted to say to the long-dead people I was writing about "what happened to you mattered, your lives mattered." With *Domino*, I wanted to honour the shipped girl whose name was never recorded, like the women of the Bible. It was the same with *The Doryman*. The Newfoundland Grand Banks schooner fishermen (& those from Portugal and the Basque country, too) received no or few

honours or accolades. Yet what they did was remarkable. The strength of their wives and widows was astonishing as well. But these things are hardly remembered. As far as I know, there is just one schooner left in Newfoundland and it is privately owned. Robert Parsons, one of our 19th century parliamentarians once bellowed in the House of Assembly, "Newfoundland isolated? How can that be? Our argosies whiten every sea!" As far as I know, *The Doryman* was the first book about the schooner families; it was certainly the first book-length narrative. And it was written when there were virtually no schooner fishermen left.

When I was researching *The Alphabet Fleet* and certainly *Domino*, I rediscovered some of the international links, I saw again how Newfoundland was something of a player on the world stage, how we were part of the Gilded Age, etc. It is difficult to argue that Newfoundland was isolated when the seas were the highways, perhaps for women but not for men (this is something I deal with in *Sheila's Brush*, my unpublished novel). The isolation notion is relatively new but persistent and I am drawn to deconstructing myths. That's quite fun to do, very exciting.

When I was writing *The Alphabet Fleet*, I wanted to create a book that reflected the stories of these people and also that tackled some of the myths in an evidence-based way. I love the research process, to me it is an exciting thing to read William Reid's diary entries about grouse shooting expeditions with the Governor and to feel in my hands the order for green velvet draperies for the Ladies' Room of the *Lintrose*. This kind of material was filed away in boxes rarely taken off the shelves. I wanted to bring it to everyone or whoever wanted to know about it.

Of course, I also wanted to produce an engaging book that readers could enjoy. I am very pleased that my books are used in the schools; meeting children who have read them and are interested in the things I write about is one of the most satisfying parts of being a writer. Also, meeting older people who say, our lives were just like that, is very rewarding. I was thrilled when so many Labrador Métis Elders loved *Domino*. I am not part of their culture and was afraid I would get it wrong but they seemed not to think so, or else they were very kind.

Creative non-fiction is not very usual in Newfoundland or Canada either. The genre is not well-understood. *Domino* was turned down for an arts council grant with the comments: "Is it a novel? Is it history? What is it?" I get novelists asking me why I didn't call it a novel and historians telling me I'm not a historian, mostly in that passive-aggressive way of academic communication but one academic reviewer came right out and said that academics are not fond of the genre. But, you know, I'm not thinking about constructions or categories or genres when I'm writing these books. The abstract expressionists knew the rules but then they broke them. Jackson Pollack got a lot of grief for this but he was just doing what came naturally to him. I feel that I understand him because I am writing something that comes from the spirit. I just hope it takes a shape that does the story justice.

MJH: * Your work, in general, focuses on periods of intense crises in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador. In which sense do catastrophes, climatic in these cases, bring to the surface the values and weaknesses of a community? What is it that can be discovered about human lives that face massive tragedy? What is it

that you have both discovered about Newfoundland and Labrador when it was swept away by water, fire, or hurricanes?

MH: Disasters put everything in sharp relief. I don't know about the strengths and weaknesses of a community because that is not my focus; I want to tell the story rather than engage in any kind of self-conscious analysis. And, as I said, things are happening at another level through the process anyway. For me as a writer, tsunamis or hurricane are vehicles to explore other things, like our relationship with nature or the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. They give me a dramatic structure to work with. They give me some emotions to go with, helping me help the reader relate to these people.

When the 1885 hurricane practically destroyed the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery, people just went on because they had to. Somehow they geared up for the next year and so on. Human beings have to keep going after a tragedy and they do. This is not unique to Newfoundland in any way –it is universal; just look at the Bangladesh earthquake, Hurricane Mitch, the concentration camps, and I could fill 50 pages with such a list. Disasters have effects (the 1885 hurricane was a contributor to Newfoundland's 1894 Bank Crash; Hannah in *Domino* names her child after a lost friend) but people go on. There is nothing romantic about this, it just is. Life longs for itself, if I can paraphrase Kahlil Gibran.

MJH: Maura, you seem to be especially proud of *Domino: The Eskimo Coast Disaster*. Why do you think that the natives are still invisible in Newfoundland? Is your main motivation as a writer to save people from obscurity?

MH: The Mi'kmaq, the Innu (both formerly "Indians"), Inuit (formerly "Eskimo"), and Métis are invisible but the extinct Beothuck are not. The Beothuck are romanticized and glorified in art, music, and literature because they are not here to challenge Newfoundlanders to recognize Indigenous land and resource rights.

Last week I listened to a radio discussion about the spirituality of the Beothuck, their bravery, their close relationship to the land, every cliché you could imagine and these clichés are replicated in art, music, and literature. We have not moved beyond that. Meanwhile the media focuses on Indigenous people's social problems, brought about multiple, multi-generational losses (language, land, the right to parenting and family life [residential schools], etc.) but without explaining this context.

But, in *Rogues and Heroes*, I explained that if the Beothuck were alive today, they would be submitting land claims, blocking woods roads, suing the government —doing all the things the surviving Indigenous people are doing. If they were alive, people wouldn't talk about the Beothuck in reverent tones; they would be fed up with them while quite ignorant of their history and culture. The government would be arguing that Europeans got here first, as they do with the Mi'Kmaq. We know this because this is the reception given to the Mi'kmaq, the Innu, Inuit, and Métis. One example involving a publication of record: The *Newfoundland Quarterly* recently ran a two page article on the demise of Okak, Labrador, due to the

Spanish flu epidemic; all the way through the *NQ* referred to Okak as an Innu community but it is, in fact, Inuit.

This is not unique to Newfoundland, of course. The Indigenous people of the past are romanticized all over North America and Australasia while, as the UN says, the rights of the living ones are neglected. I've worked with the Mi'kmaq of Quebec, and the Quebec government argues that the Europeans got to Quebec first as well. It's the old European doctrine of *terra nullus* at work.

Again, any motivations related to these political issues were not in my conscious mind as I wrote *Domino* —or *The Doryman*, which is also relevant. With *The Doryman*, I wanted to be true to the story of my own mixed-ancestry family, as it was told to me (warts and all). With *Domino*, I spent so much time in Coastal Labrador, which is among my favourite places on earth, and I wanted simply to tell the world about the people I met and the stories they told, the lives they lived and still live. It's part of the course that this would have political ramifications because they are Indigenous people, internally colonized and part of the Fourth World.

Again, I am very pleased that *Domino* is in the schools, as is *The Doryman* and *Rogues and Heroes*.

I should note that *Domino* was not reviewed anywhere except in Labrador and in a NL fisheries magazine called *The Navigator* (both favourably). It is the least known of all my books, it seems. (It has since been reviewed in an academic journal).

I'm not sure where this fits in but I went to Catholic schools (all NL schools were denominational when I was growing up). I did not come from a family that practiced the religion to any significant degree but the social justice aspect of Catholicism that I got in school stuck with me. It made sense and had appeal. We spent every Saturday morning in high school taking developmentally delayed children on outings like bowling. We collected and distributed Christmas food hampers, etc. It was more charity than social justice but it was a start. When I think about it now, I see that my whole career, writing and consulting, has been about advancing the place of marginalized people.

MJH: Maura: could you talk a little about your facet as a travel writer?

MH: Well, I haven't done as much travel writing as I would like. If you know how to break into this in a big way, please let me know! I have fantasized about asking Jan Morris if she needs an assistant (her book on Spain is fabulous). I like the way she gets to the feel of the place; it's much more than travel writing and it's something to aspire to.

I've done a few things like an article about Haiti in *The Diverse Traveller*, a prize-winning article about an NL outport in the UK *Independent*, etc. I guess this comes from growing up in a place with a strong sense of place and then relating to other places through that lens, as I've talked about already. Also, islanders always know that they are not the centre of the world —the sea is there, ever reminding them. It makes them curious about other places, I think.

You know, I have to get off the island every few months. I can't read about NL while I'm here (except when I have to for work reasons) as I get claustrophobic.

Also I have to live away when I can; I've lived in Greece, as I said, England, Ontario, BC, and Nova Scotia. I don't expect or want to spend every year of my life here on the island. I am the kind of writer who needs different experiences, new visual stimulation, change, etc.

I certainly have a love-hate relationship with Newfoundland. This may mean I'm engaged; neutrality would be disengagement. James Joyce felt the same way about Ireland and such feelings are probably not uncommon among writers.

MJH: It seems that St. John's is a city whose history is one of making and unmaking, being constructed once and again and being burnt down to ashes. Even now, the streets near the harbor are all "stored up" again. Would it be all right to say about St. John's that it is a city that, however old, has a transient physicality?, that it could never stand as it is permanently?

MH: Although I grew up here, St. John's is somewhere I have not connected with very much on an emotional level. This is one reason I am in and out of it all the time. I live here, now anyway, for professional reasons but there is not much of an attachment. I find this is unusual among the current crop of NL writers, many of whom want to celebrate the city in their writing. I recently made the point on Angela Antle's show that it's fine to be urban and edgy and cool but, since 1992, we are moving on from our rural roots in a hurry without understanding them. So all we're left with is cliché and mythology which is not useful. You can listen to this interview at CBC (www.cb.ca/wam, WAM Interviews and Documentaries, September 30, 2007).

The Soviet-style buildings started in the 1970s, very controversially but you can't beat City Hall, as they say. Welcome to Moscow!

My lack of connection to the city is some sort of reaction to that intangible mix I tried to describe earlier.

MJH: * Do you feel any connections between your work (fiction/nonfiction) and other Canadian or Newfoundland novels which also dive into the past, especially into historical crises or myths of origins?

MH: Maybe I feel a connection to Cassie Brown, whose writing was not unlike mine. We studied her *Death on the Ice* in school and I remember being blown away by the idea that a Newfoundlander could be a writer. It had never been role-modelled to me (no one in my family had much formal education) and Newfoundland had already forgotten about Margaret Duley, Erle Spencer, and even Harold Horwood and Percy Janes who were more recent. (I always wanted to write). I later read everything Cassie Brown wrote. *Death on the Ice was* about the 1914 sealing disaster. I loved Percy Janes' *House of Hate*, which told the truth of one dysfunctional family in Corner Brook, the offspring of poverty and her twin sister, ignorance, I think he wrote. Janes was a courageous writer who had a big impact on me.

I'll tell you some of my favourite writers –actually it's their books or some of them I like: *The Good Terrorist* by Doris Lessing; Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Chil-*

dren; *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold; *The Stories We Could Tell* by Tony Parsons, which really captures England on the cusp of Thatcher and losing itself; Anita Diamont's *The Red Tent*; Emily Brontë; Thomas Hardy; Jane Austen; Truman Capote's short stories; Haiti's Edwidge Danticat; Chinua Achebe from Nigeria; Marguerite Yourcenar; Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair*; and Ian McEwan's *Chesil Beach*.

All these writers tell a great story and offer us memorable characters. So far, I haven't found many Canadian writers who do; I've noticed this just recently when a reporter and then you asked me about it. The problem with Canadian writing is the current fashion for occasionally beautiful but self-conscious word-smithing at the expense of plot and character (Anne Michaels, Michael Ondaatje, etc.) I know this sounds harsh and you have to be brave to say it in this country. Exceptions are Bernice Morgan in *Random Passage* (Newfoundland writer? Canadian writer? Does it matter? Are all writers citizens of the world?) Jane Urquhart's *Away*, Ann Marie McDonald in *Fall on Your Knees*, and Jane Rule who, as a lesbian, might not be mainstream. I do think, but may be biased, that *NaGeira* is an incredible achievement and an original exploration of scape-goating.

You know, I am a bit mystified when people talk about British writers or Canadian writers or whatever because that is not how I approach books. This may be due to some gap in my education so please elucidate me if you can!

Isn't it funny when people say "writing", they really mean fiction. This is not a criticism; I do this, too, obviously but don't really understand why.

I read a lot of non-fiction. I like and have been influenced by Edward Said, Andrea Dworkin, Reynolds Price, Thomas Merton, James Behrens, James Bartleman, Ward Churchill, Winona LaDuke, Gore Vidal, and the earlier, slightly less cynical work of Christopher Hitchens. Ok, enough name-dropping!

MJH: Do you think you are somehow outside the tendency of many mainstream Canadian novelists that use the past for historiographical metafiction purposes (both to create the past anew and to insist that it is all made up)? By mainstream I mean successful novels, both commercially and academically, which are included in university syllabuses partly because their variety of self-reflective techniques calls for a lot of scholarly commentary.

MH: I don't think I am familiar enough with Canadian writing to answer this. You would be in a much better position to answer it than me. But based on the wording of the question it sounds like the answer might be yes.

MJH: There is no uneasiness in your books about bringing us closer to the past or serving us the past straight away (that is why I asked the last question). I think other writers (for example, Ondaatje, Atwood, Findley, Shields, etc.) would feel obliged to use parody to bring attention to their "narrative tricks" and their imaginative manipulations. Do you think you belong to a different tradition of storytelling, one devoted to the art itself and not to theorizations on it? Do you think that the contemporary Newfoundland novel, because it is immersed in a different cultural environment, can do without postmodernism?

MH: I think so, yes, at least speaking for my work. But it is a generalization I don't feel equipped to make for other people.

C) The Issue of Newfoundland Identity

MJH: Can you tell us a little about your book *Through a Mirror Dimly: Essays on Newfoundland Society and Culture*? What do you think characterizes NL society? You said that the idea of NL community, or at least NL artistic community, was a bit overblown: why do you think that is so?

MH: This book was just a series of lectures for a distance education course @ MUN [Memorial University]. I have actually forgotten most of it and I was young at the time, 29, so I am almost afraid to go back & look at it. Though I think we have to forgive our younger selves if there is anything to forgive.

I think we have a culture which values artistic expression, sometimes taking it for granted and not doing what it takes to support artists, e.g. buying their paintings, for example. But I'm not sure we have an arts community the way it is often portrayed —everyone supporting each other, hanging out together, etc. It may be so with musicians or visual artists, I don't know, but there isn't a single community of writers. There are communities of writers, or groups of friends who are writers or networks, but not one cohesive community. Paul and I have something of a community with our writing workshops. You know that a homogenous society will always divide somehow and maybe this applies to NL writers!

The national media has paid a fair bit of attention to NL writers and the writing community here but some of this is fashion and has been quite patronizing and reflective of the Canadian need to caricature someone, i.e. NL. (The US has the South; England has Ireland and so on.) There is in some of the coverage a failure to see Newfoundlanders as multi-dimensional. CBC often portrays us as all happy, sticking together on a rock in the sea, our face to the gale. Unfortunately, some artists play into this, especially our actors. Hopefully it is changing as people become more politicized. Many young people are way past it so it is generational to a degree.

What characterizes NL society? That is a huge question. It is more multicultural than people think, with diverse roots and regions. Official tourism has turned us all into leprechauns, playing fiddles in the meadows, but this doesn't reflect fact or reality. There is the beginning of a backlash against this now. One-third of Newfoundlanders are of Irish ancestry, that's all! Most have English ancestry. Many, if not most, of us have many stories in our ancestry; our people are Lebanese, Chinese, Jewish, Indigenous, French, Portuguese, German, Norwegian, Welsh, and Scottish. These histories date way back. Lately, new Newfoundlanders are Sudanese and Russian, among other ethnicities.

What characterizes NL society? NL is largely misunderstood, cloaked in ideas banged into our heads by Joey Smallwood and other politicians serving their own ambitions more than their people: we are backward, poor, isolated, burn your

boats and all that. These ideas are simplifications at best and have been damaging to our individual and collective self-esteem, ergo every aspect of our lives.

NL's is an introvert society; people will help you but think about how long it takes to get to know people.

It remains family-oriented; try to get a group of friends together on a Sunday when everyone is having dinner with their extended family.

The root or settler population had an interesting relationship to the land. They could not own land or access natural resources in the British Isles so this was something of a paradise for them. But they were Christians and had the notion of man having dominion over animals, etc. Contrast this to the world-views of Aboriginal people. This relationship between the settler population and the land has become rights-based, more so since 1992. Its expression is unpleasant in many ways now, e.g. the disregard for the bogs caused by an idea that driving an ATV (all-terrain vehicle) is some sort of right.

MJH: * Every Newfoundlander, whether an artist, a CBC broadcaster, or a person in the street, will tell you about the closely-knit familial structure that has permeated the history of NL since the beginning. Is it because the communities were small?, is it because life in the outports did not have any of modern facilities? Is it because this is an island and you feel apart from Canada? Is it because you were poorer and have historically emigrated to Alberta? (Countries with a strong emigration tend to give a lot of stress to family values, Spain was an example).

MH: Well, let me start off by saying that there are hundreds of children in foster homes in this province so we have to take a good hard look at ourselves.

I think the question is premised on other myths, too. Any amount of research into NL history will reveal that Newfoundland was no poorer than any other agrarian or maritime society, e.g. Saskatchewan, Missouri, Portugal. These places may be poor through our current lens but you have to go back and really think about how they saw themselves and how they lived. They weren't poor if their needs were met. There is a notion that the pre-Confederation poverty here was singular. Instead, I've found that there was case, not mass, poverty and that the society was very stratified with the usual mix of rich, poor, and in between. In spite of the enduring notion of NL at this time as a cashless economy, many of the tsunami victims had hundreds of dollars in the bank (1929) or in their homes and these were rural fishermen. Outport people had beautiful household items imported from all over the world via our schooners: silks, china, jewelry, etc.. The mass transformation to a cash economy actually happened before Confederation, during WW2 with the establishment of military bases here. There was, however, only the most rudimentary social safety net, of course, as in most places at that time, making women and children and the ill or disabled vulnerable. The Great Depression hit us hard, as it did most places. The Depression colours most Newfoundlanders' understanding of our pre-Confederation history; the political forces at the time were sophisticated in shaping this but that is a long story. Many Newfoundlanders do not realize that the Depression was global and that our union with Canada was

really part of the general reshaping of the world map after the war.

The stress on family values comes from the land and sea-based economy in which the family was the economic unit, i.e. brothers fished together while their wives "made fish" onshore. Communities were small because people had to spread out to use the available natural resources effectively. NLers once had summer and winter houses in the fashion of many Indigenous people.

Emigration, as you say, has long been a factor: first to New England, then Ontario, and more recently Alberta. Men having to leave for work was a factor in the 1899 election (see *The Alphabet Fleet*) so it is not new and, as you allude, not unique to here. I wrote a column for *The Social Edge* called "Worlds without Men" about rural NL, Mexico, and Haiti.

MJH: * On October 14, Kenneth J. Harvey and Ed Riche were interviewed at the LSPU Hall. Ed Riche read a fragment from his novel *Rare Birds* where he said that, unlike the predictability and the comfort Nova Scotia offered tourists (gentle landscape and geographical attachment to Canada), Newfoundland was in the middle of the ocean, all alone to cope with the ocean's dangers, and it posed a constant threat to the tourists' safety with all those moose constantly crossing the roads. Do you think that, while the issue of Canadian identity is the favorite Canadian pastime (that is what we, European students of Canadian literature, have been taught), the issue of Newfoundland identity is likewise also Newfoundlanders' favorite pastime (either for romanticizing it, for joking, or for more profound critical purposes?)

MH: This is a good question. I once was annoyed by the Canadian obsession with identity —why do you have to keep asking who you are?!— but I came to see it differently. When they stop obsessing about it, they become just another 30 million North American consumers; they lose that cultural dimension they are trying to retain living next door to the elephant. So it is actually quite useful to obsess about it. They even created an institution to do just that: the CBC, but it is falling down on the job lately, importing too many American programs, being too centralized, etc.

I suppose once we started writing, questions of identity inevitably came up. You know, I noticed that similar questions have come up in Britain a lot lately, remarkably so in the past few years. I guess the British are trying to cope with their relatively new consciously multi-cultural society and what it means and some of them feel threatened.

I suppose in some ways Newfoundland feels under attack with the 1992 groundfish moratoria (which we failed to recognize as permanent and grieve for), the Alberta oil field sucking people from here (and every other Canadian province) like a vacuum, the disillusionment with Canada and what it promised (certainly more than resource extraction, conflict, and Newfie jokes), and the commercialization of our society so that we are like everyone else in North America. In the 20th and 21st century, change has happened at a faster pace than any other time in human history and by exploring identity we may be trying to buffer ourselves against this.

INTERVIEW WITH PAUL BUTLER

A) Context and Creativity

MJH: * Does a novel/a book start in your head or in the archives?

PB: I'd say there are themes, characters, and emotions in my head that are awaiting expression and a piece of history somewhere provides the framework through which expression can come about. Here's an example: In 2002/3, my head was very full of issues regarding the use of military force and what makes the use of force seem legal or illegal. It's obvious, I suppose, why it was a preoccupation. The larger and more powerful the "state," it seemed, the less its power was questioned.

A few years before this I had come across this character in Newfoundland history, a pirate called Peter Easton who controlled a good deal of Newfoundland's coastline between about 1611 and 1613. He was a real person, not a myth. What was interesting was that he had been at different times both a pirate and a loyal privateer (loyal to the English crown). Which side of the dividing line —privateer or pirate— he was on depended on several factors (e.g. whether England was at war with the country whose ships Easton attacked, how powerful Easton was and whether the duly appointed powers loyal to the English crown could defeat him, and whether Easton might "buy" a pardon from the cash strapped English crown). None of these factors had anything much do with how Easton was behaving in any moral sense. In other words, the dividing line between pirate and privateer was political and had nothing to do with ethics.

There were so many parallels with this story from Newfoundland's past and the kinds of frustrations that I was feeling as I watched the news every night that the story of Easton became an outlet, and this is where the novels *Easton* and *Easton's Gold* came from. Easton in the first book is a pirate who doesn't think he is a pirate. He sees himself as doing the "work," fulfilling the obligations —i.e. attacking foreign vessels— from which the English crown has abdicated responsibility. In his own mind, he is fighting for England, and the English king is a usurper.

Later, in *Easton's Gold*, it is 1640, the age of Galileo etc., and Easton is caught up in an era when universal morality was being questioned by science. He is alternately wracked by a kind of maudlin guilt, then defiantly believing he had as much right as any to create his own morality as any deity. This is how Easton looks back on his life.

MJH: * Do you feel any connections between your novels and other English, Canadian, or Newfoundland novels which also dive into the past, especially into the myths of origins?

PB: Although it may not seem obvious because of the era, I was very affected by Andrea Levy's *Small Island*. Although it is set just after the Second World War it is an exploration of the beginnings of a society —namely British multicultural society. As a story of cultures which think they understand each other, and don't,

coming to co-habit it's also about the birth of modern British racial tensions. I was struck by the way Levy crafted a story in the late 1940s in which the embryo of the 1980s —possibly the time of greatest racial strife— was clearly present. Even though I'm using the seventeenth century as a backdrop I like to think my novels *Easton*, *Easton's Gold*, and *NaGeria* have something in common with that.

B) Your Works

MJH: * Paul, I asked Maura about the issues that surface in a community after big catastrophes, could you give us your view on this too? You have recently published *St. John's: City of Fire*, a book about the fires that destroyed St. John's at least three times in the nineteenth century. What is it like, for a fiction writer, to get engaged in the mechanics of writing a documentary book?

PB: Frankly, it's hard. I get kind of impatient with facts and fact checking. I find that usually a story screams to be told and that I have to keep this aspect caged during the process of putting a piece of work like *St. John's: City of Fire* together. It is interesting, of course, because, as you say, a disaster does tell us about the strengths and weaknesses of community, about inequalities, about the way people view authority, which changed a good deal through the 1800s from the first fire 1817 to the more recent in 1892. After *St. John's: City of Fire* I began to write a purely fictional story about the fire of 1892 (called, for now at least "1892"). This was absolutely necessary for me, kind of like my reward to myself for writing the non-fiction book.

MJH: * What is it that can be discovered about human lives who face massive tragedy? What is it that you have discovered about Newfoundland and Labrador when it was swept away by water, fire, hurricanes?

PB: I'm not sure Newfoundland is really any different in any fundamental way from anywhere else, except that island people are often forced back upon their own resources. You can see this in the fire stories. Some people left Newfoundland after the St. John's catastrophes but had, say, Birmingham, England, burned down in the same year, many more people would have had the option to leave than was the case in St. John's.

MJH: Is *City of Fire* a study of class differences in nineteenth-century Newfoundland?

PB: It ended up being so, at least to some extent, principally because what had been written in the past few decades seemed to swallow the late Victorian line about who suffered the most, which to the late Victorians was the middle classes and above. To an extent the people doing the writing and reporting (who were middle-class and above themselves) were just more shocked by their own suffering

than by the suffering of people who already lived in conditions which would have been unacceptable to them.

MJH: Your second novel imagines the life of Bram Stoker's family after his death. How were you drawn to that topic? The book is somewhere described as a mixture of biography and dreamscape. Could you explain the sources, or the effects, of this hybridity?

PB: I never realized until I read this question that this story had something important in common with the "Newfoundland" novels but of course it does because it's about a real historical character, a historical situation, and has folds of mythology too. This story is really about fearing the act of creation, fearing what we find out about ourselves and others once pen is put to paper. Bram Stoker created a memorable character and many believe the well he drew from, at least in an emotional sense, was his all-consuming adoration of Henry Irving. Irving was an actor and Stoker's employer and many believe Stoker's adoration of Irving had a spirit-draining effect ultimately upon Stoker. *Dracula* is still a troubling novel because the love the heroes have for their women can turn very violent suddenly, e.g. Arthur impaling the eroticized Lucy, his fiancée, in a manner which is quite horrific. Stoker's own prose seems to be at the mercy of powerful psychological undercurrent which had not at that same (1897, Dracula's publication) been much understood or discussed. By 1922, the year in which Florence Stoker (Bram's widow) tried to get the film Nosferatu banned (in real life), psychoanalysis was, of course, in vogue. The questions that got me started on the Stoker's Shadow story were these: what might have been going on in Florence's head that she became so single mindedly intent on punishing the film-makers? What might her worst fears have been about *Dracula* regarding what that work might potentially reveal about her husband and her family? And what might the effect of the same fears have been on the Stokers' son? The question is full of dramatic potential. While the historical facts help frame this drama, they would also limit that dramatic potential if I didn't find a way to cut the cord and go into the realm of fiction. One way I did this was to change the names of Bram's son and his wife from Noel and Nellie (historical) to William and Maud (fictional) and to introduce an entirely fictional element, Florence's maid, Mary, who would carry one of the three narrative points of view. She would also represent the new world of 1922 entering the world of Victorian sensibility that Florence still inhabited.

Once done, I felt creatively freer. The late Victorian era seems to represent the very pinnacle of sexual repression, the time when the gap between private and public sexuality seemed in societies like the U.K. to be at its greatest. Bram Stoker himself was an odd combination of the stuffy and the wildly perverse. The most important single fact that drew me to this story was that when Florence Stoker failed to get payment for F.W. Murnau's pirated film Nosferatu, she continued a legal battle until the courts ordered all existing prints of the film to be destroyed. Although she didn't ultimately succeed, this seemed like a very clear statement of something, and the one essential image was of Florence actually burning the work

of art created by her husband. This is turned around in the novel and she forces Mary to burn the book *Dracula* which she is reading without permission.

MJH: Why were you interested in the myth of Sheila NaGeria? What does it mean in Newfoundland culture? Can you tell us why you decided to turn over Sheila NaGeira's attributes and how did you do it?

PB: NaGeira, according to oral history and folklore, is the first woman of European descent to have had a family here which stayed here. To many people she symbolizes the birth of Newfoundland's Irish-English dominated mainstream society. According to this legend (and, some believe, history), she is supposed to have been rescued in the English Channel from Dutch pirates by Peter Easton in 1602, who at that time was a loyal English privateer. Sheila had been on her way to France where her aunt was in charge of a convent. But she met an officer, Gilbert Pike, on board of Easton's ship and had a change of plan. They married and stayed on board traveling to Newfoundland with Easton. Easton was going there to protect the fishing fleet. She settled in a community called Mosquito, now Bristol's Hope.

I first became aware of Sheila, the legend, while I was researching Peter Easton, and I was somewhat astonished to find that, despite this story being recorded in the Newfoundland Encyclopedia (a reasonably well-respected publication) as history, there is really nothing to say that she really existed at all. This in itself fascinated me, as did the very real attachment people in the area of Carbonear (where she is supposed to have ultimately settled) to every detail of the above story. I wrote an article about the legend for *The Beaver* (the magazine of Canada's Historical Society) and it became an article about how people create legends and personas based upon their own psychological, community needs. One vital aspect of many societies is, of course, the goddess figure, and many accounts of Sheila stress her role as a midwife and a herbal healer. Both Protestant (QEI) and Catholic (The "Virgin" Mary) had powerful goddess figures in the land from which they came; it was fascinating to me that Newfoundland had created its own.

Another aspect of the Sheila stories is that they tend to have her both as a young woman, and as an old woman, and I became aware of a figure in Irish mythology called Sheila Na Nig, a rather fearsome, very old but vital, sexually active figure. I believed that there was some kind of folkloric connection, whether faint or strong. Sheila Na Gig opened the story up for me dramatically. Finding out about her provided a very important impetus for wanting to write about Sheila. Sheila NaGeira, the undisputed heroine of some of the Newfoundland myths, had already been told. (An author called P.J. Wakeham wrote a story in the 1950s called "Sheila Na Geira: The Irish Princess".) The great thing about Sheila Na Gig —or what that image said to me— was that she was about fear, not heroism. There is nothing cozy about her. I thought, well what if our Sheila was not a heroine who turned into a sweet and much loved old woman after all? What if she dispensed the herbal remedies and knew the secrets of the village, and was, as historically old widows were, an object of suspicion? In a folkloric way this seemed to ring more true to me anyway. We are much more likely to end up venerating in death those who we

persecute during their lifetime. If I could find a way for Sheila to be at once the repository of her society's anxieties, their fears, their guilt, and posthumously, their need to redeem themselves, then I thought I'd be creating both an interesting story and one that would ultimately work nicely with the enduring strength of the Sheila legend now. It's also more dramatic to have a character who is on the outs with her community —as my Sheila is— than someone who is accepted and liked, especially as I could tell the story of a young Sheila and how she came to be dispossessed in the first place; that could provide a nice contrast to the despised old woman living in misery.

MJH: Did you feel you were committing some kind of violation when you turned Sheila NaGeira's romantic, foundational myth, upside down?, or perhaps should I say "inside out"?

PB: In a way I did. There is some investment in those who are enthusiastic about the traditional story, some attachment to the idea of Sheila as a straightforward heroine. The wedding to Gilbert Pike is played out every year in a kind of pageant in Harbour Grace. I think a novelist passes a point of no return when writing a novel like *NaGeira*. Your inner voice tells you what you must do and you have little choice but to follow it. To do otherwise would render the whole exercise pointless. Finally, you reach a stage when you just have to finish it, and then you rewrite parts, edit, etc., and you just have no choice to try and get it published so that all that work is not wasted. I felt some growing trepidation through this process, especially as I was always coming across people who, with the best intentions say, "Oh, you're writing a novel about Sheila NaGeira. I'll introduce you to so-and-so who has a lot of information about the legend you can use." I felt mean because I had no intention of using any such information which, experience told me, would invariably be someone's family history hinting at a connection with the legend.

This feeling of trepidation is all the more heightened because there is a powerful feeling of a sense of ownership over Newfoundland history, even to the extent that fiction is often not judged by the same criteria with which it is judged elsewhere. I've heard repeated arguments that Wayne Johnston, for instance, can't be a good writer because he mentions Harbour Drive in St. John's in a historical novel set in a time before Harbour Drive existed. I think it's okay to want historical verity in historical fiction but I think it's often taken a step further here, as being a central virtue, or vice of historical fiction. I'm of the opposite school. There are instances when I will deliberately use an anachronism if it serves the story and the theme well enough.

I suspect that, to some, *NaGeira* still is a bit of a violation. I have not been directly criticized but I sometimes think I can sense disapproval in people's silence on the subject. Incidentally, I was challenged at the book launch, not aggressively but with some spirit, about why some of the more charming motifs, particularly the wedding, that go along with Sheila were not in my novel. My only answer is that all that material already exists in play form, in a novel written by P.J. Wakeham in the 1950s, and as various non-fiction accounts and that there's no artistic merit

in repeating it. One concession, which may have been unconscious, was to not call the novel "Sheila NaGeira" which would have led people to believe this was the one definitive myth of the "Irish Princess". As it is, few people even recognize the name "NaGeira" on its own.

MJH: About your novels *Easton* and *Easton's Gold*. How did Easton come to your imagination? Or did you create him little by little?

PB: Peter Easton is a real historical character (see earlier answer) and I envisioned him —I did the research but nothing is written *by* him, although there are contemporary accounts *of* him. I envisioned him, and this is somewhat borne out by history, as a sociopath, the kind of figure who might be a brokerage politician in our present era, well spoken, slick, probably capable of great sentimentality, and deep down desperate for love.

MJH: Are those two novels meant to be read from a number of levels or dimensions? I mean, they have a historical dimension, also adventure, perhaps they can also be read as tales of suspense, perhaps they are meant to be philosophical reflections. I know all good novels contain these layers and many more, but could you give us your view on this?

PB: When I wrote Easton I had it in mind to write something fast-moving, and not as interested in the interior as Stoker's Shadow, the novel that immediately preceded it. Because it was such a political story, there naturally was something about the nature of politics waiting to be discovered in it. It ended up being a partial allegory of today's political world in which morality is the ostensible purpose of foreign policy, while the real reason is financial.

MJH: Both novels seem to be radically different in tone and perspective. Why was that so?

PB: This goes back to the point about protagonists not being heroes. Easton is one of the three main characters, and the protagonist for a third of *Easton's Gold*. Going inside his mind meant the novel had to be heavier. It had to deal with cruelty, the extent and limits of self-forgiveness, about narcissism, and self-delusion. This couldn't be fast moving the way that Easton was, although given its themes it is pretty fast moving really. All the characters carry secrets and a great deal of moral anxiety.

MJH: Could you tell us a little about your first novel, *The Surrogate Spirit*?

PB: *The Surrogate Spirit* is about a spirit who initially remembers nothing of his former life, but who gradually picks up strands of memory as he hovers around his former town. He is initially certain that he is, and was, a sensitive, kind soul, but it is with a kind of horror that he watches memories return which show

him to be a corrosive influence upon those who were closest to him. It is a somewhat hellish vision of the afterlife, but one that does hold some redemption.

I react badly to fiction in which the author takes pains to make the protagonist too sympathetic. It seems a bit of a cop-out. If a novel is to expose cruelty or dishonesty then the most effective way of doing this is surely through exploring the interior of the main character. I realize now that this is something that recurs in my fiction, that if I have something to say about oppression, violence, or abuse, I want to do it, at least in part, from the point of view of the abuser. In a curious way I think it's unethical and dishonest not to.

C) The Issue of Newfoundland Identity

MJH: * Paul, could you comment on the question, already answered by Maura, about the traditional way of life in Newfoundland revolving around a closely-knit family structure which has characterized the history of Newfoundland since the beginning? It is not uncommon to hear that Newfoundland has lived the same kind of existence from the sixteenth to the twentieth century only to wake up recently to the swirling global world of technology and commodities.

PB: I think it's at least partly the fact that in the fishery people depended upon each other for safety and to get the job done. I suspect that creates a certain set of values, e.g. a high value placed upon familiarity, on knowing a face and being able to trust who you know. But, speaking as someone who came here as an outsider, I don't think this translates into anything exclusive or insular. It's very easy to become part of this familiarity; the only qualification you need is to simply turn up. I think generations of shared risk with the fish harvest, shared work, etc. have created an egalitarian ethic, a sense that we are all in it together, and a sense that the whole is more important than individual triumph. This is quite rare, I think, in "western" societies. There is a cynicism too about power and wealth that I find very attractive.

MJH: * Could you comment on the permanent interest in questions of Newfoundland identity? Why do Newfoundland writers keep approaching this question in a variety of moods? (See Ed Riche's half-humorous, half-proud distinction between Newfoundland and the Maritimes which I mentioned in my last question to Maura)

PB: I think there is a very profound interest in "our" history which is even more the case because Newfoundlanders have so often felt forcibly moved away from it, e.g. the Commission of Government from 1933 when Britain took over Newfoundland's government after many decades of Responsible Government; and later Confederation. There is a very real and understandable resentment that Newfoundland history was not for many years taught in the schools here. So when there is a resurgence of cultural pride, it comes with a great deal of energy, like something

released after being kept down. It is often led by the arts (or so it seems from my perspective) —many commentators will look to the '60s and '70s as a cultural renaissance here.

There is a lot of anger that Canada Day is celebrated on the same day that commemoration for Beaumont Hamel (Newfoundlanders' position on the push of the first day of the Somme in 1916). So here, I think, there's an edge to it and a sense that if we don't express what's important to us, no one else will.

I think that, referring to the Ed Riche point, a central theme of pride for Newfoundlanders —a central virtue perhaps— is resilience. The fishery and the seal hunt were always extremely hard and dangerous occupations requiring a stoical outlook. I arrived here in 1994, two years after the cod moratorium was announced, and there was a sense that Newfoundland was an open wound... that very hard working, quietly proud people had lost the cornerstone of their identity. It's not like that now and the mood is generally much brighter in the more urban centres anyway, and perhaps it is because this resilience, this stoicism really is a core value that these qualities remain intact despite the circumstances of the last 15 years. There are a great many families who have a member, often a husband, off most of the year in Alberta, or on an oil rig somewhere living a dormitory existence while the family lives in an outport. The remarkable thing about it is the lack of grumbling for a lifestyle that is really no one's dream. There is still this sense of quiet "getting on with things". I suppose this is the legacy of centuries of making the best out of what there is.

MJH: What has the experience of living in NL has brought you artistically? (You seem to have been mostly inspired by your cultural environment of adoption)

PB: It has certainly given me a sense of the possible. It's a smallish population with a proportionately large university. So the atmosphere —if you remove the baggage about class and "town and gown" that goes along with it— is not unlike being at Oxford or Cambridge. Everyone is publishing something, or studying something. Everyone has an urgent opinion about literature or history. And if you add to that a preoccupation with "nationhood," and Newfoundland's destiny, this is a very rich and vibrant culture, one that draws outsiders in and tends to keep them, particularly if they are involved in the arts. What I've written here in terms of novels is a bit of a surprise, as for the first few years I never thought I'd be able to set a novel in Newfoundland. In the end the fact that it's new to me ended up being one of the advantages. It set me free, I think, from certain constraints in a way that I'm not sure I understand myself. Perhaps trying to evoke a setting you grew up in, is in itself inhibiting to the writer. The onus is to be true to a memory. Newfoundland, for me, exists outside memory, and that could be a good thing.

MJH: What is it like for an Englishman to live in Newfoundland?

PB: It's generally wonderful. Newfoundlanders are very egalitarian people who allow you into their culture easily. Of course, I'd be lying if I claimed I never

feel like an outsider. The intense preoccupation about Newfoundland history, admirable and fascinating as it is, can also be overwhelming when you are not part of the same group, you don't have the same formative experiences. You have to work very hard to play catch-up. The curious thing is that everyone I speak to has such an investment, such a thorough knowledge of their history, and yet people will tell you that they did not receive any education specifically about Newfoundland in high school. I think this is being rectified now.

MJH: In the forum of your website, you regularly call attention to great books, especially to "Newfoundland and Labrador most overlooked publications". Could you please name a couple of NL books that have met this fate either in Newfoundland or in Canada in recent years?

PB: I sensed that books are terribly disadvantaged in the media, no interesting visuals, few sound-bites compared to music, theatre, and film. They tend to scoop off the most recognizable, visually appealing "stars," and once that happens they have their 'go to' people. Most writers, and therefore most books, end up sinking into the mire of obscurity within months of publication. This seems especially the case in Canada. Books are judged here by what they say about their region; they compete with each other as worthy champions of that region. If your book misses its slot as "a new Nova Scotian classic," or a fine example of Newfoundland's "distinct voice and dialect" then it could simply be lost. The media —which is on the look-out for an easy sell to the public— won't recognize its relevance. The books that have had this fate are too numerous to mention. One that comes to mind is *Filling the Belly* by Tara Manuel (Turnstone Press, I think). Also a few years ago Annamarie Beckel published a fine novel through a Newfoundland publisher called *Dancing in the Palm of His Hand*, a fiction set around the witch craze in Europe. I've no idea how well it did outside Newfoundland, and Canada, but one local reviewer here gave it a few cursory lines after much more in-depth reviews of books on local subjects.

I find this frustrating as it feels as though we, in Newfoundland, don't understand that we can be as much the centre of the universe as anywhere else. The London press doesn't disregard the release of a London publisher because it's not about London. Why should we be any different?

MISCELLANY

THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH NOVEL AND ITS SPANISH HERITAGE AND RECEPTION

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ABSTRACT

This essay tries to contribute some ideas, data and reflection on the presence and diffusion of the English novel in Europe, and particularly in Spain, during the eighteenth century. The coexistence of different literary traditions, ideologies and national conditions, as well as the powerful French publishing industry, make the European reading of the English novel a truly distinctive phenomenon in the history of literary reception, rewriting, translation and adaptation. Examples taken mostly from Spanish will be analysed to illustrate some of these issues, discussion of which to date has mainly been in relation to other European literatures.

KEY WORDS: Eighteenth-century novel, narrative traditions, European influence, Spanish stereotypes, literary reception, censorship, literary translation, literary adaptation, Spanish Inquisition.

RESUMEN

Este ensayo intenta proporcionar algunas ideas, datos y reflexiones sobre la presencia y la difusión de la novela inglesa en Europa, y en particular en España, durante el siglo XVIII. La coexistencia de diferentes tradiciones literarias, ideologías y condiciones nacionales, así como la poderosa industria editorial francesa, hacen de la lectura europea de la novela inglesa un fenómeno verdaderamente distintivo en la historia de la recepción literaria, de la reescritura, la traducción y la adaptación. En este ensayo se analizan ejemplos tomados en su mayoría del español para ilustrar algunas de estas cuestiones, pues hasta el momento el tratamiento de estos temas se ha hecho principalmente en relación con otras literaturas europeas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: novela del siglo XVIII, tradiciones narrativas, influencia europea, estereotipos españoles, recepción literaria, censura, traducción literaria, adaptación literaria, Inquisición española.

The eighteenth-century English novel is widely recognized as a complex phenomenon; its origins, development, and main representatives have been subject to numerous controversies which are well known (e.g. Davis; Armstrong; Erickson;

McKeon; or Hunter, among many others), although perhaps the French and Spanish influences on the origins and development of the genre have occupied most critics and scholars for a long time. The relevance for the great English novelists of the seventeenth-century French romances, the picaresque and Cervantes's long shadow are certainly evidence of that, but other influences should also be mentioned, both native and foreign. Thus travel narratives, Utopias, or confessional writing, to name just a few. However, even though I will touch on these issues occasionally, my aim in this essay is not to produce another reading of that complexity.

Rather, I want to show that the rise of the novel in England cannot be seen as an exclusively insular achievement because its importance went beyond the English frontiers, exerting a powerful influence on the continent. All loans that the English novelists made from their continental peers and predecessors (be it Richardson's possible indebtedness to the French sentimental romances, or Fielding's, Smollett's or Sterne's to Cervantes and the picaresque, for instance) were generously repaid during the eighteenth century. It is indeed universally acknowledged that the English novel in this period acquired a presence in Britain and abroad that can be described, without exaggeration, as paramount and superior to other national manifestations of this narrative mode.

My purpose in this essay is to offer a general view of the conditions that allowed that to happen, and to provide data and reflection upon them, dealing with national traditions, translations, and the ideological conditions that made the reading of the English novel in Europe, and particularly in Spain, such a fascinating phenomenon in the eighteenth century.

As Elinor Shaffer has written in the general preface to the project on Reception of British and Irish Authors in Europe, "the reception of British authors in Britain has in good part been studied; indeed, it forms our literary history. By contrast, the reception of British authors in Europe has not been examined in any systematic, long-term or large-scale way."[1] Of course, partial studies of the reception of the eighteenth-century English novel do exist for some European countries, particularly in connection with translations and adaptations.[2] This is especially the case for French literature (Graeber, *Französischen*; Grieder; Rochedieu; and Streeter), German literature (Joret; Kost; Oppel; Price, *English*; and Senger), Spanish literature (Effross; Glendinning; and Sánchez Franco) or Swedish literature (Östman). There are also numerous studies on specific English works and authors who were very influential on the continent: Richardson, Fielding, Defoe, Swift, Sterne, Smollett and Goldsmith are the main ones. But these studies are generally restricted to their

[1] For a general description of the Project, see <http://www.clarehall.cam.ac.uk/rbae>. The quotation by Elinor Shaffer is taken from Real (IX).

[2] In this respect, Lynch (124) has recently characterized English eighteenth-century fiction as "moving writing," a "mobile property."

reception in one particular country, concentrating on a single author and his influence on a national tradition or a specific writer, like Fielding in Germany, Sterne in Italy, Swift in France, etc. (cf., among others, Rabizzani; Goulding; Hatfield; Joliat; Risch; Harris; Michelsen; and Pajares, *Richardson*). Others have a much broader scope, such as Beebee's book on the reception of *Clarissa* on the continent, which transcends national frontiers, or Price's essay ("Holland as a Mediator") on Holland's role as a mediator between English and German influences, or Blassneck's study of France's similar role also for English and German mutual influences, as well as Graeber and Roche's commented bibliography on French translations, and their further translations into German, of seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries English works (*Englische Literatur*).

However, what we do not have yet are sufficient overall views of the European novel in the eighteenth century, which explore the crosscurrents of influences, traditions, ideological and national varieties that gave the genre momentum as it developed in Britain and on the continent. Alain Montandon's book *Le roman au XVIIIe siècle en Europe*, is possibly one of the few exceptions. Montandon explains how hard it is, and at the same time how delicate, to put in some sort of order in the period's immense variety and wealth of novelistic creation, remarking that, for the French novel, only Henri Coulet and Françoise Barguillet have been able to carry out such a synthesis.[3] After Montandon, another perceptive and global analysis of the French novel has been written by Nathalie Ferrand in her recent *Livre et lecture dans les romans français du XVIIIe siècle*. Her attention to the presence of books and reading in eighteenth-century French novels enables her to offer an interesting survey of how different national literary traditions and readers (English, German, Italian, Spanish, Swiss...) were seen by French novelists of the period.

Most work to date has dealt with French and German novels, little being said so far about other national literatures (even though Dutch and Italian have been briefly explored), so in order to illustrate my thesis I will, for the most part, be taking examples from studies in the fields of French and German. These will be complemented with examples from Spanish studies, which have not received any treatment in the few syntheses produced up to now.[4]

Three issues are central in my discussion: traditions, ideologies and stereotypes, which encompass many of the aspects I will be tackling, and I will use them to focus and structure this essay, so that we can better understand the English contribution to the shaping of the eighteenth-century novel on the continent.

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[3] Montandon (4), referring to Coulet and Barguillet, says they are the only ones who have known how "réaliser une telle synthèse avec une envergure, une finesse et une clairvoyance admirables." For other national literatures there are also relevant works which need not be mentioned here now.

[4] Elinor Shaffer has written in the prefaces to the Continuum Project, "In general, comparative studies have neglected Spain in favour of France, Germany and Italy, and this imbalance needs to be righted" (cf. de Voogd & Neubauer, eds.: IX).

I. TRADITIONS

Even if we agree that the eighteenth century is the century of the rise of the novel in Europe, and that this rise of the novel is to a large extent synonymous with the rise of the English novel and its development in Britain and on the continent, we cannot forget that in numerical terms the novelistic production in Britain was not at all the most important in Europe, at least in the first half of the century. In France, for instance, the number of novels published in the first two decades (1700-1719) was 236, whereas in England the number was just 62. The French publishing industry was impressive indeed, not only for the number of books produced, which surpassed any other country in Europe, but also for the influence French books exerted all over Europe, Britain included.[5] We have to bear in mind that many of the English novels read on the continent were read not in English initially but in French, because French was the language of culture while English was normally known, if at all, only by a very few enlightened individuals. Many English novels were in fact read in French or in translations from the French into other European languages. The same was true for other languages and literatures, which were known outside their frontiers through French: Cervantes, for instance, was not directly translated into German until Bertuch did so in 1775-1777; in the meantime French was the intermediary language, and thus *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* was translated into German in 1746 via the French translation by Madame le Givre de Richebourg of 1738. Likewise, Wieland's Quixotic novel *Don Sylvio von Rosalva* (dated 1764) was written following the French and English models, the latter also in French versions (Montandon 23; 484). The popularity of French translations in Germany can be gauged from the use of the expression "aus dem Französischen übersezt," which was even added to works which were not translations at all but genuine creations in German: an example of this is Neugebauer's *Der Teutsche Don Quichotte oder die Begebenheiten des Margraf von Bellamonte, komisch und satyrisch beschrieben; aus dem Französischen übersezt* (1753).

Similarly, Richardson and Sterne were read in Russia for a long time in their French versions (by Prévost and Frénais respectively), and the picture was the same in Spain, where almost all English works were read through French versions (Richardson, Fielding and Sterne were known to enlightened Spanish readers thanks to French translators such as Prévost, Pierre Antoine de la Place, Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Suard, and Frénais).[6] These versions circulated during the eighteenth century, and were widely known to the Spanish *ilustrados* (cf. Álvarez Barrientos). The presence of those volumes in their private libraries and in bookshop catalogues is a telling evidence of their success (Effross; Defourneaux; García Fernández; and Enciso

[5] Just to give one example, in Spain, according to García Hurtado (37-39), 2,401 volumes were translated in the period 1700-1808; 55.11% were translated from French, 18.9% from Italian, 16.4% from Latin, and only 3.74% from English.

[6] For the reception of Sterne in eighteenth-century France, see Asfour.

Recio); in fact, it was not felt necessary to translate them into Spanish until the last decade of the century.

The language from which the French translated more than from any other was certainly English: Streeter says that between 1700 and 1805, 472 novels were translated from English, or 630 if English stories, anecdotes and imitations are included (Montandon 23). All this is a reflection of the so-called "Anglomanie" prevalent in France during the century (Grieder); on some occasions, as happened in Germany with French translations, genuinely French texts were also presented to the public with the label "traduits de l'anglais," because this had become, particularly after 1740, a powerful selling point, as well as conferring a touch of distinction.

What are the reasons for this Anglomania? To what extent and why did France accept the English novel? How was it translated and read by French and other European readers? These are issues closely related to the traditions of the novel in different European countries and I need to comment on them in order to answer these questions. Let me then try to approach these traditions and their reflection upon the English novel on the continent.

I will briefly analyse four literary phenomena, which were deeply influential on the English novel in the eighteenth century. None of them can be considered originally English although all of them became quickly naturalised and, after their adaptation in English, were successfully exported to the continent. These four phenomena are: a) *Don Quixote*; b) the picaresque tales; c) the French romances; and d) the epistolary mode.

Cervantes's masterpiece is undoubtedly a founding stone in the construction of the novel as a modern genre. In spite of the controversies over the figure of Don Quixote as representative of a crazy imagination, a mirror of the fanatic blindness of the prototypical Spanish character —a view of course unacceptable to many Spanish critics, who reject this picture as a gross stereotype— nobody can deny its influence in Europe. Even in the age of the Enlightenment, when Spain was seen by its European neighbours as the land of superstition and intolerance, governed by the Inquisition, the presence of *Don Quixote* in the European collective imagination, and in so many writings, was so strong as to prevent a general condemnation of Spanish culture and literature. Cervantes's novel was published in 1605 (First Part) and 1615 (Second Part). The first French translations were almost immediate: 1608, 1609 and particularly 1614 (by Oudin), although the most complete and influential version in the eighteenth century was produced by Filleau de Saint-Martin in 1678 (more than 20 editions were published between 1730 and 1780 alone). Even Lesage himself translated Fernández de Avellaneda's sequel to *Don Quixote*: *Les Nouvelles Aventures de Don Quichotte de la Manche* (1704). Many other French adaptations and imitations followed during the eighteenth century, and some of them (Marivaux's *Pharsamon*, for instance) were even translated from French into English, Italian and German.[7]

[7] Cf. Les Regrets de Sancho Pança sur la mort de son âne (1714), Histoire du grand et veritable Chevalier Caissant (1714), the compilations of «nouvelles» entitled Le Désespoir amoureux,

English versions of *Don Quixote* were not late in appearing either: Shelton produced translations in 1612 and 1620, and then Philips in 1687, Motteux in 1700, Ward in 1712, Jarvis in 1742, and Smollett in 1755. Evidence of the strength of the Quixotic tradition are imitations in diverse styles and genres, such as Butler's *Hudibras* (1663-1668), Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749), Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) or Smollett's *The Life and Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* (1760-1762), to name but a few.[8] The fact that many of these English Cervantine novels were translated into French and German, among other languages, reinforced the Spanish influence upon other national literatures. Moreover, some successful German novels, notably Wieland's *Don Sylvio von Rosalva,* were translated into French: *Les Aventures merveilleuses de Don Sylvio de Rosalva* (in Dresden and Paris, 1769); a second translation into French —or rather an adaptation of the original work— was made by Mme d'Ussieux, with the title of *Le Nouveau Don Quichotte, imité de l'allemand de M. Wieland* (1770). It is equally curious to notice how on the continent this Quixotic tradition, so openly evoked and referred to by Fielding, Smollet, Lennox or Sterne, combined with the Richardsonian and Sternean sentiment, to produce comical texts, such as the German parody of the epistolary novel *Grandison der Zweite*, by Musäus (1760-1762).

It is also interesting to notice that in Germany this Quixotic tradition combined with Sterne's presence, which was felt strongly throughout the continent, to produce fascinating examples of comic novels where the ridiculous is represented by Quixotic characters, whereas the sentiment and the humour are basically Sternean (Large 68-78). Critics have explained that during the last decades of the eighteenth century the German novel was developing an interest for realism, a mode that was difficult in German due to the lack of any tradition. Naturally, Cervantes, Marivaux, Lesage, Swift, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne were the models followed, but the adaptation of the comic —present in all these writers— to the realistic mode was a problem on account of the political, sociological and cultural circumstances (dialects included) of a geopolitical region that was not a single nation but a combination of different states. The English influence together with that of Cervantes's *Don Quixote's* (itself largely transmitted to German readers through English and French versions) was decisive in the evolution of the comical, realist novel after 1770, examples of which include Müller's *Siegfried von Lindenberg* (1779), Nicolai's *Das Leben und die Meinungen des Herrn Magister Sebaldus Nothanker* (1773-76), Kotzebue's *Die Geschichte meines Vaters, oder wie es zuging, dass ich geboren wurde* (1788), etc.

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avec les nouvelles visions de Don Quichotte, histoire espagnole (1715), or Marivaux's parodies such as his early work Pharsamon ou les Folies romanesques (1712), which was translated into English (1750), Italian (1751 and 1759) and German (1773, 1793 and 1794) (Montandon 474-9).

[8] Among parodies published in English, it is important to mention at least Richard Graves's *The Spiritual Quixote, or The Summer's Ramble of Mr. Geoffry Wildgoose* (1772), not to speak of

Along with the Quixotic tradition, the picaresque also flourished in the eighteenth-century English novel and played a significant part in the development of realism. The use of the first person narration, the picture of everyday life in lowly surroundings, far away from courtly and aristocratic milieus, the coarse humour so akin to the popular classes, and even the society of criminals characteristic of this mode are key elements in the works of Defoe, Fielding, Smollett and others. *Moll Flanders* is probably the best example of this mode, but again Spanish predecessors cast a long shadow over the English picaresque novels. Classic Spanish texts from the sixteenth and early seventeenth century which were available in translation in England and in other European countries, and certainly exerted an influence on the development of the first-person narrative mode, include the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599-1604), Quevedo's *El Buscón* (1626), Vicente Espinel's *La vida de Marcos de Obregón* (1618) or *La pícara Justina* (1605), by López de Úbeda.[9]

It is worth noting that Lesage translated, or rather adapted, *Guzmán de Alfarache*, by eliminating "toutes les moralités superflues" and "déclamations contre les moeurs" (Montandon 145). His familiarity with Spanish picaresque made Lesage one of the most influential picaresque writers in eighteenth-century Europe, thanks especially to his novel *Gil Blas de Santillane* (1715-35), with its obviously Spanish background and realistic sketches of places and characters. *Gil Blas* was a great success across Europe: more than 75 editions were published in France alone before 1800; Smollett translated it into English in 1749 and Thomas Holcroft imitated it in *The Adventures of Hugh Trevor* (1794-97); by 1800 there had been no fewer than eight Russian editions of Lesage's novel, which became the model in Russia for imitation of picaresque literature, notably Chulkov's novel *The Gracious Cook or the Adventures of a Corrupted Woman* (1770)[10]; in Germany there was a curious fusion of Lesage's Gil Blas and Defoe's Robinson, in so far as the first German translation of Lesage's novel was entitled *Der spanische Robinson; oder sonderbare Geschichte des*

Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, where Yorick clearly evokes Don Quixote and Rocinante. For accounts of this phenomenon, see Pardo García, "La otra"; *La tradición*; and "Formas".

[9] The *Lazarillo* was translated into French as early as 1560, and published on numerous occasions in the seventeenth century; *Guzmán de Alfarache* also became a classic in French, being translated by different authors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: by Gabriel Chappuys in 1600, by Jean Chapelain in 1619-1620, by Gabriel Brémond in 1695, and by Lesage in 1732, in a version that is considered "un déplorable massacre de l'ouvrage original" (Montandon 143). The *Buscón* also spawned various translations: by La Geneste in 1633, by Raclots in 1699, and by Hermilly and Rétif de La Bretonne in 1776. English translations were also numerous in the same period: *Lazarillo* was translated by David Rowland in 1576; *Guzmán de Alfarache* by James Mabbe in 1622; *The Buscón* in 1657, by John Davies of Kidwelly, etc.

[10] It is remarkable that Russian picaresque developed in the eighteenth century (and continued into the nineteenth) not only under the influence of Lesage, but also because *Lazarillo de Tormes* had been translated from the French in 1775, while Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* and Smollett's *Roderick Random* were translated in 1772 and 1788 respectively.

Gil Blas von Santillana (1726-1735). Lesage's work was so influential that it was even translated into Spanish by Father de Isla in 1788.[11]

The English picaresque was, then, greatly indebted to Spanish writers and to Lesage, although we should not overlook the seventeenth-century English tradition of biographies of criminals and prostitutes, as well as Nashe's *The Unfortunate Traveller* in 1594. Nor is *Moll Flanders* the only case of English picaresque worth mentioning. Fielding's great novels also owe much to this mode, even if we cannot describe them as completely picaresque: *Jonathan Wild* (1743) was translated into German in 1750 and into French in 1763; *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749) were both also translated successfully into French and German a few years later. Similarly, the picaresque exerted extraordinary influence on Smollett: apart from his translations of Lesage's *Gil Blas* and *Le Diable boiteux*, and Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, his own novels bear witness to this: *Roderick Random* (1748) and *Peregrine Pickle* (1751) particularly, which were translated into French, German, Russian and Danish a few years later, and also his less popular *Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753), with its manifest indebtedness to Alemán, Cervantes, Scarron, Lesage, and the *Lazarillo*, as well as to English "jest-books" and tales of poverty and misery.

Two other important traditions nourishing the English and the European novel at this time were the seventeenth-century French romances and the epistolary mode, although I will not say much about them here as they bear very little relation with Spanish letters in the period. Both coalesce, however, in Richardson's sentimental novels, the supreme case of English influence on the continent. The popularity of seventeenth-century romances by authors such as de Scudéry or La Calprenède amounted to a phenomenon which may have been as powerful as the Quixotic and picaresque heritage. The curious mixture of these fantastic tales of love and adventure with the Quixotic tradition culminated in Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752), nor should we forget their influence on other women writers (Gothic novelists, among them) up to the beginnings of the nineteenth century (Austen's *Northanger Abbey* is of course the best example).

II. IDEOLOGIES

It is surely no coincidence that both *Gulliver's Travels* and *Robinson Crusoe* were received, and consequently adapted, in many European countries as books for children, in what constitutes a clear distortion and manipulation of the original works. The search for an answer to why this was so will inevitably lead us to discuss

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[11] Cf. *Aventuras de Gil Blas de Santillana robadas a España y adaptadas en Francia por Monsieur Le Sage, restituidas a su patria y a su lengua nativa por un español celoso que no sufre que se burlen de su nación* (Valencia, 1788) (Barjau Condomines 113).

the power of the ideologies present in various European countries in the eighteenth century.

There is no doubt about Swift's immediate success on the continent. *Gulliver's Travels* was published in England in October 1726, and just three months later, in January 1727, an anonymous French version was printed in The Hague; in April another one (this time signed by Abbé Desfontaines) came out in Paris[12]; also anonymously, a German version appeared in the same year (1727) in Hamburg, and another one, this time with the name of its translator, Johann Heinrich Liebers, was published in 1728 at Leipzig. Criticism was quick to appear, too, as the first German review of *Gulliver's Travels* was published in 1728 in *Neue Zeitungen von gelehrten Sachen*. Naturally, dozens of versions, editions and translations were published in the course of the century, not only in French and German, but also in Italian (1729), Swedish (1744-45), Danish (1768), Russian (1772-73), Polish (1784), Portuguese (1793), and Spanish (1793-1800). If not in all languages, *Gulliver's Travels* was presented *exclusively* as book for children in Swedish, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish, and later in Czech, Bulgarian, Romanian and Hungarian, among others. However, this does not mean that there are no reliable editions of that work today in those languages, but simply that for a very long time, and for a variety of reasons, the only versions available were severely cut and manipulated. In Germany alone, to give just one example, Hermann J. Real says that "almost two hundred *different* children's versions have been tracked down" (Real 2). I will not delve into the specific reasons in this particular case because a good deal of information has already been provided in the thick volume recently compiled by Hermann J. Real for the Continuum series (Shaffer's project) in 2005.[13]

Robinson Crusoe enjoyed a similar fate. Its success in England is well known, with several editions in 1719 alone, the year of publication, and immediate sequels and imitations. Although the narration of the *topos* of the desert island was not strictly invented by Defoe, as precedents such as Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines* (1668) and the Dutch narrative by Hendrik Smeeks, *Beschryvinge van het magtig Koningryk Krinke Kesmes* (1708) clearly prove, *Robinson Crusoe* established a new model, usually called the "Robinsonade," which was to have a long trajectory in the modern novel (cf. Reckwitz; Fohrmann). Robinson's plight sparked other individual or collective "Robinsonades," which adapted materials of diverse origins including

[12] This version by Desfontaines was another case of the *belles infidèles*, and a huge success across Europe; as Wilhelm Graeber ("Swift's First Voyages" 10) has written, "half a dozen reprints and reissues appeared in the same year, and at least another nine till the end of the century [...] All told, some 180 editions as well as adaptations of Desfontaine's version are on record."

[13] Cf. particularly the already quoted Graeber ("Swift's First Voyages"), as well as other essays in Real's collection covering reception in eighteenth-century Europe: Gregori for the Italian; Chamosa González for the Spanish; Bastos da Silva for the Portuguese; Krake, Real and Spieckermann for the German; Hartmann for the Danish and Swedish; Düring ("No Swift") for the Polish; and Düring ("From Russia") for the Russian.

Utopian, political, philosophical and erotic works. In many European literatures dozens of titles were registered during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which use the *topos* of the desert island for a variety of purposes.

The transmission of *Robinson Crusoe* in other languages followed a similar pattern to that of *Gulliver's Travels*. It was promptly and successfully translated into French, the first volume by Themiseul de Saint-Hyacinthe, and the others by Van Effen in 1720-21. Several editions and sequels also appeared in French during the century, a pervasiveness attested by Rousseau's *Émile* (1762), which recommended the novel as a pedagogical tool for children. In 1766, an abridged edition for children was published in Amsterdam, by Feutry, and others followed very quickly. Combinations of the Robinsonade with the sentimental novel (analogous to those of the picaresque with the sentimental narrative), were also popular in France: a famous case is that of de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* (1788).

Reception in Germany was even warmer than in France, perhaps because there was a precedent in the *Simplicissimus*. The novel was translated in 1720 (two different editions, one at Leipzig, the other in Hamburg) and achieved great success, with many editions and imitations following: about 50 different Robinsonades were published in Germany alone in the eighteenth century. In fact, the word *Robinson* became a common noun, simply meaning "adventurer," and all sorts of Robinsons appeared in fiction with diverse nationalities (American, Austrian, Nordic, French, Finnish, Danish, Czech, Jewish, Persian, and so on). Lesage's *Gil Blas,* as I said earlier, was translated with the title *Der spanische Robinson* (1726). The best imitation was Schnabel's *Insel Felsenburg* (1731), which was so successful that a second, a third and a fourth parts were published afterwards (1732, 1736 and 1743 respectively). But undoubtedly the best known German Robinson was the adaptation for children, in dialogue form, published by J. Campe in 1779-1780 with the title *Robinson der Jünger*. This was, for many languages, the version most widely read and in some cases first translated (the Spanish *Robinson* was a translation by Tomás de Iriarte of Campe's book, under the title *El nuevo Robinsón. Historia moral reducida a diálogos*, 1789). Other European languages also received *Robinson* a few years after its original publication: Dutch in 1721 (from the French version), Italian in 1731, Danish in 1744, and Swedish in 1745.

But let me now examine Spanish versions of Robinson as a particular case of the way ideology affected the transmission of novels. As I have just said, the versions of the novel that circulated in Spain in the eighteenth century were adaptations for children: Campe's in Iriarte's translation, and Justo de la Barra's translation of a French adaptation by François Guillaume Ducray-Duminil: *Los dos robinsones, o aventuras de Carlos y Fanny, dos niños ingleses abandonados en una isla de América* (1792). The text written by Defoe was prohibited by the Inquisition (the French translation of the Third Part, by Saint-Hyacinthe, published in 1720-1721, was included in the 1790 edition of *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*) on the grounds that it contained heretical propositions about Redemption and the Mysteries, according to an edict of 1756 (Defourneaux 248). Politically and religiously, Defoe was very much anti-Spanish: the publication of *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719 took place a few years after the Treaty of Utrecht (1713-1714), which put an end to the War of

Spanish Succession. The treaty, which had been very difficult to negotiate, provided that Spain cede Minorca and Gibraltar to Britain and granted Britain the exclusive right to supply Spain's American colonies with slaves for a period of thirty years. When the original text of the novel was finally translated into Spanish in the nineteenth century by José Alegret de Mesa (1849-1850), not from English but from a French version, the translator felt the need to explain to his readers Defoe's moral and political shortcomings.[14] So, in the case of *Robinson*, the prevailing political and religious climate prevented the novel from seeing the light of day in Spanish in the eighteenth century, apart from in versions for children. Well after the Inquisition had disappeared, this climate, though milder, continued to prevail even into the nineteenth century.

But the powerful influence of ideology on the transmission of English novels in eighteenth-century Europe was not only politically or religiously motivated. There is no offending political or religious content in *Pamela* or in *Tom Jones*, for instance, or even in *Gulliver's Travels*. Nevertheless, the versions that European readers had access to in their own languages were cut, sometimes severely cut, censored, adapted; in short, manipulated for reasons which the translators themselves often explain. Some of the early French translators openly claimed their right to "improve" the original, and not to be slaves of the source text, because there were occasions when the original text had defects (at least for the audience of the target text) that should be eliminated in order to contribute to the success of that book. We cannot forget in this respect that these French translations were, for most of Europe, the means through which the English novels reached thousands of readers in countries as diverse and far apart as Poland, Russia or Spain. Prévost writes in the preface to his translation of *Sir Charles Grandison* that he has given "une nouvelle face à son ouvrage par le retranchement des excursions languissantes, des peintures surchargées, des conversations inutiles et des réflexions déplacées" (qtd. Montandon

[14] Thus, when the English writer makes reference to the cruelties committed by Spaniards in the American conquest, the translator reminds his readers about the behaviour of English troops under Wellington's command in Spain during the War of Independence. His words are charged with malevolent irony: "Está visto que el autor nos profesa un odio, que raya en manía: ¿qué recuerdos quedarán de sus compatriotas en la India? ¿Cuáles son los que quedan en algunas ciudades de España, como Badajoz, San Sebastián y otras, cuando arrojaron a los franceses y entraron en ella como amigos, saqueando, talando y cometiendo toda clase de crímenes, crueldades y excesos? ¡Y todo esto en el siglo XIX! Por último, a medida que vaya el autor prodigándonos finezas, se las devolveremos, a fin de que algún otro escritor inglés no nos venga también algún día a echarnos en cara que los españoles somos poco corteses y carecemos de galantería" (cf. Galván 65, n. 41). The translator also felt the necessity to defend the Catholic faith from Defoe's attacks, and alludes to a "Religious Dissertation" written by abbot Labouderie, that he translates and incorporates to the novel: "Robinson en su calidad de protestante, dirige aquí y en el curso de su historia serios ataques contra el catolicismo (que él llama papismo), ataques cuya refutación se encuentra en la bella disertación del señor abate Labouderie, colocada al fin de esta traducción. Se lo decimos al lector para que en adelante le sirva de gobierno" (qtd. Toledano Buendía 316).

21). Writing about his translation of *Tom Jones*, La Place says that if Fielding had been writing for the French he would have probably cut "un gran nombre de passages très excellents en eux-mêmes, mais qui leur paraîtraient déplacés. [...] J'ai donc fait ce que l'auteur eût probablement fait lui-même" (qtd. Montandon 21). But if we examine that translation we find that La Place cut not only digressions, but also essential elements of narrative technique (every introductory chapter to each of the Books; and humorous episodes), as well as other details which he considered rude and licentious, that "déplaisent souverainement à nos dames" (qtd. Montandon 21).[15]

The "goût français" was considered superior to the English and consequently everything that was liable to offend or bore the French was omitted in translations (see Nordmann; and Zuber). Thus, the English fondness for digressions, introspection, reflection, and so forth was normally sacrificed on the altar of action and movement. Apart from that, the French language was generally regarded as refined, a product of finesse, unlike the English, which was seen in France as rude and lacking subtlety. Explaining his translation of *Pamela*, Prévost wrote:

> Nous avons tâché de la rendre aussi fidèle qu'il nous a été possible, vû la différence des Langues. On sçait que la Langue Angloise n'est pas tout-à-fait aussi châtiée que la Françoise. On souffre dans celle-là des expressions, qu'on ne permettroit pas dans celle-ci. Il seroit aisé d'en citer un grand nombre d'exemples, s'il étoit necessaire. (qtd. Galván & Pérez Gil 86, n. 80).

But probably more transcendental than these prejudices against English taste and the declarations of French superiority are the moral and religious issues. Some of these are found in the prefaces and notes written by French translators and adaptors, but many are not only translated but also expanded in their Spanish versions. Although the Inquisition was not in full swing in Spain at the time (despite prohibitions, books circulated more or less freely in the country, and many enlightened individuals were allowed to own and read forbidden books),[16] translators into Spanish were careful enough to stress the moral message they wanted to convey in their translations. Thus, when Pamela, in desperation, feels tempted to commit suicide, the Spanish translator (Ignacio García Malo), instead of omitting the episode, keeps it in order to introduce a footnote where he dispatches the following tirade against English corrupted morality:

> Todas las reflexiones que hace aquí Mr. Richardson en boca de Pamela son muy a propósito para contener a los mortales desesperados del abominable crimen del

[15] An interesting analysis of translations of Fielding's works into several European languages, and particularly Spanish, can be found in Deacon.

[16] Cf. Defourneaux, who provides good evidence of this. On page 104 he uses a metaphorical expression to allude to this inefficiency on the part of the Inquisition: "Un verre d'eau pour éteindre un incendie."

> suicidio, tan contrario a la orden de Dios, que la misma naturaleza le detesta y aborrece. Y como en Inglaterra es más común este pecado que en ninguna otra parte del mundo (sea efecto de aquel clima, o más bien de la demasiada corrupción de las costumbre inglesas, como lo dice el célebre Young cap. del suicidio), por eso carga la mano Richardson contra tan monstruosa acción, y hace ver que solo con la gracia de Dios y los auxilios de la religión es capaz el hombre infeliz de resistir a las desgracias de esta vida con la esperanza consoladora, que le da el cristianismo, de pasar a otra mejor, después de llevar con paciencia los trabajos que la Providencia le envía para su mejor bien. (qtd. Toledano Buendía 310)

On many other occasions, the translator opts for simply omitting episodes, references or expressions that might be found offensive by their readers, such as blasphemies, allusions to physical attributes, or sexual innuendoes. At times, too, lengthy descriptions are summarized in a few words. The translator has no problem in advising the reader about this, as the Spanish translator of *Tom Jones* explains when drastically cutting Fielding's detailed description of Sophia's beauties and talents:

> El verídico autor de esta historia ha hecho un retrato en grande y muy circunstanciado de las gracias, figura, carácter y talentos de nuestra heroína, y yo por ahorrar a nuestros españoles, menos pacientes que los ingleses, el fastidio inseparable siempre de un razonamiento dilatado, lo diré todo en pocas palabras, esto es, que *Sofía era hermosa y a más de esto amable*. (qtd. Toledano Buendía 280)

Examples could be multiplied in different European languages, but I think these few taken from French and Spanish are enough to give an idea of the extent to which national ideologies —connected to national pride, aesthetics, morality, religion, politics, and so forth— affected the reception of the English novel on the continent (see Pajares "Censura"). What Defoe, Swift, Richardson, or Fielding wrote in English did not reach their continental readers unaltered, because only very few could read those works in English.

Interesting evidence of the importance of the mediation exerted by the translations and adaptations in the process of reception is to be found in some European countries in the catalogues of private libraries and bookshops. Many of these libraries have disappeared due to the passage of time, war or plundering, but some have survived, even if partially, at least through catalogues and registers from notaries. This is the case of Spain, where important research in the private libraries of *ilustrados* has been carried out in recent times.

It is striking that in many of them the same titles appear once and again: apart from books of law and science, there are also many novels, histories and philosophical works. Among the most popular of those written originally in English which circulated in French versions in Spain are the classic texts by Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, John Locke, Francis Bacon, David Hume, Joseph Addison, Edward Gibbon, poems by Pope, Young, Dryden, Thomson, Milton, Gray, Macpherson, and of course the great novels of Defoe, Swift, Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, Sarah Fielding, as well as Charlotte Lennox and Sophie Lee (whose *The Recess* was extremely popular in a Spanish version entitled *Matilde o el subterráneo*, in 1795). An

examination of these catalogues shows that most by far of the foreign books listed in libraries were published in French, books in English being very few.[17]

Even so, ever so occasionally we find some libraries with a good number of books in English, as in the private library of the rich Irish merchant in the Canaries Bernardo de Valois (41% of his 568 volumes were written in English). But the norm is represented by the huge library of enlightened Asturian politician Pedro Rodríguez de Campomanes, only 12 of whose approximately 6,000 volumes (1,000 prohibited by the Inquisition) were in English.

Those who read English books, either in English or in French and Spanish translations, were not all in favour of England and its customs and writers. Some were, of course, such as Olavide, Cadalso, Jovellanos, Feijóo, and the Jesuit Father Juan Andrés, who all admired the English and imitated them in their works.[18] But others became acquainted with English works in order to criticise them and learn about their shortcomings, with the purpose of advising their Spanish readers not to follow their «corrupted customs." Thus Francisco Mariano Nifo (or Nipho), who was a firm opponent of English individualism, freedom of the press and free trade, which had, according to him, terrible consequences for religion, commerce and the arts.[19]

Naturally Spain was not alone in censoring and criticising England for its immorality or freedom, because in other countries the reading of so many novels (and books in general) was also ideologically charged,[20] as a consequence, on many occasions, of some stereotypes predominant in Europe about the English.

[17] Cf. the already mentioned Defourneaux, as well as the following two studies on private libraries: García Fernández; and Enciso Recio, the latter being an excellent synthesis of studies carried out in this field in all parts of Spain.

[18] Some important studies in this respect are: Gil Novales on Burke's influence in Spain; E. Helman on Jovellanos; Bermúdez-Cañete, and Geoffrey Ribbans on Cadalso; and Pajares ("La literatura") on Father Andrés.

[19] Cf. Effross's judgment in her Diss. (77): "The English considered their individualism one of the fundamental causes of their happiness. They prided themselves in not following each other like sheep, as the inhabitants of other nations did. Nipho considered the toleration of eccentricity and unconventionality ridiculous and strange: "Todo es peregrino, y singular en este País. ... Aquí por cualquier camino, como no sea trillado, se va en derechura al barrio alto del elogio." Still, the desire to be unusual often yielded beneficial results for the country as a whole, and was not a quality to be despised. The English liberties which permitted individualism to exist were attacked by Nipho. He was sarcastic about the common people's concern for their rights. The freedom of the press to criticize and satirize authority was derided as a misunderstood liberty. Nipho also believed that the consequences of the government's laxity in permitting free expression and free trade were offenses to religion, and decline in commerce and the arts. Despite these liberties, the English were still melancholy and taciturn."

[20] In spite of the French "Anglomania" and the numerous translations from the English into that language, censorship based on moral grounds was also present in France against novels, particularly between 1725 and 1760. Especially in the year 1737, some restrictive measures were adopted (the chancellor of Aguesseau, in fact, forbade novels), and Prévost was not allowed to print his *Cleveland* in France, unless he changed his religion and converted to Catholicism. That explains,

III. STEREOTYPES

Naturally stereotypes existed not only for the English, but also for other nationalities and they usually differ from one country to another. The stereotype Spain had of the English as immoral, associated with the values of individualism and freedom is not always replicated in other countries. It is curious how these stereotypes appeared in the novels themselves. In her study of the English stereotype in the eighteenth-century French novel, Ferrand recalls the hero in Prévost's *Cleveland*, defined as the "Philosophe Anglais." As she writes (Ferrand 131), "solitaire, méditatif, l'Anglais se livre naturellement à la lecture qui est pour lui un mode d'être raisonnable et sensible, où se manifeste une psychologie plus profonde que pour les autres types nationaux."

This sort of reader is unlike the Spanish one, because the stereotype for the latter is linked to undiscriminating, quixotic voracity. Ferrand (127) clearly states that "on a trop lu en Espagne et mal," and notes the bogus marquise in Lesage's *Gil Blas*, a woman in Toledo who has read so many chivalric romances that she has become mad and tries to seduce Don Chérubin by making him replay the dialogues between Don Bélianis of Greece and Floribelle. Ferrand also alludes to English sources, and mentions the Cervantine model as the representation of Spain when she recalls the contents of the library at Doña Rodolpha's in Lewis's *The Monk*, apparently forgetting for a moment that that library was not located in Spain but in the romantic castle of Lindenberg, in Bavaria.[21] The library was of course full of chivalric books, very much the same books read by Don Quixote. But can we seriously take that description as true to the Spanish reality of the eighteenth century? Similarly Prévost in *Cleveland* and Montesquieu in *Lettres persanes* offer this view of Spanish readers: all of them mad, all of them heirs of the hidalgo from La Mancha (Ferrand 127-130). Despite the untruthfulness of the stereotype, it was so widely spread outside fiction that it became a commonplace in history.[22]

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as Montandon says (10-11), that many Parisian printing houses published novels giving as places of publication foreign or fantastic locations: Cologne, Rome, Peking, Constantinople, Luxuropolis, Cythère, Badinopolis, Amsterdam, Leipzig, etc.

[21] Ferrand (128) writes: "Comme bloquée par le modèle cervantin, la représentation de l'Espagne lisante ne sait que balbutier et répéter la même chose: frappées d'un sort étrange, ces bibliothèques fictives contiennent encore et toujours les mêmes livres, comme à la fin du siècle celle de doña Rodolpha, dans *Le moine* de Lewis (1797), qui 'étoit principalement composée de vieux romans espagnols', dont *Tyran le Blanc, Palmerin d'Angleterre*... soit les mêmes romans que Don Quichotte." However, Lewis locates the library not in Spain, but in Germany (cf. Lewis 133-134).

[22] In a review of a book on the Spanish Civil War for the *TLS*, historian Felipe Fernández-Armesto (3) tried to explain the origins and development of this stereotype: "At the end of another Spanish Civil War —the one usually called the War of the Spanish Succession, from 1701 to 1716— Francesco Conti wrote an opera to console his master, the Emperor Charles VI, for the loss of the Spanish Crown. *Don Quixote in Sierra Morena* represents Spain as the kind of country a ruler could do without: a troublesome place full of fanatics and dimwits. At the close of the work —in the

The reality was in fact different: the eighteenth-century English novel, among many other things English (science and philosophy, for instance) did have a presence in Spain, thanks mainly (though not exclusively) to French versions, but a presence nonetheless and, incidentally, of the kind it had in many other European countries. Our current knowledge about the contents of private libraries, the catalogues of bookshops in places such as Seville, Cádiz or Madrid, the acquaintance of many writers with English novels, philosophy and thought, and also the certainty we now have about the general inefficiency of the Inquisition are evidence enough to refute the commonplace. Spain was not closed to contemporary European currents, was not living in the peculiar and romantic isolation of Don Quixote's madness. That was to a large extent fiction. It is true that Spanish novelists in the eighteenth century were not at the level of their predecessors in the seventeenth century (there is no Cervantes, no Quevedo, no Mateo Alemán) or of their contemporaries in France and England, but there were certainly fiction writers sensitive to the European models represented by the French and the English novelists (epistolary novels, for instance, such as those by Mor de Fuentes, Luis Gutiérrez, or Antonio Valladares, which bear witness to Richardson's rich influence).[23]

In conclusion, as I have tried to show in this essay, the reception of the eighteenth-century English novel on the continent, and particularly in Spain, was tinged by a fascinating mixture of traditions, ideologies and stereotypes. The presence of many English writers in different European countries was certainly important, even decisive in the development of some national literatures, but it is essen-

version I have seen— the hero is alone on stage, inside the iron bars of a cage, railing at the rest of the world and denouncing its insanity. It could be a metaphor for the next two-and-a-half centuries of Spanish history, when, according to the standard account, Spain was confined in paranoid isolation, puzzled, like so many stage madmen, at other peoples' madness. The 'Tibet of the West' excluded the Enlightenment, resisted the influence of the French Revolution, revived the Inquisition, spurned industrialization, postponed *aggiornamento*, practised *mañanismo*, perpetuated the siesta, maintained the mantilla, clung to clericalism, sniffed at science. Painters, poets and novelists spread a fantastic image of Spain, where swart Gypsies and heavily moustachioed bandidos inhabited Moorish ruins. The country became the only Western victim of Orientalism, as though historical accident had washed Spain up on the wrong shore of the Mediterranean. Africa, alternatively, "began at the Pyrenees." There was never really any truth in this picture. Spain has a typical Western European past, as far as such a thing exists, and continued to be a representative part of Western Europe in the nineteenth century, experiencing much the same conflicts and changes as everywhere else, with differences of rhythm, intensity and distribution. But the conviction that Spain's was an extreme case of exceptionalism became a commonplace."

[23] For Richardson's influence on Spanish novelists of the eighteenth century, see Baquero Escudero, and more particularly on the novelists mentioned, the following articles: on Mor de Fuentes' *La Serafina*, Emilieta Panizza, and Patricia Shaw; on Valladares' *La Leandra*, Herrera Navarro, and García Garrosa ("*La Leandra: novela original*"; and "*La Leandra*: novela moral"). Other interesting references to the influence of the English novel in Spain are: Glendinning; Suárez Lafuente; Sánchez Franco (chapter V); Barjau Condomines; Urzainqui; Alberich; Pajares, *Richardson*; "La literatura"; "La traducción"; and "Samuel Richardson's"); or the valuable bibliographical study of Carnero.

tial to finally notice that their presence and influence cannot be described in simple terms of cultural penetration, through the prestigious and powerful mediation of the French language and book market, but need a detailed analysis of the circumstances obtaining in each country. Such research has yet to be carried out in many places and, of course, a final synthesis would have then to be produced. As I hope I have been able to prove, there are multiple factors that give shape to the continuous crosscurrents from one country to another, so that even if we have a common field in some respects (and the rise of the novel in England and on the continent can be taken as such), that common field is far from being the same or "identical," to borrow the adjective used by Montandon (4) when referring to this issue ("un champ commun identique"). However, what all this ultimately reveals is the plurality of readings and views of the same texts, texts that strictly speaking are not the same once they start crossing the Channel and travelling through the continent.

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A RESTORED COMEDY. María José Mora, Manuel J. Gómez Lara, Rafael Portillo and Juan A. Prieto Pablos, eds. *The Woman Turned Bully*. Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 2007.

The Woman Turned Bully is one more of the high-quality editions prepared by members of the Universidad de Sevilla. Other works like *The Virtuoso* (1997), *Epsom Wells* (2000) and *The Reformation* (2003) form part of the good results obtained by the Restoration Comedy Project <http://alojamientos.us.es/restoration/editions.html>. Since 1995, members of the Department of English literature at the Universidad de Sevilla started working on the Restoration comedies. Their basic objective was to provide more information on these plays as well as produce modern critical editions of those hardly accessible. A database of the comedies, farces, burlesques and drolls, as well as some tragicomedies in which comedy has a significant part, all produced during the Restoration, is under construction at the moment with some samples available. Because of its quality, this project has received official recognition and funding by the Spanish Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia.

This edition of *The Woman Turned Bully*, published by the Universitat de Barcelona, is the first since 1675 printed quarto which has been collated with extant copies to constitute the base for the present work. Spelling, punctuation, and some other formal aspects have been modernized as far as they did not imply altering meanings or sounds conveyed by the original forms. The book includes a well structured introduction where the editors discuss elements related to the play.

Going further than the first date of publication, the possible date for the performance of the play is considered, as well as its authorship, since no name is given in the quarto edition. The increasing amateur writing might justify the anonymity but there could be other reasons for the author's silence: it could be the case of a rewritten version of a previous work or, simpler than that, it could be the case of a well known author uncertain about the success of the play and therefore tried to avoid the consequences of failure for his/her reputation. Though there is no vindication of a definite authorship, the editors analyze references provided in the text comparing them with other plays to strengthen or minimize the attribution of *The Woman Turned Bully* to Aphra Behn, a Restoration female dramatist, whose remarkable production must be taken with high regard if we consider that it was only after 1660 when women were allowed to be professional actresses. Though there are several points in favor for her authorship it is also possible that the play was the result of a collaborative work, that is, the product of more than a single author working for the Duke's Company.

The plot of the comedy shows influences of the Spanish "comedias de capa y espada," and can be included within a "new type of comedy which blended different issues —wit, love, intrigue, manners and above all satire—" (29), a final element conveyed quite often by exploiting the medieval concept of "humours," as it happens in other contemporary works. Nevertheless, as Styan well says, this repetition of characters and plots from play to play for about forty years, seemed by the time unimportant since

these were just "convenient pegs on which to hang the true elements of drama offered by Restoration comedy. And where might they be found? In the code of speech and behavior which lay dormant in the lines, and in whose secrets player and spectator could share —but only through the right sort of performance" (1). However, the text has manifest peculiarities to make it relevant, such as its portrait of the legal world of the period: its attorneys and clerks, and their legal expressions and "malapropisms." These are the target of the author's satire, nevertheless stating that not all deserve criticism.

Worthy of mention is also the evolution in the concept of theatre play, a fact that is revealed by a female character, Betty Goodfield, whose knowledge of the contemporary drama comes not as being a spectator but a reader, drama is now written not only to be represented but to be read. Printed play-texts will mean a wider reach of theatre and with it the influence exerted by their authors. This influence includes the recalling of other literary works, such as *Don Quijote*, whose sentences the characters quote with especial emphasis, and furthermore: "In the printed quarto, most of the quotations are also marked out in italics for the benefit of the reader" (44, n.51).

Madam Goodfield's reference to the *canary* (115), malmsey or malvasía wine, may also take us to Shakespeare's plays, in fact, this word's first entry registered by the *Oxford English Dictinary* corresponds to Shakespeare's *Henry IV* in 1597; other quotes from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries follow. But malmsey was imported from the Mediterranean since the Middle Ages, and it is only when Crete was seized by the Turkish Empire in the middle of the 17th century that the Canary Islands production grows. The *canary* wine appears as a basic product for the commerce with England between the 16th and 17th centuries to the extent of becoming its monopoly. "El conflicto de la Compañía de Canarias fue una viva demostración del monopolio británico del comercio insular y mostró palpablemente las limitaciones que este hecho representaba para la economía canaria" (Arbelo García and Hernández González 28). The reduction of the English imports of *canary* will be due to political and economic factors, British merchants buy more than what they sell and the two countries keep in conflict, problems that will contribute to the final substitution of *canary* for Portuguese wines.[1] Nevertheless, Madam Goodfield's comparison of *canary* and Derby's ale, has nothing to do with the disappearance of the imports of malvasía, which by the time of the play was still highly appreciated, but with separating the uses of the country and the city: the defense of tradition, or plain coarseness, as opposed to open-mindedness, or plain snobbism.

In spite of comedies being read, *The Woman Turned Bully* was written to be represented as it in fact was on 24 March 1675 by the Duke's Company at the Dorset Garden Theatre. By then, this was a well equipped theatre with imported machinery that does not seem to have been necessary for the staging of this work. The analysis of the directions establishes at least two acting spaces, though the editors provide a whole description of the stage and the other playhouse areas.

No list of artists was provided in the quarto edition but several actors and actresses of the Duke's Company are here suggested to have played the different roles according to their previous performances. This is an aspect the editors consider: "Since the actor was usually identified with a particular character-type, casting became not only a powerful tool in the definition of character, but also an effective means of establishing the expectations of the audience" (Mora 78). The inclusion of a "breeches part," where the female character dressed as a man would reveal part of her legs, was a lure for the audience and an element to take into account when selecting an actress to play that role.

This edition of *The Woman Turned Bully* is, first of all, enjoyable by itself, but it has other qualities. Besides providing a new amusing reading to be used in class, it might be considered a

[1] Further information can be found in the seminal work by Antonio Betherncourt Massieu, "Canarias e Inglaterra: el comercio de los vinos (1650-1800)," *Anuario de Estudios Atlánticos* 2 (1956): 195-308.

source for further research both in the fields of literature and linguistics. The jargon of law as reproduced in the comedy could be one of such objectives for which the notes offered by the editors could be a first step. Even though the realism of this type of comedy can easily be questioned due to its plot, it is also true that Restoration comedy was realistic, especially if compared with heroic drama, as Salgado states: "It is fairly clear that a less stylized, more naturalistic style of acting was used in comedy. Scenery and stage properties would confirm visually the general impression of contemporary actuality, a world smaller, tidier and altogether more familiar than the evoked by the exotic splendour of 'heroic' settings" (144). A deeper analysis of the language would help to add or reduce to this conception of the comedy. In the same terms, the capacity of its audience to understand the terminology, quite often in Latin, would help to clarify the idea of who were the theatregoers of this period and might also have something to say about the success or failure of the play.

Therefore, several are the reasons to praise the appearance of *The Woman Turned Bully*, but may it suffice to say it is a well done work.

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SOBRE LA RECEPCIÓN DE LAS LITERATURAS INGLESA E IRLANDESA EN ESPAÑA. Antonio Raúl de Toro Santos y David Clark. British and Irish Writers in the Spanish Periodical Press 1900-1965: escritores británicos e irlandeses en la prensa periódica española 1900-1965. La Coruña: Netbiblo, 2007. [xxiv + 126 pp. ISBN 978-0-9729892-7-5]. Antonio Raúl de Toro Santos. *La literatura irlandesa en España*. La Coruña: Netbiblo, 2007. [xii + 97 pp. ISBN 978-84-9745-216-8].

Estos dos volúmenes forman parte de la colección "Irish Studies Series" que ha comenzado a publicar recientemente el Instituto Universitario de Estudios Irlandeses "Amergin" de la Universidad de La Coruña. Con estos dos títulos son ya media docena los que han visto la luz en esta colección. Todos ellos son, como se anuncia en la presentación de la serie, obras de investigación de tipo interdisciplinar que versan sobre Irlanda y, más en particular, sobre las relaciones entre ese país y Galicia y España en general.

El primero de los volúmenes objeto de esta reseña es una obra de recopilación bibliográfica de gran interés para los estudiosos de las literaturas inglesa e irlandesa en España, ya que reúne un importante número de referencias sobre estas literaturas publicadas en la prensa periódica española entre los años 1900 y 1965. Los autores explican en su prólogo que los límites temporales —si bien son arbitrarios— se seleccionaron en virtud del desarrollo de los estudios universitarios sobre literatura inglesa en España, pues es a partir de mediados de la década de los sesenta del pasado siglo cuando comienzan a consolidarse las primeras publicaciones de investigación de la especialidad (como la revista *Filología Moderna*, en la Universidad Complutense, cuya publicación empieza en 1960). A partir del año 1965, efectivamente, son muchos más los canales de comunicación existentes, y ese periodo es mucho mejor conocido (y está generalmente bien documentado) entre los anglistas españoles. Baste recordar que buena parte de las publicaciones periódicas más veteranas de la especialidad, con la excepción de la citada *Filología Moderna*, ven la luz en la década siguiente: *ES* (Universidad de Valladolid) en 1971; *EFI: Estudios de Filología Inglesa* (Universidad de Granada) en 1976; las *Actas* de los Congresos de AEDEAN a partir de 1978; el *Anuario* del Departamento de Inglés de la Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona en 1978; *Atlantis* en 1979; y la *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses* en 1980.

Por este motivo el volumen de los profesores de Toro y Clark viene sin duda a llenar un hueco informativo y crítico notable en nuestros estudios, completando algunas pocas investigaciones previas sobre aspectos de este periodo, como los interesantes libros de Jacqueline A. Hurtley *Josep Janés: el combat per la cultura* (Barcelona: Curial, 1986) y *José Janés: editor de literatura inglesa* (Barcelona: PPU, 1992). Como dice John Rutherford en el "Foreword" de este libro, no son menos de ciento trece las publicaciones periódicas (diarios, semanarios y revistas) que han sido objeto de análisis detallado. El trabajo es en sí mismo ingente y las dificultades que deben de haber encontrado los autores para consultar tantos ejemplares pertenecientes a ese extenso periodo histórico —jalonado, como sabemos, por la Guerra Civil y el exilio— no son en absoluto de despreciar. Entre esas más de un centenar de publicaciones están la mayoría de los diarios más conocidos en nuestro país en esa etapa histórica, como *ABC, Arriba*, el *Diario de Vigo*, *El Heraldo*, *El Imparcial*, *El Pueblo Gallego, El Sol*, *La Vanguardia*, etc., pero también revistas de larga trayectoria, y no sólo las publicadas en castellano sino también en otras lenguas de España, como *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, *Escorial*, *La Estafeta Literaria*, *Finisterre*, *La Gaceta Literaria*, *Ínsula*, *Litoral*, *Nós*, *Papeles de Sons Armadans*, *Revista de Occidente*, *Ronsel*, *Serra d'Or*, *Triunfo*, etc. En algunos casos, además, el periodo consultado para cada una de las publicaciones se extiende más allá del ámbito temporal del título de este volumen, pues a veces se han incluido números de periódicos o revistas anteriores a 1900, o incluso posteriores a 1965, y hasta se han incorporado algunas publicaciones que vieron la luz fuera de España (en México, por ejemplo, en el caso de *La Nostra Revista*, entre 1946 y 1955; o en Santo Domingo, para *La Poesía Sorprendida*, entre 1943 y 1947). Se

observa un elevado número de publicaciones de Galicia, pues la investigación originalmente se circunscribía a ese ámbito territorial, si bien luego se extendió al resto de España. Las numerosas publicaciones de Cataluña y Euskadi así lo ponen de manifiesto.

En todo caso, debe resaltarse la extensísima cobertura de esta recopilación, tanto espacial como temporal, y el hecho de que se incluyan las publicaciones más relevantes en el ámbito de la prensa diaria y de las revistas literarias y culturales españolas del siglo XX. Ello le otorga a los resultados un índice importante de fiabilidad, ya que los hallazgos pueden considerarse sin duda representativos de la recepción que las literaturas inglesa e irlandesa tuvieron en nuestro país a lo largo de las primeras seis décadas del siglo XX. Pero si digno de elogio es este aspecto, no menos habría que decir del impresionante elenco de autores para los que se han ordenado los centenares de referencias bibliográficas. Son ciento cincuenta y siete los autores sobre los que podemos hallar referencias bibliográficas en este volumen, cada una de ellas con los títulos, autores de los artículos o reseñas (cuando aparecen en la publicación, naturalmente) y los datos completos que nos permiten su localización exacta (fecha, volumen y número de la revista, número de páginas, etc.). Es interesantísimo ver la nómina de autores y comprobar el tipo de recepción que tuvieron, pues no deja de sorprender a veces que Jane Austen, por poner un simple ejemplo, apenas tenga tres reseñas (una en *El Sol* y dos en *La Vanguardia*), frente a Chesterton, del que se recogen treinta y tres. Por el abultado número de referencias cabe colegir que sería muy interesante perseguir la recepción de autores como Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce, Kipling, Shakespeare, Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, Oscar Wilde y Yeats, por citar sólo algunas de las grandes figuras literarias objeto de múltiples reseñas y artículos en el periodo que nos ocupa. Pero igualmente reveladores son los abundantes ecos que se recogen de ciertos autores hoy considerados "menores", como William Somerset Maugham, Liam O'Flaherty, o Lytton Strachey, frente a la escasísima repercusión en el caso de diversos escritores de primerísima fila, que apenas tienen una o dos reseñas: William Blake, Robert Browning, Geoffrey Chaucer, John Donne, George Eliot, E.M. Forster, Mrs. Gaskell, Samuel Johnson, Christopher Marlowe, Samuel Richardson, Evelyn Waugh, William Wordsworth, etc.

La información es presentada en diversos apartados, lo que facilita mucho la consulta del lector interesado. Por un lado, hay una ordenación alfabética de autores ingleses e irlandeses sobre los que se recogen referencias (en el listado sobre cada autor se sigue luego un orden cronológico de las reseñas, de modo que puede verse bien la evolución de la recepción). Por otro lado, se ofrecen cuatro apéndices en los que se incorporan: a) la relación de trabajos sobre literatura inglesa en España de tipo más general, no sobre autores concretos; b) los trabajos que hacen referencia a la traducción; c) las referencias históricas y culturales relacionadas con Irlanda; y finalmente: d) la relación completa de publicaciones consultadas, con sus fechas. Lo que echamos de menos, en este caso, es un índice con los autores de las referencias, pues hubiera sido muy útil saber, por ejemplo, con una simple consulta a ese índice, qué aportaciones hizo en este periodo un escritor como Ricardo Baeza, u otros como Ramón Pérez de Ayala, o como Salvador de Madariaga. Ahora eso lamentablemente no es posible sino de manera parcial o muy engorrosa, pues hay que consultar los diversos índices y apéndices, que no están obviamente ordenados por los nombres de los autores de las reseñas o artículos. Me atrevo a sugerir que, si hay ocasión de una nueva edición, se estudie la posibilidad de incorporar un índice de este tipo, que sería valiosísimo para orientar investigaciones futuras.

El segundo volumen, obra exclusiva de Antonio Raúl de Toro, es un estudio crítico del impacto de la literatura irlandesa en España en el mismo periodo histórico del que venimos ocupándonos, estudio que se enriquece con un apéndice que incorpora las obras de escritores irlandeses traducidas en España según el catálogo de la Biblioteca Nacional. Para el caso de algunos escritores, como Oliver Goldsmith, George Bernard Shaw, Jonathan Swift, u Oscar Wilde, los listados de traducciones son impresionantes, pues se recogen muchas traducciones y edicio-

nes de las obras de tales autores durante las primeras seis décadas del siglo XX. Aunque la relación de traducciones de otros, como James Joyce, Laurence Sterne o W.B. Yeats es mucho menor, no dejan de ser muy interesantes los datos recogidos, ya que ilustran muy bien sobre el desarrollo de su publicación en España, tanto en lengua castellana como en catalán, gallego y vasco.

Pero sin duda el estudio que constituye el núcleo central de este libro merece ser debidamente destacado, pues en él Antonio Raúl de Toro nos revela datos muy poco conocidos (en algunos casos inéditos) sobre la influencia que determinados escritores irlandeses, como Yeats, Joyce, o Synge, ejercieron sobre ciertos autores españoles. De Toro subraya, por ejemplo, la importancia de la traducción de Juan Ramón Jiménez y Zenobia Camprubí de *Riders to the Sea* de J.M. Synge (*Jinetes hacia el mar*, 1920), que "dejó su impronta en *Bodas de sangre* de García Lorca" (9), hasta el punto de que Federico se mostró muy interesado en poner en escena, con La Barraca, la otra célebre obra de Synge, *The Playboy of the Western World*, que traducía como *El farsante del mundo occidental*. En la página 10 nos revela Antonio Raúl de Toro uno de sus hallazgos: la dedicatoria que Federico escribe al poeta coruñés Carlos Martínez Barbeito en un ejemplar de *Jinetes hacia el mar*: "A Carlos. Este Synge es un admirable poeta que creo te interesará. En La Barraca vamos a representar su mejor drama "El farsante del mundo occidental", de un vocabulario ardiente y de un humor trágico absoluto. Federico. Como esto es irlandés es casi gallego. Cuando leas esto, te parecerá ambiente de tu país".

Tampoco Valle Inclán fue ajeno a las relaciones entre escritores irlandeses y españoles, como se pone asimismo de manifiesto en estas páginas (13-14), y las traducciones de Joyce, de Yeats, de Lady Gregory, de Lord Dunsany, de Sean O'Casey o de George Moore, por señalar algunos de los escritores irlandeses más representativos, dejan una huella profunda en la literatura de habla española y gallega de la primera mitad del siglo XX. Muy ilustrativos son especialmente los datos y las reflexiones que de Toro ofrece sobre escritores gallegos (los de la generación *O Rexurdimento* y los asociados a la revista *Nós*) y su herencia irlandesa. Los nombres de autores como Vicente Risco, Ramón Otero Pedrayo, Ramón Cabanillas y Castelao son suficientemente relevantes como para dar testimonio de la estrecha vinculación existente entre las obras de los irlandeses y los gallegos, aunque sin duda no son éstos los únicos (pueden añadirse otros, como Villar Ponte o Plácido R. Castro del Río). Las páginas que escribe Antonio Raúl de Toro sobre ellos y sus obras (ensayos, traducciones, adaptaciones u obras originales inspiradas parcialmente en los textos irlandeses) se cuentan desde luego entre las aportaciones más originales de este libro. No debe extrañarnos, pues como comenta finalmente el autor, "en Galicia el discurso relacionado con Irlanda poco tiene en común con el resto de España, con la excepción de Cataluña y todavía en menor medida en el País Vasco" (59). Para Galicia la "cuestión irlandesa" entronca claramente con el movimiento cultural de raíz celtista que buscaba recuperar su propia mitología, a partir del héroe Breogán de las leyendas irlandesas. Si bien la Guerra Civil y la postguerra supusieron un evidente obstáculo para lograr esa recuperación, hubo sin embargo una disimulada y, a menudo, distorsionada, admiración por Irlanda en la que abunda el tono nostálgico y edulcorado, muy en consonancia con las dificilísimas circunstancias que se padecían entonces. Escritores como Otero Pedrayo, Vicente Risco, Plácido Castro, que antes habían adoptado una postura reivindicativa, ahora junto con Ramón Castroviejo, o Álvaro Cunqueiro evocan las tierras soñadas de Irlanda retrotrayéndose a la leyenda o a la representación imaginativa, todo ello envuelto en una atmósfera melancólica. (58-59)

Finalmente, y desde un punto de vista meramente formal, debe destacarse también la excelente presentación de los volúmenes de la colección, tanto en el diseño de la cubierta y del interior como en la calidad de la impresión y del papel. Las inevitables erratas que siempre se escapan son escasas y apenas afean el producto final. Como testimonio de la lectura atenta de este lector, se recogen a continuación las pocas que se han detectado, la mayoría fácilmente subsanables y que no crean ningún problema de comprensión al lector. Por si hubiera ocasión de una reedición, se apuntan las siguientes: en el

volumen bibliográfico que comentamos en primer lugar: "y" por "and" (xi); "versión" por "version" (xi); "Cristopher Marlow" por "Christopher Marlowe" (48); y "Lawrence Sterne" por "Laurence Sterne" (75). En el volumen sobre *La literatura irlandesa en España* hemos detectado las siguientes: "aproximádamente" por "aproximadamente" (2); "intrínsico" por "intrínseco" (7); "... de García Lorca en Granada puso fin" por "...de García Lorca en Granada pusieron fin" (10); "fuese éste uno de los primeros" por "fue éste uno de los primeros" (12); "preveer" por "prever" (18); "debemos acudir" por "debe acudir" (19); "Millinton" por "Millington" (29); "Lawrence Sterne" por "Laurence Sterne" (52); "periódísticas" por "periodísticas" (53); "leyendas irlandeses" por "leyendas irlandesas" (53); "el por qué" por "el porqué" (54); "contemporaneos" por "contemporáneos" (58); "y como esa simpatía" por "y cómo esa simpatía" (59). Debe también cuidarse la referencia en la página 44 a Giraldus Cambrensis, Edmund Campion y Edmund Spenser", pues parece que se les llama a los tres "historiadores del siglo xvi", algo obviamente erróneo. Asimismo, en la página 19, convendría reformular la frase del tercer párrafo que comienza con "Un caso que ilustra este proceso...", pues debe de faltar algún nexo de unión entre "lengua y cultura española" y "tiende".

Ninguno de estos pequeños deslices formales, sin embargo, tiene entidad suficiente para deslucir la calidad investigadora y los hallazgos originales que encierran estos dos volúmenes de la serie sobre estudios irlandeses que ha editado Netbiblo para el Instituto Universitario de Estudios Irlandeses "Amergin" de la Universidad de La Coruña. Como se ha mostrado en las páginas anteriores, se trata de unos libros que suponen una contribución importante al conocimiento sobre la recepción y la influencia de las literaturas inglesa e irlandesa en España durante el siglo xx, pues aportan análisis, interpretaciones y datos novedosos que conviene que sean conocidos y divulgados.

Fernando Galván

SILENCE, WHISPER AND SOUND: TEXTUAL SUBJECTIVITIES REVISED. Eva Darias Beautell and María Jesús Hernáez Lerena, eds. *Canon Disorders: Gendered Perspectives on Literature and Film in Canada and the United States*. Logroño: Universidad de La Rioja/Universidad de La Laguna. Servicio de Publicaciones, 2007. 186 pp.

At this, the beginning of the 21st century, it is difficult to discuss any theoretical aspect of literature, cultural studies or philosophy which does not include questions of "canon" and "gender". These two key concepts of contemporary critical theory have been at the center of the debate for so long that we might run the risk of taking them for granted. Books such as *Canon Disorders: Gendered Perspectives on Literature and Film in Canada and the United States* are welcome, therefore, as reminders that we must continually keep rethinking and revising cultural production. It should also be pointed out that one of the apparently obvious, yet somehow innovative aspects of Darias Beautell and Hernáez Lerena's book is that it deals with literature and film production both in Canada and the United States, an unusual proposal in hegemonic canons.

One of the contributors to this book says in her essay that "the voice excluded from the canon can barely whisper, cannot make enough sound to enter a textual space" (van Herk, 41). Indeed, in the last decades of the 20th century, the postmodern demand for revision of the canon created an interest in many texts, long forgotten or excluded, which were suddenly given a voice, becoming objects of study in Academia. But, as Nelson, Treichler and Grossberg stated in the introduction to their *Cultural Studies*[1], which they edited in 1992, many questions have to be asked when dealing with the canon, such as who decides, or who has power to decide; and to this they added that "it is not only the content of the selection that must be examined —who ends up in the canon-the syllabus-the conference-the book— history. It is also the constitution and consequences of selection, by progressive as well as by conservative forces" (13) that have to be questioned. These editors were dealing with cultural studies, but their idea that this discipline "must constantly interrogate its own connection to contemporary relations of power, its own stakes" (13) can be applied to any other academic field.

In fact, the history of feminist criticism is a good example of how the relationship between a discipline and power has been reflected upon. As the editors of *Canon Disorders* say in the introduction to their book, feminist scholarship, both in Canada and the United States, has been crucial in bringing to the foreground "the complex relationship between canon and power" (11). In addition, the obvious shift from the margin to the center which feminism has undergone has forced many scholars, once they have also been empowered within Academia, to rethink their work. This is not the place to discuss a concept such as "gender", yet it should be pointed out that the editors of the book state that the essays included in this edition "define gender in the most encompassing sense, which would include traditional (white and middle class) feminist analyses, queer theory as well as studies of masculinities" (p.13). The book presents us with seven essays which, in the words of its editors "mark the persistence of old sites of struggle within gender studies and point to the existence of new ones" (16). Different perspectives, differing angles: an apparent disorder of the canon they are constructing.

Aritha van Herk's essay, "Hanging out the Laundry: Heroines in the Midst of Dirt and Cleanliness" uses laundry as a metaphor to discuss the feminist construction of the canon, showing how the emphasis on cleanliness and hygiene, as opposed to dirt and filth, pervaded early selections of texts. She states that "in attacking and revising the established canon", feminism "inadvertently" canonized "the middle-class heroine" (23), and ended up enforcing conformity (26). She analyzes two films, two

[1] Cary Nelson, Paula A., Treichler and Lawrence Grossberg, "Cultural Studies: An Introduction". *Cultural Studies*, Ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson and Paula A. Treichler, (New York: Routledge, 1992) 1-22.

novels, a short story collection and a memoir, all from different nations, but with one thing in common: female characters who are involved in domestic labor, and to be more precise, in laundry work. Hers is an invitation to construct a renovated literary canon where "human frailty and filth" (43) are included, so that the "impregnable canon-fortress" (42) can be invaded.

In "Blood Road Leads to Promise: A Gendered Approach to Canada's Past in Gail Anderson-Dargatz's *The Cure for Death by Lightning*", Eva Darias Beautell analyzes this Canadian novel from an ecofeminist perspective, focusing on the relationship between women and the environment. Thus, she shows how the foundational myths of Canada are revised, how the "patriarchal and ethnocentric pillars" of the Canadian pioneer period are dismantled (49) in a novel which denounces gender violence together with the colonization and acculturation of Aboriginal culture. According to Darias Beautell, the revision of the relationship between wilderness and gender, which belongs to a long tradition in Canadian literature, also takes place in this novel. The search for alternative ways of relating gender and the environment is clear in a text where gender and culture become determining factors "of plot structure, of narrative pace and teleology as well as of the novel's resolution" (50).

María Jesús Hernáez Lerena also analyzes a Canadian novel, Douglas Glover's *Elle* (2003), attempting an exploration of to what extent contemporary criticism has become interwoven with the writing and reception of the text. Her essay, "Surviving the Metaphorical Condition in *Elle*: Douglas Glover's Impersonation of the First French Female in Canada", shows how the sixteenth-century female protagonist of the novel, Marguerite de Roberval, is constructed following feminist and postcolonial theories "of male hegemony and of European imperialism" (71). Thus, this legendary figure becomes, in the novel, a metaphor for the colonization of the nation, as well as for the relationship between women and the wilderness. Hernáez Lerena contends that the endowment of the heroine with contemporary critical vocabulary turns the story into an essay where "critical discussion of postcolonial and gender issues" becomes the main aspect of the narration (78). Although the author analyzes the obvious use of parody in Glover's novel, she considers the text disturbing as a reading experience, as "it does not allow the reader to conclude which of the two voices (tragic or comic) one has to respond to primarily" (86). Hernáez Lerena comes to the conclusion that the novel shows the inability of language to convey experience, while contributing to the feminist project in expanding the protagonist's "potentiality as hero" (87-88). In fact, the idea that the novel shows the two dimensions of Marguerite de Roberval, both as the cultural artefact, "elle", and also as a woman, points to the feminist contention that after postmodernism, contradictions have to be shown, and also taken advantage of.

In "Representing Hegemonic Masculinity: Epistemology and the Performance of Male Identity in Documentary Film", Vicente R. Rosselló Hernández takes the gendered perspective which for a long time remained an unmarked category in gender studies: masculinity. His essay also endeavours to fill a gap in the analyses of gender in Film Studies, in which many fiction films have been objects of study, but rather fewer documentaries, despite the author's opinion that documentary "provides a particularly fertile ground for analyses of cultural portrayals of gender identity" (94). After giving an account of the most contemporary theoretical work on gender —with the emphasis on masculinity studies— and carrying out a survey of the most important views regarding representation in documentary studies, Rosselló Hernández devotes the last part of his essay to analyzing the portrayal of hegemonic masculinity in three documentary films, all by white male directors. His objective is to show how the kinds of masculinity constructed in the three documentaries are "ideologically-charged performative iterations of gender" (94) and, furthermore, how the texts become "powerful illustrations of the particular zones of anxiety, liminality and tension" that contribute to the instability of gender as a category (95). This essay is critical of the risks we may run in thoughtlessly embracing more contemporary and provocative theo-

ries, and reminds us of the amount of work which remains to be done in the field of gender studies. Thus, the author warns us of the danger that assumptions about gender and sexual identity, such as the ones exposed by queer theory, may eventually lead to an "unquestioning and vague celebration" of the subversive possibilities of discontinuous, fractured, or fluid subjectivities, "with rather less notice given to the practical everyday effects of the heteronormative gender order and the need for more sustained, organised forms of resistance" (96). The analysis of the representation of normative masculinity that Rosselló Hernández undertakes in this essay is more than justified, and his contention that the representation of this kind of masculinity "is always already ubiquitous", but has been for a long time "paradoxically, transparent, unmarked" (102), is exemplified through the presentation of these three documentaries, described as "hyperbolic instantiations of hegemonic masculinity" (115).

The intention of Dulce María Rodríguez González in her contribution to this book is to dismantle the hegemonic traditional Freudian couples, in which the relationships between mothers and sons, or fathers and daughters were examined, but the bonds between mothers and daughters remained absent. In "The Dismantling of the Oedipal Dyad in Two American Women Poets: The Dynamics of Maternal Desire", Rodríguez González analyzes two poems, one by Anne Sexton, the other by Alicia Ostriker, showing how the mother-daughter dyad may result, as in the words of Luce Irigaray, in a "highly explosive nucleus" (120), one worthy of study by feminist criticism when attempting to question the patriarchal order. The author turns to the work of Nancy Chodorow and Jacques Lacan in order to analyze the importance of mother-daughter relationships in the two poems. She shows how both the need to identify with the mother, and the impulse of separation are present in the texts written by these two women poets. Rodríguez González's analysis shows how the Freudian absence can finally be restored, and her essay offers an example of the impact which the connection between psychoanalysis and literature had on gender studies.

In "'Too Bad Mihijita Was Morena': Anzaldúa's Autobiographical Encounters with Her Mother", María Henríquez Betancor analyzes Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La frontera* as a "gendered cultural autobiography" (144), focusing especially on the problematic relationship between Anzaldúa and her mother as one of the most significant borderlands in the life of this Chicana writer. Before beginning her analysis of Anzaldúa's text, Henríquez Betancor gives an account of the contribution of Chicana writers to the field of autobiography because, in her opinion, since the 1980s the autobiographical texts produced by these writers were a challenge to what was then considered canonical autobiography. *Borderlands/La frontera* (1987) would therefore become an example of how what was understood as autobiography in the 1980s was questioned by Anzaldúa in a text which transgressed many of the expected norms by writing from a working-class Chicana lesbian perspective or revealing the conflicts in her relationship with her mother in a community where "the mother figure has been dearly sublimed" (147). The impulse to reject the gender roles imposed by her culture made Anzaldúa search for a different model of motherhood, and she found it in their religious icons. Thus, Coatlicue, the goddess who symbolizes power and resistance in pre-Hispanic Mexico becomes the empowering figure for Anzaldúa, helping her to recuperate who she is "in the borderlands of race, class, and gender" (157).

Mladen Kurajica's, "*Ganzfeld* or the Ontology of Escape in Robert Kroetsch's *The Hornbooks of Rita K*" is a reflection on the idea of vanished identities which we are witnessing at the outset of the 21st century. Kroetsch's female character, a woman who has chosen to disappear and thus falls into silence, gives way to Kurajica's analysis of a novel in which "the representation of subjectivity" is at stake (163). He follows Deleuze and Guattari in their defence of "intuition, experiment, and rupture", in "their understanding of subjectivity as a never-determined set of multiplicities" (163), and in their idea of the rhizome, which allows subjects to become the one and the other, the male and the female. According to Kurajica, it is in terms of the rhizome that we can understand Rita and

her decision "to deterritorialize herself from the limitations imposed by language" (180). He has chosen a novel where language is constantly questioned, where the female (vanished) protagonist has stated that words are "'lock, not a key'" (162), and he wonders in his essay whether there could be "a poetics of silence, instead of language" (162). That, in his opinion, would be the way out proposed by Kroetsch in order to escape the postmodern paradox of having to use language in order to defy it: silence as the way to escape the "logic which always defines us in terms of binary beings" (169).

The emphasis on silence as a liberating idea in the last essay of this book may be seen in paradoxical contrast to the statement made in the first essay about whispers and excluded voices which cannot make enough sound to enter a textual space. Sound/silence: we find ourselves trapped in binary oppositions again, and we may be wondering which road to take. Whatever the answer we choose, this book has made us reflect upon many of the aspects concerning the canon and gender studies in the past decades. The editors, as canon-makers themselves, have decided to show the disorder of a canon in which the more traditional and the more innovative perspectives on gender are exposed. *Canon Disorders* offers, therefore, a varied selection of approaches, and whether the focus is on women, masculinities, working-class heroines, daughters, men, mothers, talking characters, fathers, femininities, or silent characters, what is clear is that it forces us to continue to rethink and revise the construction of subjectivities in literature and film. Perhaps both sound *and* silence, following Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomes, can be embraced. Perhaps we should simply be aware, as one of the contributors of the book warns us, of the risks taken in failing to ask questions, and in celebrating one approach over the other (Rosselló, 96). On reading this book, one has the impression that no voice should be excluded from the canon; for as we have seen, even that which has decided to remain silent has something important to tell.

Isabel González Díaz

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