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REVISTA ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 2 2011

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University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies
Centro de Estudos Anglisticos da Universidade de Lisboa

REVISTA **ANGLO SAXONICA** SER. III N. 2 2011

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University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies
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CONFERENCES
COLÓQUIOS

Introductory Note

Introductory Note

This volume contains the proceedings of an international Conference on Canadian Literature and Culture that took place at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon under the title *From Sea to Sea: Canadian Literature and Culture in Lisbon*, from 18 to 20 November 2009.

Organized by a research group from the University of Lisbon Centre of English Studies,¹ this Canadian Conference was the first of its kind to be held in Portugal. The aim was to call the attention of academic and non academic communities to the specificity and diversity of Canadian literature and culture and also to bring together researchers on Canadian culture coming from various universities and research centres from Portugal and abroad.

There were three plenary speakers: two guest authors and an international scholar. Jane Urquhart, the novelist whose novels illuminate ways of loving and living in the inexorability of a country called Canada; Fred Wah, the poet who forces words and sounds into new forms capable of saying the inner tensions and complexity of a hyphenized existence; Hilde Staels, from Leuven University, who gave a lecture consisting in a thorough analysis of Aritha van Herk's novels.

¹ ULICES' Research Group 4, on "The United Kingdom and the New English-speaking Literatures and Cultures: Inter-art and Intercultural Dialogues". The principal investigator of this group, Prof. Isabel Fernandes, was assisted by an organizing committee composed by Fernando Barragão, Mário Vítor Bastos, Marijke Boucherie, Luísa Falcão, Julian Hanna, Eduarda Melo Cabrita and Duarte Patarra. The committee could count on the invaluable help and expertise of John Havelda, lecturer of Canadian Literature at the University of Coimbra.

All other participants came by invitation and it was possible to gather a rich community of researchers who touched on a wide selection of Canadian realities and artistic manifestations: Canada's Indigenous Peoples, Landscape, Survival and Otherness (Willa Cather's Canada, Emma Donoghue); Canadian Identity (and) Postcolonialism (David Chariandi, Dionne Brand, Madeleine Thien, Yeng Chen); Canadian Literature in English (Urquhart, Atwood, Munro, Van Herck) and in French; Poetry (Fred Wah, Anne Simpson) and Cyberpoetry; Visual Art (Ken Lum, Fred Wah, John Havelde), the Literary Manifesto, Canadian Film, Portuguese Literature in Canada and Translation Studies, among others.

The Conference was sponsored by FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, the Government of Canada, The Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon (FLUL) and the English Department (DEA). A detailed memorandum following the present introduction describes and acknowledges the participation of the main entities involved. We would like to thank all speakers, participants and sponsors.

Lisbon, 16 December 2009

Marijke Boucherie

in Lisbon. Catálogo bibliográfico) was to be visited during the Conference in the Exhibition Gallery and the catalogue freely distributed among the participants.

During the three days of the Conference, the screening of three Canadian films took place: *Away from Her*, directed by Sarah Polley (introduced by Professor Teresa Casal), a selection of short animation films by Norman McLaren and *Les Invasions Barbares* directed by Denys Arcand (both introduced by Professor Mário Jorge Torres).

Finally, a reception hosted by the Embassy of Canada on the second day of the Conference brought together all the participants in a gathering where it was possible for all those present to exchange views and experiences relating to Canadian issues and to further pursue the relationships between Canada and Portugal.

“From Sea to Sea: Canadian Literature in Lisbon” was the first international Conference on Canadian literature and culture in Lisbon and brought together scholars from Portugal and Spain who work, often quite isolated, on Canadian Literature and Culture. It hosted two Canadian authors, an internationally recognized scholar in Canadian Literature in English and a series of high quality presentations that did justice to the linguistic, cultural, social and formal diversity of the literatures and cultures of Canada. It promoted the relationship between the Portuguese academic community, the public at large and the Canadian Embassy. The Conference also gave visibility to the future book launch of a bilingual anthology of Canadian poetry and hosted an exhibition by Canadian artists. It introduced the public to Canadian Cinema (with great success as confirmed by the feedback) and gave great visibility to Canadian authors and themes.

Thanks to the conference, the Library made a significant order of books by Canadian authors thus making available to students, staff and general public a greater number of titles.

On a less formal basis, it must be stated that one of the very positive aspects of the Conference was the smooth and well functioning collaboration between different institutions and services at the Faculty and between the Faculty and the community at large; The Embassy of Canada and ULICES; The Faculty of Letters and ULICES in the person of the Dean, Professor António Feijó; ULICES and the Department of

English Studies in the person of its director, Professor Isabel Barbudo; The University of Coimbra and ULICES in the person of John Havelda; the Library Staff of the FLUL and the Organizing Committee of the Conference; Antígona Publishing House and ULICES; ULICES and CEC in the person of Professor Mário Jorge Torres and ULICES and the Department of Romance Languages in the person of Professor Luís Dias Martins; ULICES and the Centre for Translation Studies in the person of Professor Alexandra Assis Rosa and Luísa Falcão and their students. Moreover, former students from BA and MA courses in Canadian Literature and Culture attended the Conference as did people from the wider community. There was feedback from a Portuguese citizen in Toronto, Carlos Rocha, who showed great interest in furthering closer relationships between Portugal and Canada.

Furthermore, Fred Wah and Pauline Butling who spent some time in Portugal before the Conference were extremely helpful with advice and publications (to be donated to the Library). Pauline Butling, especially, with specific advice on contemporary Canadian poetry was crucial for the organisation of the book display and book orders.

Finally, the help and enthusiasm of the team of young researchers and students (whose hard work behind the scenes and on front stage cannot be sufficiently acknowledged) was a very positive contribution to the Conference.

What should be bettered in future initiatives around Canada is a wider visibility of French Canada. As the present Conference was organised by a research centre of English studies there was — as yet — no opportunity to include French Canadian Literature in culture, on a broader scale. However, there was a presentation in French, a French Canadian film, and French Canadian books were ordered and included in the exhibition.

Marijke Boucherie

**FROM SEA TO SEA: CANADIAN
LITERATURE AND CULTURE**

Landscapes of Survival: Transplant and Sustenance in Willa Cather's Canadian Writings and Experience

Isabel Maria Fernandes Alves

UTAD

Landscapes of Survival: Transplant and Sustenance in Willa Cather's Canadian Writings and Experience*

In *The Art Instinct: Beauty, Pleasure, & Human Evolution*, Denis Dutton exposes the reasons for human longing for landscape and tries to understand why human beings are so attracted to certain landscapes. According to him, human responses to landscapes are an inheritance from the Pleistocene, assuring us that we still have the souls of those ancient nomads, [and that] the emotions felt by our distant ancestors toward advantageous landscapes can flood into modern minds with surprising and unexpected intensity, transfiguring the human soul. Human beings long and desire for landscapes because they are remnants of our species' ancient past (27-8).

Dutton's view bears relation to what I have long been asking myself: what are the senses of place? What comes from the relationship between a soul and a landscape? What is the relationship between literature and landscape? From my readings, it is clear that landscape is related to origins, to a faraway past when all humans experienced a close relation to nature. Literature, on the other hand, operates through words; therefore, when one deals with literary landscapes, one has to bear in mind that the power resides in the word, in its capacity to forge new worlds in the imagination; when an author selects and highlights a certain landscape, he is sharing with the reader an immersion into a common past with Mother Nature. If the actual meeting with the elemental dimension allows human beings to emerge renovated and reanimated, the contact with words and images

* I want to thank my dear friend Marijke Boucherie for having invited me to participate in this meeting on Canada. My life has been much enriched by the different landscapes she has brought into it.

which refer to the natural world is a way of raising consciousness and alertness towards the imaginative potentialities of the natural world. Moreover, both acts, that of going into nature and that of reading about nature, are reenactments of ancient rituals of renovation and renewal. In addition, the fact that an author has the power to describe a certain landscape, a certain arrangement of the natural elements, posits him close to the power of God in the Book of Genesis: naming a landscape is to create a whole world.

The relation between literature and geography is a rich one. This is a perspective in which natural features are treated imaginatively, becoming an expression of human experience. Places viewed by artists convey more than the sum of physical elements; they become emotional forms transmitting ideas and values. Kenneth Mitchell, for instance, states that geography is at the basis of the difference between British, American and Canadian literatures. According to him, geographic forces can be seen working perfectly in Canadian literature as a consequence of the fact that Canada, as a country, is mainly presented as a geographical fact:

the frozen north, the huge blank on the TV weather map, full of cold weather and high winds, a land of bitterly hostile landscape and climate that simply refused to yield to the onslaught of the frontier. (26)

Canada portrays a particular meeting between nature and the human project; a meeting that records life being shaped by space, a geography forging Canadian consciousness and identity (Elspeth 9). As Margaret Atwood shrewdly points out quoting Northrop Frye: in Canada rather than answer the question “who am I”, it is relevant to ask “Where is here?”, implying that this is a question related to survival: if a person survives or not will depend partly on what “here” really contains (25).¹ Therefore she

¹ A slightly different perspective is offered by Robert Kroetsch; comparing American and Canadian literary tradition, he states that in both countries there is great concern with the problem of identity, and that in both countries literary texts dramatize a quest for the self. However, while in America they ask: who am I? Canadians do not ask who they are but, rather, *if* they are, implying that Canadians are skeptical about their existence, living with the exquisite fear of being invisible people (Kroetsch 55, 57).

proposes that to read landscapes in Canadian literature is a way to know Canada as a state of mind, referring that literature is a map, a geography of the mind (26). The presence of winter, trees, lakes and rocks is a constant in Canadian literature. However, and as exposed by Atwood, Canadians seem not to trust nature and see it as a menace; according to the European literary code of the nineteenth century, the one which influenced Canadian imagination, pioneers were expected to feel awe and faith in nature, but, instead, they felt a hopeless imprisonment and impotence. However severe the Canadian landscape was, the art of living and survival was to adapt to those particularities of weather and soil, and as Atwood also suggests, to make a house in it (80).

To build a house in a new country also means to create a place for the imagination; Jane Urquhart eloquently exposes the relation between Canada and geography:

Canada with its lack of official history, lack of rigidly defined identity, and with the super-consciousness of its largely uninhabited wilderness north, its vast Arctic, and its settlers from across the globe is simply the perfect geography for something as fluid as the imagination. (Urquhart ix)

While this may be a perspective consistent with contemporary sensibility, in pioneer times, on the contrary, Canada was seen as a 'matter-of-fact country', a place where 'fancy would starve for lack of marvelous food' (Bennett 92). This was, at least, Catherine Parr Traill's vision. Therefore, in Canadian literature the idea of 'landscape' has been under evolution: first, it was characterized by words conveying images of struggle and hostility, accompanied with the feeling that humans were trying to live in an uninhabitable land; later, and due to the perspective of artists that established a close link between open land and imagination, Canadians reconciled themselves with their own landscape. Margaret Atwood's *Survival* is one of the works that contributed to the transformation of the way Canadian landscape is depicted: it became a form of survival, not only because men and women actually lived from it, but because it started feeding imagination and artistry. Moreover, and according to the specificities of Canadian geography, Atwood proposes the metaphor of survival itself "La survivance" (Atwood 41-2) as a unifying symbol in Canadian literature.

Like in much of Canadian Literature, the idea that landscape has the potential for transformation is present in Willa Cather's fiction. To Cather (1873-1947), the natural world coincides with the possibility of redemption; her fictional characters seek a new landscape in order to survive either physically or spiritually. Most of her characters are in the process of being transplanted into a new landscape, a process they view as an opportunity to renew their faith in a new life and to get sustenance from a new soil. In fact, in the texts in which Canada is the setting of action, the country is always seen as a geography of hope, a terrain where the seeking souls of the Old World (*Shadows on the Rock*) or the unfree and disillusioned souls of America (*Sapphira and the Slave Girl* and 'Before Breakfast') go to in order to find peace and spiritual nourishment. Moreover, as David Stouck states, Cather came to view Canada as an alternate American tradition; against increasing American materialism, Canada provided an alternative to American urban and technological culture (13).

Margaret Lawrence's reading of Cather's texts supports Stouck's hermeneutics. According to Lawrence, Cather's fiction evinces a repudiation of the nervousness and the speed and the staccato rhythm of the surface life of America, and presents, instead, the forces of the underneath, the spiritual beginnings of the new world (356). According to Lawrence, though Cather lived in a time of accomplished realities, she was a writer who nurtured herself from the spiritual existences of America, and her characters were defined by the immense spaces which define the New World's geography. One can assume that Lawrence's appraisal of Cather's work is based on the uses of landscape. To Cather, landscape is the place where the elemental forces enact a dialogue with human beings, therefore offering them the possibility of renewal, the recreation of self and soul.² Additionally, and like the Canadian north that symbolizes virtues such as purity, moral strength, freedom and spirituality (12), landscape in Cather's works functions as emblems of moral, physical and spiritual virtues. In *My Ántonia*, for instance, Tiny Soderball leaves San Francisco for the Canadian

² "The Latin *natura* means birth, and that is what nature means to Cather. Man's response to the nature of stone or soil or water amounts to knowing how these things are born, and these origins teach man about the birth of all life, including his own" (Giannone 36).

north, a non-American destination, a place where she finds her inmost identity and integrity. Seeking refuge in Canada is a recurrent pattern in Cather's fiction, a pattern that reenacts Cather's most inward conflict: that of the supremacy of moral and spiritual over material values. Moreover, to her, landscapes relate to beginnings and always offer a lightness of heart and a wild feeling to those who experience them, preserving human lives from the devastating effect of technology. In this sense, Cather's fictional Canadian landscapes, like memories, function as a form of transmitting knowledge, of passing word to future generations about the possibility of accordant human interaction with the natural environment.

Cather's artistic credo conveys a vision in which human beings relate not only to other humans but to the nonhuman world as well, a reason for her to be seen as bearing an environmental imagination, and one which shows awareness of the interconnectedness between nature, culture and art.³ Cather reacts profoundly to the trivia of geographic detail and to the atmospheric characteristics of a place, and therefore, Cather found in Canada the perfect geography for the play of her own imagination. Following Emerson, she understood that the best of American identity was precisely the fluidity of its forms and landscapes, the possibility of movement and transformation. Cather has an imagination open to nuance of various sorts, the changing weather patterns being one example, but above all Cather is sensitive to the meeting of the Old World and the New.

I'll use Robert Kroetsch's statement "Canadian writing is the writing down of a new place" (41) to identify one of the reasons Willa Cather may have felt attracted by Canada: its newness. Before becoming a fictional writer, Cather wrote for newspapers and literary magazines; in one of her first references to Canada, she comments on Gilbert Parker's *The Seats of the Mighty: A Romance of Old Quebec* (1896), and revises positively Bliss Carman and Charles G. D. Roberts's poetry, praising their fresh treatment of nature as a literary theme. To Cather, Canada is a country that, like America, has roots in the Old World but, like a transplanted plant, has

³ The terms 'environmental', 'ecocriticism' and 'ecological' have been used as similar in content, all of them signifying the premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and being affected by it (Glotefelty xix).

to seek new ground — cultural and spiritual — in order to nourish its roots and survive.⁴ Throughout her fiction, Cather portrays different geographies, but her enduring reverence was towards places which remained new and fresh, places where man may experience the far gone sensations of being in the presence of the primitive and elemental. Moreover, as critics have pointed out, one might see the subject matter of her writings as the transference of European cultures to the American landscape and the survival and reshaping of old orders in pioneer form (Lee 61). The imagery of survival is present throughout her writings for her theme is clearly the way a man carves for himself a place in a new land, a place that is not only a locale for the body but for the soul as well. Therefore, I realized that in Cather's work there was an imagery of survival closely connected to the one Margaret Atwood points out as central to Canadian writing. In the texts I'll be mentioning, her characters try to survive either by hanging on, fighting external obstacles, like the climate, or by trying to survive a spiritual crisis. Cather looked hungrily for characters whose lives prove the possibility of passage from one kind of life to another; her successful characters are those who learn how to overcome harsh conditions and hard climates; ultimately, how they deal with the shaping influences not only of a new culture but a new environment.

Willa Cather first imagined Canada as a geographical setting in her first novel *Alexander's Bridge* (1912); in this novel Canada is the place where a Midwestern engineer, a 'tamer of rivers' ventures forth to build bridges over wild rivers. On his last trip intended to deal with the flaws in the construction of his newest bridge and while he is giving instructions to the men, the bridge collapses and he drowns. Unlike her character, however, Cather, throughout her literary career, managed to build a bridge which would lead her to other Canadian landscapes. In *Sapphira and the*

⁴ As Bernice Slote points out, at the end of the nineteenth century Cather had a very clear idea about nature and passion, two concepts she will use throughout her fiction; according to Slote, Cather evinced a conviction that the measure of reality is how deeply we are involved with elemental things, and that the most frightening loss is our diminished sense of wonder — wonder at greatness, beauty and the mystery of things (34). I see this view clearly related to what Cather valued in the reading of the Canadian authors: a connection to the elemental.

Slave Girl, her last novel, Canada is envisioned as a refuge, for it is the place where the slave Nancy escapes to, emphasizing Cather's view of Canada as a place of affirmative value for living. The Canadian north, like so many other non-American destinations in Cather's fiction, is a place beyond the border where characters are able to come closer to their inmost identity and integrity.

Willia Cather visited Canada for the first time in 1919 and till 1940 she returned regularly to the country. She visited friends in Toronto, but the most relevant Canadian places both in her life and fiction came to be Grand Manan Island and Quebec. The remote fishing island in the Bay of Fundy, the one place in the world where she felt she could work without interruption, securely annexed from the world. According to Edith Lewis, her friend and biographer, Grand Manan functions as a retreat and a refuge from the heartless and mundane American society of that time. Her feelings about Canada grew when she came to know Quebec. In 1928 and on her way to Grand Manan, she discovered the subject for her one novel set wholly in Canada, *Shadows on the Rock*, published in 1931. She felt deeply interested in Quebec because it preserved an Old World culture intact, a fact that she came to view as a miracle (Lewis 153-4), and as a feeling about life she could not help but admire (Stouck 14). In her own words: "To me the rock of Quebec is not only a stronghold on which many figures have for a time cast a shadow in the sun; it is the curious endurance of a kind of culture, narrow but definite" (Cather, *Stories, Poems* 966). *Shadows on the Rock* is a text about the desire to create order in a wild land, or to find the spells of summer in a winter climate. Above all, and as with many other Cather's texts, this novel is about the beginning of a new life in a new place, the rock and the shadow symbolizing the conflict between

the immutable and intangible ideals that are the bedrock on which the human community is built and the passing of individual human figures, subject to time and growth and change and death, and the movement of history itself. (McFarland 116)

What fascinated Cather in that French-Canadian world was that it functions as a nurturing landscape in the way it preserves an old form of living even if the geographic context is that of the arduous rock.

Cather's relationship to geography underwent an evolution; in her first writings Nebraska was seen as unappealing to imaginative appropriation, however, she came to see it as a blessing, because it conveyed as nothing else the feeling of coming back home. In a parallel way, *Shadows on the Rock* shows the forest as the unknown, the psychic force Kenneth Mitchell talks about. Though she praises Quebec as a sanctuary, a protected shelter, Cather does not obliterate what she knows is the great reality of Canadian experience: "the sealed world of the vegetable kingdom" (*Shadows* 467). Yet, the fact that, in the novel, Pierre Charron, is portrayed as a new type of man, the true Canadian, a product both of the culture of the Old World and the Canadian forests, is to be of the utmost importance in the evolution of the narrative, because it represents Cather's acknowledgement of Canadian appealing forces, of its unsurpassed beauty: "the glorious transmutation of autumm had come on: all the vast Canadian shores were clothed with a splendour never seen in France; to which all the pageants of all the kings were as a taper to the sun" (*Shadows* 608).

In the novel, the changing landscape in autumm is a symbol of Cécile's own transformation toward the new land: she decides to accept it, to make a whole new life by the shores of the Lawrence River.⁵ Therefore, *Shadows on the Rock* portrays a reconciliation between pioneers and the new landscape, an evolution one can see in Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush* (1871) as well, a view which corroborates Frank Watt's statement: "By the 1880's poets are not any longer bemoaning the inhuman and unpoetical nature of Canadian landscape (...) it is used symbolically, or as an extension or manifestation of the human" (221).

In *Shadows on the Rock* the narrative technique is essentially the juxtaposition, or as Cather puts it:

⁵ In Michael Peterman's "In Pursuit of 'Aristocracy of the spirit': Willa Cather and Robertson Davies", the comparison between the two authors is based mainly on the reading of Cather's *Shadows on The Rock* and Davies' *Hope Deferred* and points out the following: "what leaps out is the American affirmation of newness, of a fresh kind of authority based on knowledge, experience, and what Cather so lovingly calls 'a kind of passion'. America had placed itself beyond kings, reinventing itself with a different kind of pride and distinction" (Peterman 49).

the text was mainly anacoluthon (..) I took the incomplete air and tried to give it what would correspond to a sympathetic musical setting; tried to develop it into a prose composition not too conclusive, not too definite: a series of pictures remembered rather than experienced. (*Stories, Poems* 966)

This represents the right technique for a book which wants to suggest much more than to describe. As mentioned before, Cather's imagination was prone to change and evocation; accordingly, the colors and textures of Canadian landscape appear as symbolic free places for the imagination, a fact that is particularly attuned to Canadian imagination as well. This is the case of the weather atmosphere through the novel, for it accentuates a character of vagueness attuned to Cather's aim in depicting human lives in the process of transformation and change: its autumn fogs

rolling vapours that were constantly changing in density and colour; now brown, now amethyst, now reddish lavender, with sometimes a glow of orange over head where the sun was struggling behind the thick weather. (*Shadows* 61)

Weather and water are elemental aspects of a landscape in which characters search for a place where they may cherish "the sacred fire" they call home.

As Atwood writes in *Survival*, to carve life out of the land in the New World and particularly in the Canadian north was an arduous but a glorious task. Though Cather's novels of the prairies — I am thinking particularly of *O Pioneers!* (1913), and *My Ántonia* (1918) — take place within American borders, they maintain fruitful correspondences to the Canadian literature produced within the same geographic coordinates. In *Prairie Women: Images in American and Canadian Fiction*, Fairbanks's states that both American and Canadian fiction of the prairies share a pervasive optimism and the quest for survival and sustenance (252). In both cases, to survive corresponds to the act of carving out a place in the new land. Therefore at the center of Canadian and American writing of the prairies there exists an intense concern for the lives of those who favor new possibilities of life in a new country, and their strategies for survival.

Therefore, Cather — with Atwood, Munro and Roy, and before them Catherine Parr Traill⁶ —, recognizes the transformational power of Canadian landscape. Their characters, pioneer women transplanted from former houses and old countries, felt the urge to create small places around the house, fruit gardens and flower gardens, while learning to see the world around them: the way the grass grows, and the sky changes. Therefore, and as Julie Roy Jeffrey says, women in the Great Plains were shapers of the landscape in the way they transformed it, embellished it, and humanized it. Cather's prairie women, namely Alexandra and *Ántonia*, represent the ability to find a secure and satisfying place in the seemingly uninhabitable landscape, sharing with other Canadian female authors the pondering about space and transience, and the possibility of further beginnings (Barnard 22).⁷

The land, as Cather puts it in *My Ántonia*, represents the void: "There seemed to be nothing to see; no fences, no creeks or trees, no hills or fields (...). There was nothing but land: not a country at all but the material out of which countries are made" (Cather, *Early Novels* 718). But as Alexandra Bergson testifies in *O Pioneers!*, women are to play an essential role in the transformation of the landscape and of the feelings toward it: to Alexandra, "the land seemed beautiful, rich and strong and glorious and therefore she developed a new consciousness of the country, felt a new relation to it. She had never known before how much the country

⁶ As Bennet comments, though in the nineteenth-century Catherine Parr Traill presented Canada as a land deprived of poetical and spiritual atmosphere, she is the one to underline her happiness and contentment in the new land that she sees as eloquently marked by the finger of God (93). Like other female authors in America, Traill conveyed a feeling for the woods and plants and flowers in a masculine world devoted to conquest and domination.

⁷ Furthermore, what is relevant here is that according to Coral Ann Howells the relation between women authors and new possibilities has been a recurrent pattern in Canadian fiction; she points out namely the writings by Margaret Lawrence, Alice Munro, Carol Shields, Margaret Atwood, noting that "storytelling holds out possibilities of escape from the imprisonment of the past, opening up new spaces for women to write their identities while in the process remapping the boundaries of what constitutes Canadian fiction" (Howells 212).

meant to her.” (Cather, *Early Novels* 170). The same enthusiasm toward the open Manitoba landscape is shared by Christine, the young character in Gabrielle Roy's *The Road past Altamont*: “I passionately loved our open plains. (...) It was undoubtedly the prairie's lack of secretiveness that delighted me most, its lofty and open countenance”, for “it seemed to me that this [the presence of hills] would have thwarted and diminished the vague but powerful summons toward a thousand possibilities that my being received from it” (111). Both Cather and Roy reflect here about the possibilities of a meeting between the human soul and landscape, the most important of all being the possibility of their characters to meet their own selves in the free space of landscapes. Moreover, both Cather and Roy expose the mystery and enigma a landscape represents, implying that landscapes may be inspirational and redeeming.

Nonetheless, both *O Pioneers!* And *My Antonia*, illustrate Kroetsch's statement that place is in many ways the first obsession of prairie fiction (76)⁸; in paying attention to significant place details like weather, plants and soil, women became more independent and acquired a wider capacity to choose, hence, on the whole, prairie fiction is about women's survival and how, out of the void, they create a home. Henceforth, and conjoining Kroetsch and Barnard's views, I want to reiterate that Cather's prairie works are an example of how place transforms human vision; moreover, Cather's female characters cross gender borders — they belong to categories which are usually masculine, they are farmers and artists — establishing a new kind of order, one which allows traditional roles and borders to be redefined. This perspective binds Cather's vision of Canada with the referred association between Canadian fiction and origins; her characters' composition corresponding to the women or the men who attempt to clear a place for themselves out of the land.

⁸ Note that Kroetsch develops his thesis comparing two texts: *My Antonia* by Willa Cather and *As for Me and My House* by Sinclair Ross. Though his perspective is more directed at exploring eroticism in these ‘place-possessed books’, Kroetsch reveals what seems central to both novels: they are set in a new country, and on the plains the need to begin is constantly and profoundly felt: ‘constantly we experience the need to begin. And we do by initiating beginnings (Kroetsch 1989: 82).

As previously mentioned, Cather sees Canada as a place imbued with the resistance of the rock and the refreshing qualities of silence, aspects that make it possible for humans to survive. However, some of the struggles for survival enacted by Cather's characters do not concern the building of a house, but the pacification of a soul, that is, characters that try to survive a crisis, a personal disaster. This is the case with "Before breakfast", the other Cather text wholly set in Canada. The protagonist of this short-story, perhaps the most ecological text Cather ever wrote, is Henry Grenfell, a self-made man who has worked his way up from a messenger boy with Western Union to a senior partner of a powerful corporation. As an old man, whenever he looks back on his life, he is dismayed: though he has married well and raised three sons, they are as cold as ice. Usually Grenfell finds solace from his business and his family on a remote island off the coast of Nova Scotia. The rugged island and the isolated cabin come to mean more than a refuge, for he feels a deep relationship to the stone and trees of the island. This time, however, he meets a professor of geology and his daughter who are going to the island as well. The professor is studying the formation of the island and tells Grenfell the island's geologic age, but this information about time, incommensurably long, generates anxiety and discontent in Grenfell's soul for it reminds him of mortality and dissolution. So, in order to get away from his thoughts, he hurries out for a walk through the wood to the sea. Climbing a trail on the island, he "like a Christian of old, [that] had left his burden at the bottom of the hill" (Cather, *Stories, Poems* 767), recognizes that the healing he looks for resides in the most ordinary things. He recognizes that the age of the island's rock need not depress him; after all, the "green surface" goes on flourishing. At the headland, he feels his "relationship unchanged" to the waterfalls, the cliff walls, the resilient "stunted beeches" and the old birches with their twisted one-side growth. Looking down, he sees the geologist's daughter taking an early morning swim in the frigid Atlantic waters. As he reflects, "she hadn't dodged, she had gone out, and she had come back. She would have a happy day. He knew just how she felt" (Cather, *Stories, Poems* 769). What Grenfell comes to realize is that he belongs to something greater than his own narrowed world; his resistance to emptiness is exemplified by other forms of resistance in nature, manifesting belief in the encouraging aspects of evolution. Grenfell reestablishes

his relation to the natural world and reasserts his faith in human nature as well.

My point here is to evince that Cather's descriptions of Canadian landscapes help the reader to understand the characters' experiences of freedom and imprisonment, connection and incommensurability, dialectics common to Canadian imagination as well. Above all, her Canadian literary landscapes show transplanted characters seeking sustaining landscapes in order to survive, an act that according to Denis Dutton, is as old as man's presence on earth. Moreover, Cather's attraction for the elemental and foundational in man's longing for landscape corresponds to her conviction that to be in touch with the new and fresh carries infinite possibilities for human beings, especially to those who are artists and therefore do not mainly seek material sustenance from the soil but above all spiritual food and survival. Like Emerson, Cather views nature as America's most original feature, believing that imagination and creativity spring from the land. This is the reason why Cather's Canadian literary landscapes represent the time and the place for reimagining Canada's possibilities of survival and sustenance. Her imagery of fresh beginnings related to Canadian landscapes is an affirmation which corroborates the more contemporary statement by Kroetsch: "we [Canadians] are reluctant to venture out of the silence and into the noise; out of the snow into the technocracy. For in our invisibility lies our chance for survival" (57).

From an environmental perspective, this is a fact of great relevance, for it reinforces the idea that Canadian literature presents a more acute awareness of man's fragility and interdependence with the surrounding natural world. In the study cited earlier, Kenneth Mitchell makes a distinction between American and Canadian literature, namely in the construction of the literary hero. While the (masculine) American hero is characterized by ambition, independence, aggressiveness and innocence, the Canadian literary hero experiences a feeling of insignificance when confronted with vast space and forbidding climate (Mitchell 27). However, the fact that Canadians have never been able to dominate their environment, and that they are constantly struggling with it, prepares them better for the questions environmentalists have been asking since the 1970s and 80s. Canadians have known for a long time that humans have to cultivate the art of humbleness when it comes to Mother Nature. So the time of Canadian

literature has come: it tells us that

man may not be the superman subduing a passive planet, as he's been perceived for five or six centuries. After a brief flirtation with outer space, we now face with more humility the incredible problems still perplexing us on earth. (Mitchell 28)⁹

Concluding, I want to go back to Ecocriticism and its approach to literary texts. It postulates that to look attentively to the values writers put in their depictions of landscape is a way of looking at the world in a relational form. Ultimately, this is a critical approach which invites literary relationships, and which explains why it has been my wish to look at an American writer's fiction interacting with Canadian imagination. Willa Cather's Canadian literary landscapes, with their particular spatial configurations of land and rock, reinforce a possible inquiry into a Canadian relationship between the natural world and identity. Cather's Canadian writings seem to point out that only in reading and interpreting ecologically, does our chance for survival reside.

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⁹ Furthermore, Hugh Kenner is convinced that Canadians show a pathological craving for identification with the subhuman, the best way to their hearts is informing them that their souls are to be identified with rock, rapids, wilderness, and virgin (but exploitable) forest (*apud* Watt 225).

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ABSTRACT

As many critics have pointed out, Willa Cather's main theme is the meeting of the intellectual and cultural inheritances of Europe and the 'great fact' of the settlement of the New World, whether in Nebraska, New Mexico or Quebec. Bearing in mind Margaret Atwood's imagery of survival, I will try to show how these images relate to Cather's pervasive theme of Old World immigrants carving out a place of beauty and salvation in the New World. Henceforth, I'll attempt to expand on the motives which led Cather to see Canada, namely in *Shadows on the Rock* (1931), as a land of possibilities, a geography which responds to her characters' need for redefining both their physical and interior borders. My reading of Cather's Canadian writings and experience has met and enlightened several of the issues which define Canada's culture: the meeting of the Old and New World, geography as the great fact of Canadian identity, and the multicultural composition of its social tissue. Moreover, Cather's Canadian writings reiterate Canada as a country of possibilities, one which provides landscapes of survival for characters in search of sustenance and looking for new forms and visions.

KEYWORDS

Willa Cather; Canada; Landscape – Geography; Identity.

RESUMO

Uma das constantes da obra de Willa Cather, escritora americana que viveu entre 1873-1947, é o encontro entre a cultura europeia e a paisagem americana. A sua obra, tendo embora fortes raízes no imaginário do Middle-West, nunca se definiu através de um só lugar; pelo contrário, as personagens, quase sempre imigrantes do Velho Mundo, vivem do desassossego geográfico, habitando o Nebraska, mas também o Novo México, a Virgínia ou o Quebec.

Tendo com ponto de partida o texto de Margaret Atwood sobre o Canadá e sobre o imaginário da sobrevivência, tentou-se demonstrar o modo como as personagens catherianas se definem precisamente através da sua capacidade de

adaptação e sobrevivência em paisagens do Novo Mundo. Tendo como âmago da reflexão *Shadows on the Rock* (1931), obra cuja acção decorre no Québéque dos finais do século XVII, pretende-se dar conta do modo como a visão de Willa Cather sobre o Canadá intensifica alguns dos aspectos que definem esse país do Novo Mundo: um espaço de encontro entre culturas e um lugar onde existe uma forte e intrínseca relação entre geografia e identidade. Além disso, pretende-se acentuar que o Canadá, tal como Cather o define nos seus textos, é um país cujas paisagens representam a possibilidade de uma salvação física e espiritual.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Willa Cather; Canadá; Paisagem – Geografia; Identidade.

Luso-Canadian Exchanges in Translation Studies: Translating Linguistic Variation

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Luso-Canadian Exchanges in Translation Studies: Translating Linguistic Variation

1. Introduction

Translation scholars no doubt can learn much from scholars of ethnic minorities, women, minor literatures and popular literatures. Much of the most exciting work in the field is already being produced by scholars from the “smaller” countries – Belgium, the Netherlands, Israel, Czechoslovakia, and French-speaking Canada. (Gentzler 2001: 197)

As stated in Edwin Gentzler’s 2001 work, *Contemporary Translation Theories*, quoted above, the list of Canadian scholars who have been influential in Translation Studies (TS) might start with Vinay and Darbelnet, who in 1958 published *Stylistique comparée du français et de l’anglais: méthode de traduction*, a work several times re-edited in French and later translated into English by Juan Sager and M.J. Hamel as *Comparative Stylistics of French and English* (1995). This seminal work is even claimed to have laid the basis for the Canadian school of translation. However, the list of Canadian scholars influential in TS continues with reference to other no less important names, including members of the Canadian Association for Translation Scholars (CATS) and the (French- and English-speaking) Canadian authors publishing their work in TTR, *Translation Terminology Writing. Studies in Text and its Transformations*.

In the 1990s, a number of studies were published on the topic of linguistic variation and translation by Canadian researchers, such as Annie Brisset’s work *A Sociocritique of Translation: Theatre and Alterity in Quebec, 1968-1988* or Annick Chapdelaine and Gillian Lane Mercier’s special issue of the journal TTR entitled *Traduire les sociolectes* (Brisset 1990; Chapdelaine and Lane Mercier 1994).

From sea to sea, these Luso-Canadian exchanges have materialized in work by Portuguese researchers. The main aim of this paper on Luso-Canadian exchanges in TS is to make a very brief presentation of how some of this “most exciting” work by Canadian scholars has been received, adopted, adapted and developed in work on the topic of linguistic variation and translation by Portuguese researchers in Translation Studies at ULICES as well as by translators trained at the Department of English of the Faculty of Letters.

Following to a certain extent Annie Brisset’s study of the dominant theatrical institution in Quebec in terms of its use of linguistic variation, Portuguese researchers have published on the TV subtitling of *Pygmalion*, by George Bernard Shaw (Rosa 1999, 2001; Ramos Pinto 2009), or on 20th century translations of Dickens (Rosa 2003), have presented papers on Portuguese translations of *Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain, published in the second half of the 20th century (as is the case of Susana Valdez), have researched the translation of linguistic variation in subtitled versions of *Gone with the Wind* (Cavalheiro 2009) or discussed the translation of linguistic varieties in general (Rosa 2003; Ramos Pinto 2009). These exchanges have also materialized in translation practice and teaching at the Department of English of the Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon.

This collective paper offers an overview of these Luso-Canadian exchanges focusing on TS research on the translation of linguistic variation. So, in the first part of this paper, selected examples of theoretical and methodological proposals by Canadian and Portuguese researchers in TS will be discussed, in terms of the operative categories so far suggested for the study of linguistic variation as a translation problem, in terms of the implications and contextual constraints involved in the translation of linguistic varieties, and also in terms of the findings that research has made so far (sections 1., and 2., by Alexandra Assis Rosa). In the second part of this paper, the application of these studies to translation research, practice and teaching will be illustrated by short excerpts of English narrative Source Texts (ST), and their Target Texts (TT) in Portuguese, followed by a comment on the translation decisions adopted (section 3. by Luísa Falcão, Susana Valdez, Raquel Moura and Tiago Botas).

2. Translating Linguistic Variation: Theory

2.1 Understanding Linguistic Variation

First, let us briefly recall what we already know about linguistic variation, starting with a quote by Laurie Bauer's *Watching English Change*: "Students who are not native speakers of English, but foreign learners, are usually presented with Modern English as a homogeneous entity. This homogeneity is inevitably a fiction." (10). Any language homogeneity is a fallacy, no language for that matter is homogenous, because any language is subject to linguistic variation. Both over time and in a given moment, speakers belonging to different regions, social groups, professions, using language in formal and informal situations, will speak the same language in different ways. Accents differ, and so do vocabulary and grammatical preferences. Let us examine what we mean by linguistic variation and the reasons why it is problematic for translation and interesting to research in Translation Studies.

Linguistic variation is a matter of correlation of linguistic signs, users and uses, or, in other words, it may be interpreted as a correlation of:

- (1) linguistic forms, such as phonetic and phonological markers that we group into different accents or pronunciations; or morphological, syntactic, semantic and lexical markers that we refer to as dialects; and
- (2) Contextual features (time, space, sociocultural group, situation, individual).

By resorting to knowledge of sociolinguistic stereotypes, a proficient speaker of a language is able to associate these accents and dialects with particular time and space coordinates (thus, identify, e.g., contemporary British, American and Canadian speakers), with a certain sociocultural group or a given situation; and all these features combine into a speaker's linguistic fingerprint: his or her idiolect. So a proficient speaker of a given language is able to correlate a cluster of linguistic forms with contextual meaning, i.e. time, space, sociocultural groups, specific communicative situations, or even a given individual.

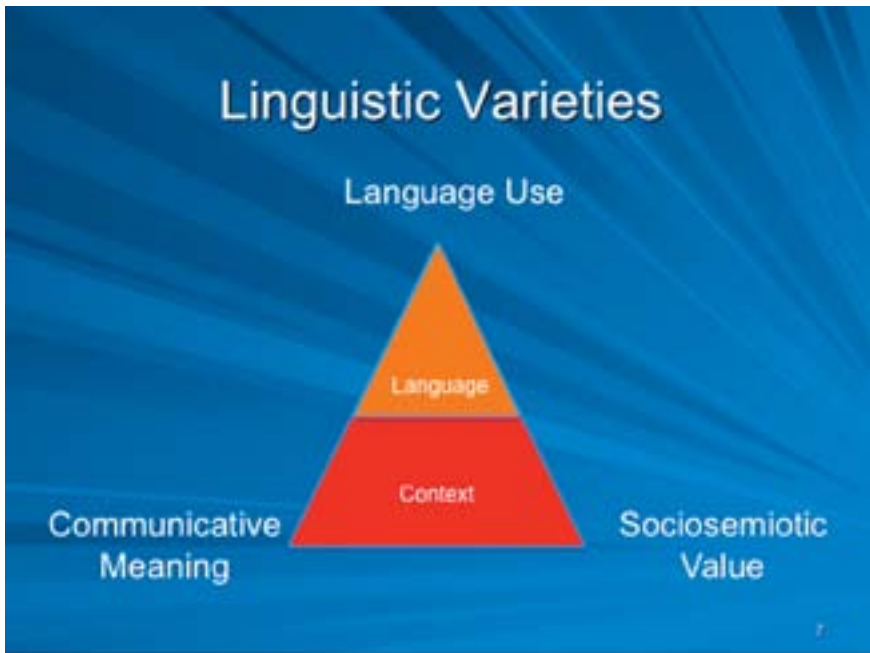


Figure 1: Language and Context in Linguistic Varieties

In other words, and as represented in Figure 2, **language use** is loaded with **communicative meaning** since by relating forms with contextual variables it allows us to place a speaker in time, and in social and geographical space. But the context is also present in language use in another way. Language use is also loaded with **sociosemiotic value**, since the correlation of linguistic markers and communicative meaning may be considered to constitute a sign, which is associated with a certain amount of prestige within a linguistic community. Certain uses are more prestigious in a given community whereas others are, on the contrary, best avoided. Language use does not occur in an evaluative void, much to the contrary. Consequently, and as suggested by Hatim and Mason (1990), linguistic forms are significant for us in terms of contextual dimensions of meaning: they have communicative meaning, related to user and use; and they have sociosemiotic value, related to power and prestige.

2.2 Translating Linguistic Variation: Procedures and Strategies

It is this correlation of linguistic forms, communicative meaning and sociosemiotic value that poses a particularly difficult problem for translators: translating forms is not especially problematic. The difficulty arises when a translator tries to replicate in another language for another receiver in another culture a ST variety in its correlation of form and contextual meaning, both communicative and sociosemiotic. Moreover, there are contextual norms constraining or motivating not only language use but also translation regularities. As Annie Brisset states:

Translation, like any writing, reflects the institutional norms of a given society (...) Thus, translation theory should concern itself as much, if not more, with contrastive analysis of social discourses as with contrastive linguistics or comparative stylistics. (158)

So, research in TS goes beyond a mere comparison of Source and Target Languages and Texts. In the case of research on the translation of linguistic variation, it also goes beyond contrastive linguistics or comparative stylistics by focusing on institutional norms, on sociolinguistic stereotypes, on “contrastive analysis of social discourses”, by importing from sociological analysis, discourse analysis, semiotic analysis, in order to delve into the ideological basis for social discourses and for translation as a fact of the target culture resulting from the negotiation of at least two systems of norms: those belonging to the source and the target culture. Moreover, in a corpus of novels or plays and their translation, any study necessarily also has to take into account literary norms and traditions in the creation of literary varieties. This becomes necessary as soon as it is acknowledged that there are no actual, real linguistic varieties, but rather pseudo-varieties recreated in literary works, sifted through various literary norms and as such different from, although related to, authentic use.

The main translation procedures for the translation of literary varieties may be identified as follows:

- (1) **Omission** of linguistic markers signalling a variety;
- (2) **Maintenance** of linguistic markers signalling a variety;
- (3) **Shift** of contextual meaning signalled by linguistic markers;
 - (i) Substandard → Standard Shift;

(ii) Substandard A → Substandard B Shift (shift of contextual features, e. g.: social → regional; regional → oral);

(iii) Standard → Substandard Shift;

(4) **Addition** of linguistic markers signalling a variety.

As suggested by this paper, translation procedures range from omission and addition to the attempt to maintain in the TT the contextual meaning signalled by linguistic markers in the ST. However, shifts as procedures which apply on a micro-structural level (sentence, clause, phrase, word) are the most pervasive procedure in translation, which means that the contextual meaning signalled by linguistic markers tends to change with translation. As such, they deserve further attention.

Translation shifts are defined by Bakker, Koster and Van Leuven-Zwart as “used in the literature to refer to changes which occur or may occur in the process of translating. Shifts (...) result from attempts to deal with systemic differences” (1997: 226). However, and of special importance for our purposes is to realize that the predominant feature of translation is not a matter of obligatory shifts but rather of non-obligatory shifts, as suggested by Gideon Toury:

In fact, the occurrence of shifts has long been acknowledged as a true universal of translation. (...) [N]on-obligatory shifts (...) occur everywhere and tend to constitute the majority of shifting in any single act of human translation. (Toury 1995: 57)

This majority of shifting is non-obligatory, norm-governed, contextually motivated and as such occurs as a result of the translator’s choice for cultural, ideological and political reasons. More importantly, when consistent, the sum of micro-level shifts may be grouped into globally recognizable translation strategies, which are never devoid of consequences on the macro-level in terms of the linguistic make-up and, consequently, also in terms of the contextual (communicative and sociosemiotic) values evoked by the whole work.

Several examples studied by Annie Brisset may be put forward as evidence of the relevance of considering the translation of linguistic variation in these terms. In 1968, the Centaur Theatre in Montreal produced *Les Belles Soeurs* by Michel Tremblay in what is referred to as (not the first but) “the most historic use of joul”, by the *Canadian Theatre*

Encyclopedia (CTE). Joul is Quebec working class dialect of the Montreal area, “considered by some as a ‘horrific bastardization of French’” (CTE). As stated by Annie Brisset:

Michel Tremblay’s joul plays created an opening in the literary system in Quebec. (...) it broadened the translatability of the sociolects of Anglo-American plays, which now had a ‘natural equivalent’ in Quebec culture. (187)

Consequently, once joul entered the repertoire, both the micro-structural procedures and the global strategy of maintaining lower prestige varieties in translation were made easier, and may be illustrated by the translation of sociolects in plays by Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee or Eugene O’Neil using joul as “natural equivalent in Quebec culture” (Brisset 186). Another example for the strategy of maintaining the contextual meaning of lower prestige varieties in translation may be Eloi de Grandmont’s translation of Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion*, using joul for Cockney (CTE).

In Portugal, the study of translations of novels by Dickens, published after the 1974 revolution, also finds a similar attempt to recreate some of the substandard literary varieties present in the ST as a means of indirectly characterizing characters both in terms of their regional and social background and in terms of their importance in narrative (since only secondary rogue characters use substandard discourse in Victorian fiction) (Rosa 2003). However, this strategy of maintenance of substandard linguistic varieties (in terms of communicative and sociosemiotic value) happened against a backdrop of a predominant tendency to shift and thereby normalize substandard varieties (Rosa 2003). This normalizing tendency is also illustrated by the study of Portuguese translations of *Huckleberry Finn* by Susana Valdez (see section 3.). In these cases ST substandard is recreated as Target Language standard. In other cases, however, the attempt to recreate for instance Cockney in Portuguese results in another type of shift because a mainly socially stigmatized dialect and accent is translated for Portuguese printed and subtitled versions of *Pygmalion* into regional features of Beira or Minho (Rosa 1999, Ramos Pinto 2009).

Against this predominant strategy to normalize substandard varieties in translation, the most interesting strategy is mentioned in Brisset’s study: in 1978 Michel Garneau translated *Macbeth*, by William Shakespeare, into

Québécois — a play which premiered in the Théâtre de la Manufacture at the Cinéma Parallèle, in Montreal, on 31st October 1978, and was published in the end of that same year. He thus “tradapted” (in his words) a canonized play by using Québécois, or Quebec French, a less prestigious dialect of French and also by using joul, the Quebec French working-class dialect of the Montreal area (Fischlin 2004). And here Brisset’s ideological interpretation is particularly interesting “translating canonical works or literary masterpieces such as *Macbeth* into Québécois is an attempt to legitimize Québécois by elevating it from its status as a dialect” (167). So, in Brisset’s interpretation, the canonized status of both ST and author was instrumental in the elevation of Québécois, the Canadian-French dialect used in the translation (instead of Standard French, Français de France). Of course this all happened at a time when, as Brisset mentions:

The language conflict was one expression of nationalist aspirations at the time. Another, in the political arena, was the nationalist movement that led to the birth of the Parti Québécois and the emergence of the Front de Libération du Québec. The demand for territorial and political autonomy was logically extended to a demand for a distinct native language. (168)

In Michel Garneau’s 1978 translation of *Macbeth*, the consistent shifts from standard ST language to Québécois or Quebec French were far from obligatory. They expressed an intentional global strategy and resulted from contextual motivations related to the defence of Quebec French, in response to a political and ideological atmosphere of nationalist aspirations by Quebec.

Such translation practices call for a corresponding classification. Theoretically, the above-mentioned shifts and global strategies may be represented as in Figure 2. First, linguistic varieties may be grouped according to their sociosemiotic value expressed by speakers’ attitudes into a centre of prestige occupied by the standard, but even more by the written standard and literary use, and peripheries occupied by less prestigious varieties. In successive wider circles less prestigious varieties are located in a continuum ranging from orality, regional substandard dialects and accents and, as is our contention, in contemporary Portugal this continuum ends with stigmatized sociocultural substandard accents and

dialects, located in the widest circle, further away from the centre of prestige. Other languages and different time frames may organize such varieties differently, positioning them either closer or further away from the more prestigious centre of this diagram.

In the diagram of Figure 2, translation shifts may be represented by arrows. The starting point of the arrow corresponds to the linguistic variety present in the ST; the tip represents the target language variety chosen to recreate the former in the TT. The arrow will correspondingly point either to the centre of the diagram (a centralizing shift) or to the periphery (a decentralizing shift).

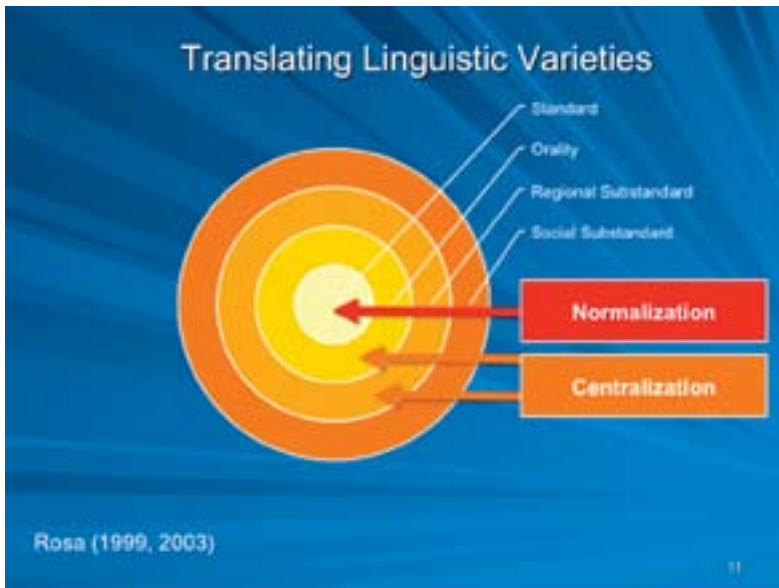


Figure 2: Translating Linguistic Varieties: Normalization and Centralization

As stated, the most pervasive procedure is for translation to bring into the centre all less prestigious varieties located in the periphery of the circle and present in the ST. Such shifts, when consistent, correspond to a normalizing or standardizing translation strategy. They entail a correspond-

ing change from ST stigmatized or less prestigious varieties to the most prestigious variety in the TT: the standard variety. This procedure is so widespread it has even been described as a translation universal of **normalization** (on translation universals, see Mauranen and Kujamäki 2004).

However, research on the translation of linguistic variation has come across some examples of an attempt to recreate the substandard varieties in the ST that neither fit into maintenance nor entail a shift to the central, most prestigious, standard varieties. These procedures have been labelled **centralization** which differs from normalization because the TT includes some form of less prestigious variety, although there is a shift toward varieties that are not as negatively evaluated as those depicted in the ST (Rosa 1999, 2001, 2003). These procedures will be illustrated by research by Susana Valdez and by Raquel Mouta's translations (see section 3.).

Additionally, ST regional varieties prove to be a very interesting case when the transfer of contextual meanings and values is aimed at in translation. In some cases, such an attempt to recreate peripheral regional varieties may produce an incongruous TT in which an Indian immigrant character that speaks broken English ends up with a Portuguese dialect or accent from the southern regions of Alentejo or Algarve. To avoid this incongruity between spatial/regional values evoked by literary varieties and actual references to a specific context corresponding to the specific time and space coordinates of a character, a strategy of translocalization or relocation may be used, and the whole plot may travel through translation, from Canada to Aveiro, whereby Indian immigrants become African immigrants in Portugal, as illustrated by the translation and analysis by Tiago Botas (see section 3.). In such cases, however, questions regarding the categorization of such procedures and strategies as resulting in a translation or an adaptation tend to arise.

Another interesting case in point is the recreation of a character's peripheral foreign-ness in a ST. Such cases may involve the recreation of that foreign-ness in the Target Language, which is not problematic provided the foreign-ness depicted in the ST (e.g. French-ness) does not belong to the translation's Target Language (e.g. French). Thus, the French foreign-ness of a speaker of English in the ST may become a similar French foreign-ness of a speaker of Portuguese in translation, as illustrated in the translation and analysis by Luísa Falcão (see section 3.).

However, Brisset's study delves into another very radical strategy, as illustrated by the above-mentioned 1978 translation of *Macbeth* by Michel Garneau. This procedure is the exact opposite of the dominant one of normalization of substandard dialects, and lacked an operative label. Previous research has labelled it a decentralization strategy, whereby ST standard is translated into TL less prestigious variety or into TL substandard, as represented in Figure 3 (Rosa 1999, 2003).

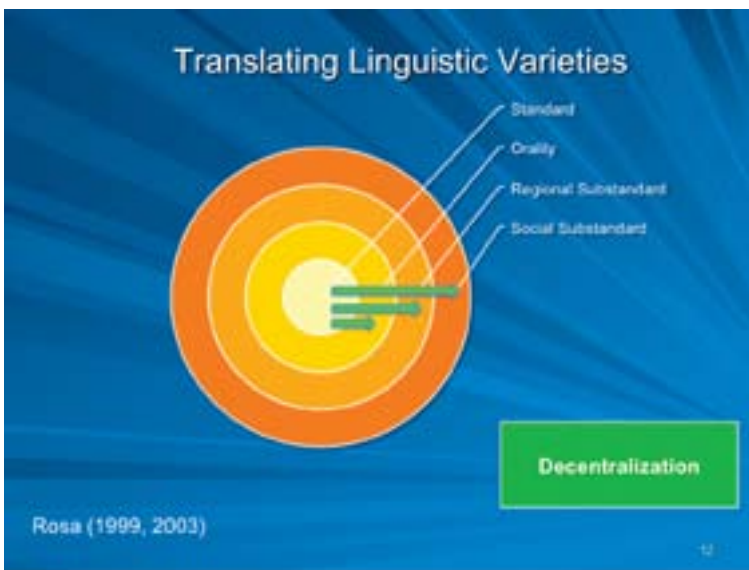


Figure 3: Translating Linguistic Varieties: Decentralization

Of course these translation strategies of normalization, centralization as well as their opposite, decentralization, have very interesting cultural, social, ideological and political motivations and consequences, which will be illustrated by a selection of examples and an analysis of translation procedures in the following section.

3. Translating Linguistic Variation: Practice

3.1 Translating “A Class of New Canadians”, by Clark Blaise (*Montreal Stories*, 2003)

Maria Luísa Falcão

The following scene takes place in Montreal. Miss Parizeau is a French-Canadian girl, and British-Canadian Norman Dyer is her English teacher at McGill language school.

ST
 ‘Please, sir,’ she said, looking at him over the tops of her tiny glasses, ‘what I was asking earlier — *put on* — I heard on the television. A man said, *You are putting me on* and everybody laughed. I think it was supposed to be funny but *put on* we learned means get dressed, no?
 ‘Ah — *don’t put me on*,’ Dyer laughed.
 ‘I yaven’t eard it neither,’ said Miss Parizeau.
 ‘To put *somebody* on means to make a fool of him. To put *something* on is to wear it. Okay?’ He gave examples.
 ‘Ah, now I know,’ said Miss Parizeau. ‘Like bullshitting somebody. Is it the same?’
 ‘Ah, yes,’ he said, smiling. French Canadians were like children learning the language. ‘Your example isn’t considered polite. “Put on” is very common now in the States.’
 ‘Then maybe,’ said Miss Parizeau, ‘we’ll ‘ave it ‘ere in twenty years.’
 (Blaise 55-56)

As pointed out before, in this text Miss Pariseau’s speech shows several marks of peripheral foreign-ness. Three main areas can be singled out as examples of the way in which her native French interferes with her English.

The first one is indicated by the deviant spelling of three verbs and one adverb: “yaven’t” [haven’t]; “eard” [heard]; “ave” [have]; “ere” [here]. Each time the standard aspirated “h” is dropped, and in “yaven’t”, there is also a contamination of the vowel “i” of the preceding pronoun, which forms a diphthong with the initial “a” of “ave”.

Sentence structure is another case in point. Like spelling, it is significant in terms of context; it has communicative meaning, related to user and use. In the following examples, Miss Pariseau’s use of complex sentences also points at her foreign-ness: (1) “What I was asking earlier

(...) I heard on the television.” [What I was asking earlier(...) was something I heard on television]; (2) “*put on* we learned means get dressed, no?” [we learned *put on* means get dressed, didn’t we? —the interference of the French language in the question tag should also be noticed]. (3) Another example is her use of the double negative : “I yaven’t ‘eard it neither” [I haven’t heard it either].

Lexical choice is the third area under consideration and the most relevant case is the phrasal verb “put somebody on” vs “put something on”— the fact that Miss Pariseau ignores this difference constitutes the joke. The second socially misplaced lexical choice is “bullshitting somebody”. As language always occurs in an evaluative context, the use of both these expressions can be considered to have a sociosemiotic value, related to power and prestige — in fact, Norman Dyer considers Miss Pariseau a French Canadian child learning a foreign language.

The translation of this excerpt into Portuguese has taken basically the same issues into consideration, and they have the same communicative meaning. Starting with spelling, several major marks were introduced: (1) Miss Pariseau’s name was changed into “Parisô” in order to obtain a more ‘friendly’ visual look of the word, resulting in approximately the same sound as in the ST; (2) given the French pronunciation of the guttural “r” (also known as the French “r”), this sound is consistently shown here by doubling the letter “rr”; (3) the frequent Portuguese nasal sound “ãõ”, so difficult for most foreigners, is rendered as the corresponding non-nasal “ao”.

Two of the marks of deviance in sentence structure are exactly the same cases of the complex sentences in the ST singled out above. Two other examples of foreign-ness are (1) the non-standard order of elements in the sentence: “Isto taobém jamais ouvi” [Também nunca ouvi isso] to translate “I ‘aven’t ‘eard it neither”; (2) the deviant use of the periphrastic structure “talvez vamos dizerr isto aqui”, which translates “we’ll ‘ave it ‘ere”. The deviant structure is used to avoid the correct subjunctive, so difficult for foreigners : “talvez venhamos a dizer isso aqui “.

As to the lexical choice, it proved to be more challenging to find an adequate equivalent for the two phrasal verbs “put somebody on” vs “put something on”. The effort put into brainstorming fortunately materialized into a pair of Portuguese idiomatic expressions with the same correlated

meanings as the two English ones. They are “levar alguma coisa” [put something on= wear] and “levar alguém” [put somebody on= make a fool of somebody].

For the slang/informal word “bullshitting”, an equivalent mild slang/informal word was found in Portuguese: “lixar”.

TT

—Porr favorr, professorr, — disse ela, olhando para ele por cima dos óculos minúsculos, — o que eu estava a perrguntarr há pouco — *lévarr*— eu ouvi na televisao. Um homem disse; —*Está-me a lévarr*— e todo o mundo riu. Penso que erra parra serr engraçado, mas *levarr*, nós aprendemos que significa vestirr qualquerr coisa, non?

— Ah, *está a querer levar-me*— riu-se Dyer.

— Isto taobém nuncá ouvi — disse Miss Parizô.

— *Levar alguém* significa gozar com alguém. *Levar* é vestir uma coisa. Okay? — Deu exemplos.

— Ah, agorrá sei — disse Miss Parizô. — É como lixarr alguém. É a mesma coisa?

—Pois — respondeu ele, sorrindo. Os canadianos francófonos são como crianças a aprender a falar. — O exemplo que deu não é considerado educado.

Hoje em dia, nos Estados Unidos, é comum dizer-se *levar alguém*.

— Entao — disse Miss Parizô, — talvez vamos dizerr isto aqui dentrrro de vinte anos.

3.2 The Beadle and the Nurse — Translating Cockney characters in Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*

Raquel Mouta

This section deals with excerpts of a dialogue from Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), chapter II, presenting a possible translation into contemporary European Portuguese while paying close attention to linguistic markers and to how those specific markers help the reader portray the characters.

The two characters in the dialogue are Mr. Bumble, town beadle, and Mrs. Mann, the overseer of the workhouse where Oliver was raised for the first nine years of his life.

Mrs. Mann's discourse is highly deviant in relation to standard English, and Mr. Bumble uses an excessively formal vocabulary although not correctly. The discourse of both these characters identifies them as Cockney speakers, or at least as speakers of the pseudo-variety of Cockney, as conventionally used in literature (Rosa 1999).

Before translating these excerpts, the following three translating procedures were considered (see section 1.2 above):

Firstly, the maintenance strategy. In European Portuguese (EP), there is no direct equivalent to Cockney. We have no substandard variety in the region of Lisbon (or of any other town) that is spoken only by a working class. So, in this case the maintenance strategy would not be possible.

Secondly, the possibility of shift from a substandard variety (social dialect) of the ST to a regional substandard variety in the Target Language (TL). Though common in dubbing of films for example, this strategy revealed itself incongruous and somewhat politically incorrect.

Thirdly, the centralizing strategy. The social substandard of the ST is recreated with reference to orality in the TL. When using this strategy, the TT would include the deviation of the characters' speech, but also a tentative approach to the standard variety of the language, more associated with the written register.

Opposing the predominant tendency to shift and thereby normalize substandard varieties in the translations published in Portugal in the previous decades (Rosa 2003, Valdez 2007), the present translations use a centralizing approach to those varieties.

Accordingly, in the TT, Mrs. Mann's discourse presents the following characteristics: contractions and ellipsis; redundancy and low register vocabulary; swapping of consonants; and use of incorrect pronouns.

Mr. Bumble's speech is characterized by the following in the TT: use of formal vocabulary with hypercorrection, resulting in words that do not exist or are inadequate; closing of vowels associated with standard EP, in some cases, and with non-standard EP in others; and use of contractions.

The excerpts are presented below with ST on the left and TT on the right. Linguistic markers in general are signalled by the use of bold. Specific markers of orality are indicated by the simultaneous use of bold and roman type. Incorrect words are pointed out by boldface and italic type.

<p>Mrs. Mann “Goodness gracious! Is that you, Mr. Bumble, sir?” said Mrs. Mann, thrusting her head out of the window in well-affected ecstasies of joy. “(Susan, take Oliver and them two brats up stairs, and wash ‘em directly.) — My heart alive! Mr. Bumble, how glad I am to see you, sure-ly!” (Dickens 7)</p>	<p>D. Mann — Ai, Jesus!, é vossa senhoria, Sr. Bumble? — disse a Sr.^a Mann, espreitando pela janela em affectados êxtases de alegria. — (Ó Susan, vai-te mais o Oliver e esses dois fedelhos lá p’ra cima e <i>lava-les</i> a fuça.) Bons olhos o vejam!, Sr. Bumble, ai Jesus qu’eu ‘tou tão contente d’o ver!</p>
<p>Mr. Bumble “Do you think this respectful or proper conduct, Mrs. Mann,” inquired Mr. Bumble, grasping his cane, “to keep the parish officers a-waiting at your garden-gate, when they come here upon porochial business connected with the porochial orphans? Are you aweer, Mrs. Mann, that you are, as I may say, a porochial delegate, and a stipendiary?” (Dickens 7)</p>	<p>Sr. Bumble — Ó D. Mann, acha qu’è cunduta respeitosa e adequada — inquiriu o Sr. Bumble, agarrando a bengala — manter os funcionários da p’róquia fora do portão à espera, quando aqui se deslocam em missão <i>peroquial concanetada</i> com os órfãos da p’róquia? A D. Mann tem co’sciência de que é, com’eu deria, uma delegada da p’róquia e uma <i>estupendiária</i>?</p>
<p>Mr. Bumble “And notwithstanding a offered reward of ten pound, which was afterwards increased to twenty pound. Notwithstanding the most superlative, and, I may say, supernat’ral exertions on the part of this parish,” said Bumble, “we have never been able to discover who is his father, or what was his mother’s settlement, name, or con-dition. (Dickens 9)</p>	<p>Sr. Bumble — E não abstante a oferta de uma recompensa de dez libras, que depois foi increncida p’ra vinte libras. Não abstante as mais s’perlativas e, devo acrescentar, s’pernaturais deligências da parte desta p’róquia — disse o Sr. Bumble —, nunca cunseguimos descortinar quem era o pai, nem o domescílio, nome ou cundição da mãe.</p>

The correct versions of the incorrect words (or words with an incorrect use) are as follows: *lava-les, lava-lhes; *cunduta, conduta; *respeituosa, respeitosa; *peroquial, paroquial; *concanetada, concatenada; *deria, diria (verb «dizer», to say); *estupendiária, estipendiária (play between «estupendo», fantastic, and «estipendiária»); *abstante, obstante

(play between «abster», to abstain, and «obstante», notwithstanding); **increscida*, *aumentada* (play between synonyms «crescer» and «aumentar»); **deligências*, *diligências*; **cunsequimos*, *consequimos*; **domescílio*, *domicílio*; **cundição*, *condição*.

Besides the described characteristics, the TT also presents a higher number of linguistic markers, a conscious addition with the purpose of compensating for the shift of contextual meaning from social substandard to orality, hopefully producing an equivalent effect to that of Dickens's text.

3.3 The translations of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* into European Portuguese (1944 – 1997)

Susana Valdez

Only taking into account the linguistic variation of the ST, this section analyzes the way this variation was translated into European Portuguese from 1944 to 1997. For this purpose, it examines the first two paragraphs of the seven translations of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* published in Portugal within this time frame.

Consequently, each sentence of the TT and of the ST was classified as:

- a) Standard, in other words, a sentence without any deviant graphic, lexical or morphosyntactic markers; or as
- b) Non-standard, in other words, a sentence with at least one deviant graphic, lexical or morphosyntactic marker.¹

Moreover, a standard sentence was further classified as characteristic of the oral or of the written speech. The non-standard sentences were further classified as characteristic of a low sociocultural status corresponding to a non-standard social variety or of a peripheral region corresponding to a non-standard regional variety.

¹ According to the Modern American English Standard description presented in the *Oxford English Corpus* and according to the European Portuguese Standard presented in the *Corpus the Referência do Português Contemporâneo (Reference Corpus of Contemporary Portuguese, CRPC)*.

In this case, of a total of 14 sentences analyzed in the ST, 64.9% corresponded to the standard and 77.80% (9 sentences) were further characterized as oral discourse, as illustrated by the following example: “Now the way that the book winds up is this: Tom and me² found the money that the robbers hid in the cave, and it made us rich.” (Twain 1885: 1)

Moreover, all non-standard sentences correspond to a social variety, as shown by the following example:

The Widow Douglas she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer I lit out. (Twain 1885: 1-2)

Therefore, taking into account the two first paragraphs of the ST, any reader will classify the narrator as belonging to a low sociocultural group, having little or no education. Furthermore, his discourse is also marked at the lexical, morphosyntactic and orthographic level as oral, in most cases.

The chart in Figure 4 represents the analysis of the ST and of the seven TT published in Portugal between 1944 and 1997. It clearly shows that none of the TT uses a non-standard social or regional variety.

In other words, in all seven TT there are no lexical, orthographic or morphosyntactic markers of any type of non-standard variety. On the other hand, the majority of the sentences analyzed are characteristic of the written standard. The target texts published in 1956, 1972 and 1973 even present a percentage of sentences characteristic of the written discourse that range from 93% to 100%.

Therefore, the first two paragraphs of such TT introduce a narrator whose profile, as portrayed by the use written and mostly formal discourse, is usually associated with a high sociocultural status, and education.

Taking into consideration the procedures and strategies suggested above, there is a general normalization strategy in the first two paragraphs

² Although the expression “Tom and me” could lead to a non-standard classification, one can argue that it may be considered a characteristic of oral standard speech: “In colloquial speech ‘me’ is often used where standard grammar requires ‘I’, especially when someone else is mentioned too”. (AskOxford) Consequently, some sentences are classified as both standard and oral.

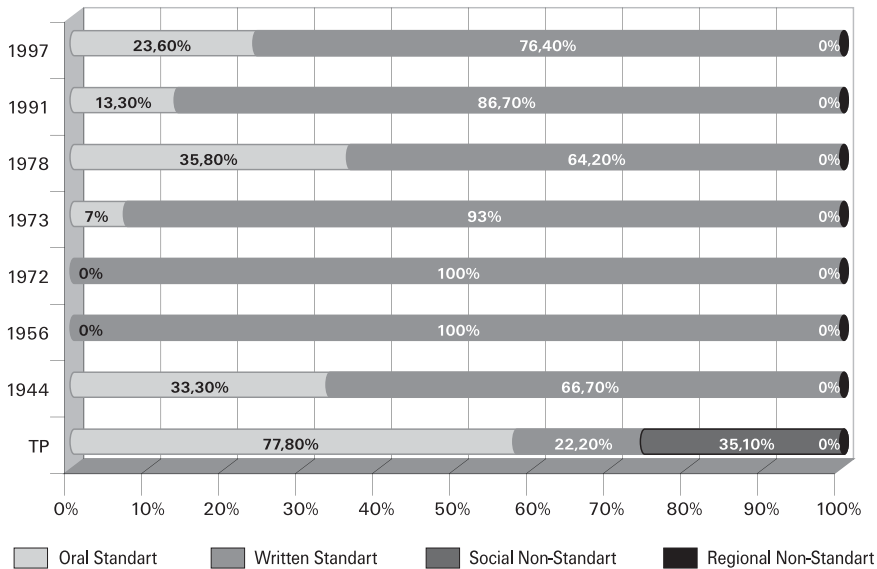
Linguistic Variation in *Huckleberry Finn*'s Translations

Figure 4: Linguistic Variation in *Huckleberry Finn*'s Translations into Portuguese (1944-1997)

of the TT published in 1956 and 1972. The remaining TT — 1944, 1973, 1978, 1991 and 1997 — indicate an either general or predominant centralization strategy.

To sum up, this brief case study reveals that translated literature occupies a peripheral position³ and that the predominant or general procedures and strategies correspond to the normalization and centralization of substandard varieties present in the ST. Further studies are called for in order to ascertain whether this is also true for the whole TT.

³ According to the polysystem theory of Itamar Even-Zohar (1990), if the translated literature occupies the center of the polysystem and, therefore, is a source of innovation, the expected behavior is of marginalization. On the other hand, if the translated literature occupies a peripheral position, then, the main worry of the translator is to find models already existent and secondary, so the result should be of centralization.

3.4 Translating “Jasmine”, by Bharati Mukherjee (*The Middleman and Other Stories*, 1988)

Tiago Botas

“Jasmine” is a short-story written by Bharati Mukherjee and included in her 1988 short-story collection *The Middleman and Other Stories*. This text tells us the story of a young girl trying to discover and live the American Dream in the United States of America. Originally from Trinidad and Tobago, this descendant of Indian parents reaches the US by way of Canada and, living first with the Daboo — an immigrant family who “were nobodies back home” — and afterwards with the Moffitt — who were “nice white American folk” —, ends up believing she is living the American Dream.

This translation posed a problem mainly with the dialogue. Not only did it prove difficult to find a suitable manner in which to translate the Indian-English accent of Jasmine and the Daboo, but since Gideon Toury’s norms of adequacy and acceptability (Toury, 1995) were the force behind my Master’s thesis, I also wanted to find a way to convey this text into Portuguese according to the initial norm of acceptability, defined as a TT’s “subscription to norms originating in the target culture” (Toury 57).

There are several examples of translation procedures motivated by this initial norm of acceptability, but I will focus mainly on an excerpt that shows both the cultural exchange and the dialogue issues. During Christmas, Jasmine, who now works for the Moffitts, stays a few days with the Daboo:

ST

The Daboos acted thrilled to see her back. “What you drinkin, Jasmine girl?” Mr Daboo kept asking. “You drinkin sherry or what?” Pouring her little glasses of sherry instead of rum was a sure sign he thought she had become whitefolk-fancy. The Daboo sisters were very friendly, but Jasmine considered them too wild. Both Loretta and Viola had changed boyfriends. Both were seeing black men they’d danced with in Ann Arbor. Each night at bedtime, Mr Daboo cried. “In Trinidad we stayin we side, they staying they side. Here, everything mixed up. Is helluva confusion, no?” (Mukherjee 135)

In this excerpt, several cultural factors come into play. The fact that Jasmine now works for white people has elevated her from “rum status” to “sherry status”, the two daughters dating black men was seen as an offense

by Mr. Daboo, revealed by his cries of anguish, and the cries of anguish themselves are conveyed in broken “Trinidadian-English”.

The adequacy version presents no changes in the cultural references, merely conveying those in Portuguese, but does attempt to add an aura of Indian-ness to the accent and dialect of Mr Daboo:

<p>ST “In Trinidad we stayin we side, they staying they side. Here, everything mixed up. Is helluva confusion, no?” [page 135]</p>	<p>TT — Adequacy “Em Trindade a gente ficamos dos nossas lado, eles ficarem dos lado deles. Aqui estamos tudo misturado. Que raio de confusão, n’ é?”</p>
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These two sentences are prolific in errors in concord or agreement in number and even gender (“dos [masculine, plural] nossas [feminine plural] lado [masculine, singular]”), they include colloquialisms (“a gente”, “que raio”) and contractions that are frequently used orally (“n’ é”), so as to, just like the ST, depict a man who learned the language he is speaking (Portuguese, in the TT) by using it and not by attending school.

The acceptability version, on the other hand, allows itself more leeway in terms of re-creating the cultural and geographical references of the ST. Jasmine, the Trinidadian girl seeking a better life in America becomes a Mozambican girl seeking a better life in Portugal; Ann Arbor, home to the University of Michigan, becomes Coimbra, where the oldest and most renowned Portuguese university exists; and — of course — sherry find its “natural equivalent” in the target culture: Port wine.

<p>TT — Acceptability Os Diamantino pareciam muito entusiasmados por a voltar a ver. “Vais beber o quê, Jasmine?” perguntava o Sr. Diamantino. “Vais beber Porto ou quê?” Servir-lhe um copinho de vinho do Porto em vez de cerveja era um sinal evidente de que ele pensava que ela tinha entrado no círculo das pessoas brancas. As irmãs Diamantino eram muito simpáticas, mas Jasmine achava-as demasiado doidas. Tanto a Laurinda como a Vânia tinham mudado</p>	<p>Gloss <i>The Diamantino acted thrilled to see her back. “What you drinkin, Jasmine girl?” Mr Diamantino kept asking. “You drinkin Port or what?” Pouring her little glasses of Port wine instead of beer was a sure sign he thought she had become whitefolk-fancy. The Diamantino sisters were very friendly, but Jasmine considered them too wild. Both Laurinda and Vânia had changed boyfriends. Both were seeing Chinese men they’d</i></p>
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de namorados. Ambas andavam com chineses com quem tinham dançado em Coimbra. Todas as noites, à hora de dormir, o Sr. Diamantino gritava: “Em Moçambique nós fica dos nosso lado, eles fica dos lado deles. Aqui estamos todos misturado. Raio de confusão, n’ê?”

danced with in Coimbra. Each night at bedtime, Mr Diamantino cried. “In Mozambique, we staying we side, they staying they side. Here, everything mixed up. Is helluva confusion, no?”

In this TT version motivated by acceptability, a veritable “translocalization” of the facts occurs, allowing the Portuguese TT readers to delve deeper and immerse themselves in the story, recognizing the references, the xenophobia, and the names.

Mozambique was chosen because it is a country with a large Indian presence, thus maintaining some of Mukherjee’s “spirit” in the translation, while, at the same time, allowing for the change of scenery to Portugal and of the language to Portuguese, since Mozambique is a Portuguese-speaking country (making the names Diamantino, Laurinda and Vânia easily recognizable). With the new African origin of these characters, they could no longer be prejudiced against black men, which is the reason why the unwanted boyfriends became Chinese. The use of Port wine was obvious, since its connection with the upper-class and special occasions is deeply rooted in Portuguese culture.

The dialogue, although this is lost in the gloss translation, shows a distinct African accent to Portuguese, as well as typical grammatical mistakes that any reader with knowledge of Portuguese would easily identify and credit to an African speaker.

In the end, and using Gideon Toury’s idea that translation is a negotiation, any approach to translation has a price (Toury 55, 64). It is the translator’s job to learn every contextual factor (target audience, text type, function, etc.) and, bearing them all in mind, approach the text using the procedures and strategies that better suit it.

4. Final Remarks

This collective paper offered an overview of Luso-Canadian exchanges focusing on TS research on the translation of linguistic variation.

The first part of this paper presented a selection of theoretical and methodological proposals including additional categories, which, besides the already mentioned universal of normalization, were deemed operative and relevant for the study of linguistic variation as a translation problem. The pertinence of these additional categories was discussed in terms of the implications and contextual constraints involved in the translation of linguistic varieties, and also of the findings that research on translation both in Portugal and Canada has made so far.

In the second part of this paper, this classification was applied in examples of translation research and practice. The comparative analysis of short excerpts of English narrative ST and their corresponding Target Texts (TT) in Portuguese, was illustrated by research on seven TT of *Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain, published in Portugal 1944-1997, which displayed a predominant or even general strategy of centralization of substandard varieties. Such a comparative analysis was also portrayed by the translation procedures adopted in the translations of a few excerpts within the general framework suggested. Excerpts from “A Class of New Canadians”, by Clark Blaise, *Oliver Twist*, by Charles Dickens, as well as “Jasmine”, by Bharati Mukherjee, were thus translated in an effort to maintain in the TT less prestigious linguistic markers deliberately included in direct speech by the characters in the ST. Consequently, such translations inverted the generalized trend and attempted to portray the linguistic and contextual features allowing for the characterization of different characters, social and regional groups, oral and written modes. This collective paper thus provided a brief illustration of the translation practice and post-graduate teaching by the English Department of the Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon, as well as research in Translation Studies currently carried out at the University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies – ULICES.

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ABSTRACT

“Translation scholars no doubt can learn much from scholars of ethnic minorities, women, minor literatures and popular literatures. Much of the most exciting work in the field is already being produced by scholars from the “smaller” countries – Belgium, the Netherlands, Israel, Czechoslovakia, and French-speaking Canada” (Gentzler 2001: 197).

Several Canadian scholars have been very influential in Translation Studies. The main aim of this collaborative paper on Luso-Canadian exchanges in TS is to make a very brief presentation of how some of the most “exciting” work by Canadian scholars has been received, adopted, adapted and developed in research work and teaching by Portuguese TS scholars. Selected examples of theoretical and methodological proposals by Canadian researchers in TS will be discussed, a few studies by Portuguese scholars will be mentioned, and the operative application of these studies to translation practice and teaching will be illustrated by the presentation and analysis of short excerpts of English narrative source texts, followed by their target texts in Portuguese, as produced and commented upon by former students of the Department of English, Faculty of Letters University of Lisbon.

KEYWORDS

Translation Studies, translating linguistic variation, literary translation, translation strategies, translation procedures.

RESUMO

“Translation scholars no doubt can learn much from scholars of ethnic minorities, women, minor literatures and popular literatures. Much of the most exciting work in the field is already being produced by scholars from the “smaller” countries – Belgium, the Netherlands, Israel, Czechoslovakia, and French-speaking Canada” (Gentzler 2001: 197).

São vários os investigadores canadianos que influenciaram decisivamente os Estudos de Tradução. O principal objectivo deste artigo conjunto dedicado aos intercâmbios luso-canadianos em Estudos de Tradução consiste em apresentar brevemente o modo como algum do trabalho mais “estimulante” de investigadores canadianos foi recebido, adoptado, adaptado e desenvolvido em investigação e leccionação por investigadores portugueses em Estudos de Tradução. Neste artigo, discute-se uma selecção de propostas teóricas e metodológicas de investigadores canadianos em Estudos de Tradução, referindo-se também alguns estudos desenvolvidos por investigadores portugueses. A aplicação destes estudos à prática e ao ensino da tradução é ilustrada com a apresentação e análise de breves excertos de textos de partida em língua inglesa, a par das respectivas traduções para português, produzidas e comentadas por antigos alunos do Departamento de Estudos Anglísticos da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Estudos de Tradução, tradução de variação linguística, tradução literária, estratégias de tradução, procedimentos de tradução.

Canada's Indigenous Peoples: a Glimpse at their Cultural Victories and Defeats Today

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Canada's Indigenous Peoples: a Glimpse at their Cultural Victories and Defeats Today

From a past of crushed identities, stifled voices, and forced conformity, the Indigenous cultures of Canada have managed not only to survive, but also to reinstate and reaffirm themselves in the midst of mainstream society.

The respect that once was taken away from them is now being increasingly won back. However, it has not been an easy victory. The Indigenous Peoples of Canada have had to fight in different fronts, and have been major players in various fields, from taking an active and prominent part in Western mainstream activities or professions, to asserting their difference in recent community projects and academic “post-Post-Colonial” research. And I say “post-Post-Colonial” research because, as Maori author Linda Tuhiwai Smith stresses:

There is [...] a sneaky suspicion that the fashion of post-colonialism has become a strategy for reinscribing or reauthorizing the privileges of non-indigenous academics because the field of “post-colonial” discourse has been defined in ways which can still leave out indigenous peoples, our ways of knowing and our current concerns. (Smith 24)

In fact, as this author explains:

Many indigenous intellectuals actively resist participating in any discussion within the discourses of post-colonialism. This is because post-colonialism is viewed as the convenient invention of Western intellectuals which reinscribes their power to define the world. (Smith 14)

At the heart of the difference between outlooks lie the Indigenous world-views and spirituality; their ontologies, epistemologies, and axiologies. As they are closely connected and related to the land Indigenous peoples traditionally occupied, it is therefore hardly surprising that they should have been at the root of the conflict between settler and native societies throughout time.

Thus, since all their knowledge derived primarily from the land, from the earth, and from the mythic space-time of rituals and visions taking place at special locations, the taking away of their land must not be seen merely as an act of colonial occupation, but also as an act of extirpation of their ancestral traditions, culture, spirituality and knowledge.

Moreover, the way Indigenous peoples constructed knowledge, accessed the Spirit World, and built their societies was in direct opposition to the way Western colonists — or settlers — constructed theirs. It is therefore no wonder that their epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies should be seen as a threat to the settlers' agenda, and that they should be persecuted for their beliefs, as well as for their lands:

Our knowledge comes from the land, and the destruction of the environment is a colonial manifestation and a direct attack on Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous nationhood. (Simpson, "Strategies" 377)

When the first era of contact — with its more or less peaceful coexistence — was over, with the end of the fur trade, and the intensification of colonization, the Indigenous peoples of Canada saw the "real face" of Western settlers. The old "*coureurs de bois*" —who, in many instances, had adopted the "Indian" ways, languages, and clothing, and had created a new race of *Métis* people — gave way to a sturdy race of conquerors who came for the land and the riches of the territory, eventually rounding up its Indigenous peoples, and confining them to reserves, stripping them off the pride of their identities, and reducing them to being dependent upon the "generosity" of the settler governments. And if that wasn't enough, they further ransacked their minds and spirits, by sending their children forcefully away from their families to residential schools (starting in 1831), where their Native languages were forbidden to them, along with their beliefs, traditional clothes, and long hair. Alongside this practice of removal

of the children, Indigenous rituals and ceremonies were outlawed, going underground to survive (Indian Act 1876).

After the end of the residential school era (1986), other policies have been aimed at the estrangement of Indigenous peoples from their own cultures — from their traditions, their spirituality, and their knowledge. Such is the case with Pierre Trudeau's assimilation Policy (White Paper on Indian Affairs — 1969, shelved in 1971), whereby their distinctive status was taken away from them in an attempt to forcefully integrate them in mainstream society, denying them a special place as Canada's original peoples, forgetting about the past, and treating them just like all the other immigrants that make up Canada's population today.

Although ambivalent, both the past assimilation policy and the educational policy that followed it have been considered as negative to the cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples as residential schools had been, as Leanne Simpson points out:

The postresidential educational experience of Indigenous Peoples continues to be detrimental to the transmission of Indigenous Knowledge: teaching Western Eurocentric curriculum in a Western-based didactic manner undermines the skills needed to understand IK and greatly reduces opportunities to learn from Indigenous Knowledge holders. (“Strategies” 377-8)

However, from a different perspective, it is possible to ascribe a few positive aspects to these policies, as they provided Indigenous people with direct access to mainstream education and activities, thus giving Canada the opportunity to witness the achievements of some Indigenous individuals in society at large, from becoming outstanding soldiers, sportsmen, actors, to becoming well-known scholars, authors, architects, lawyers, etc. As the editors write in the introduction to University of Toronto Press book *Hidden at Plain Sight*:

Native people are often portrayed as passive victims of European colonization and government policy, a picture that, even when well intentioned, not only is demeaning but also does little to truly represent the role that Aboriginal peoples have played in Canadian life. (Newhouse, Introduction)

The publication of this book is thus meant to add “[...] another dimension to the story, showing the extraordinary contributions that Aboriginal peoples have made — and continue to make — to the Canadian experience” (Newhouse, Introduction).

Those policies may even be said to have indirectly propitiated a resurgence of Indigenous pride, as the need to assert their special identity, search for their own roots, go back to their origins, and restore their traditions and spirituality began to be felt ever more strongly. They sometimes used some of the “tools” they had picked up from Western society to the purpose (be it writing, the English language, law, or the education institutions), thus marking their come-back in a unique way, and transforming the settlers’ culture, as well as reinvigorating their own, in the process, by the very “[...] transformative potential of the processes and concepts embodied in Indigenous Knowledge systems [...]” (Simpson, “Strategies” 376).

The growing awareness, interest, and revival of Aboriginal traditions and knowledge on the part of Western-trained Indigenous individuals and scholars, during the latter half of the 20th century, coincided with a different social-political atmosphere generally (Civil Rights Movement, etc), with the revocation of a number of restrictive laws ruling Aboriginal affairs, and with the rise of interest on all things “Indian” on the part of some strata of the settler society.

A number of Native Studies courses were then founded at several universities on the North-American continent, the one at Trent University, in Peterborough, Ontario, being the oldest one in Canada (dating from 1969).

Many graduates from these courses have become involved in community work back in the reserves, or in teaching at Indigenous schools and colleges, in the past decades.

But this could still be understood as yet another form of conformity to mainstream culture, therefore, a cultural defeat from the Indigenous point of view, as the main focus of their activity might still be seen as relying upon Western ideas of education, welfare, and socio-political organization.

However, the tide has been turning steadily, and those same Western structures that were once used to oppress and acculturate have now been increasingly used by Indigenous people to convey their traditions and their

knowledge, to teach their languages and their oral histories, in what can be seen as a cultural victory.

Also, simultaneously, the time seems to have come for a major breakthrough in the aims and outline of Indigenous Studies courses at Canadian Universities.

As we can read in Trent University's PhD Program brochure:

An innovative scholarship led by Indigenous peoples is emerging worldwide with an emphasis on questioning the knowledge privileges and paradigms of the Western Academy. (69)

Western scientists and scholars have also become interested in Indigenous materials, and have been integrating Indigenous forms of knowledge and expression in their disciplines, from Biology and Ecology to Medicine, Literature and Art, mostly working in collaboration with Indigenous authors, artists, elders and knowledge holders.

After centuries of benefiting from the promotion of European colonialism and the denial of Indigenous Knowledge as a legitimate knowledge system, the Western academy is now becoming interested in certain aspects of Indigenous Knowledge, particularly those aspects that directly relate to the Western conceptualizations of ecology and environment. Over the past fifteen years Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) has received much attention in United Nations-sanctioned forums concerned with biodiversity and sustainable development, and this has sparked the curiosity of scientists working in these areas. (Simpson, "Strategies" 373)

Yet, from a native point of view, working with Western academics is not always an easy task, and some issues of appropriation of Indigenous knowledge (IK) or of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) have been raised. Sometimes, they can indeed be considered cases of misuse, distortion, and misapplication of IK to suit Western agendas, thus far remote from their original purpose, from their true essence, in yet another instance of cultural defeat:

Those aspects of TEK that are most similar to data generated by the scientific method are seen as a potential resource, holding answers to the environmental problems afflicting

modern colonizing societies, while the spiritual foundations of IK and the Indigenous values and worldviews that support it are of less interest often because they exist in opposition to the worldview and values of the dominating societies. (Simpson, "Strategies" 373-4)

It is interesting to note, however, how the same type of knowledge that came under attack or was practically erased during the period of the establishment of European sovereignty over Indigenous lands (Simpson, "Strategies" 377) has now been the subject of renewed interest, only to be taken out of its context and used to favour the same type of society that tried to extinguish it in the first place... We can argue, as some authors have done, that it is yet another type of colonialism taking place (Smith; Simpson), if only in the mind, or we can say that it is part of the West's continuing attempt to hold on to its hegemonic power over land and knowledge.

From New Age dealers to environmentalists, the procedure has been the same: take, take, take. It can be seen as another case of cultural defeat today, alongside the well-documented cases of residential schools, and assimilation policies, although seemingly different, or supposedly better. At its core, however, it is yet another form of total disrespect and disregard for the cultures and the individuals at stake.

Although this may continue to be true in some instances, the fact that Indigenous people are becoming increasingly aware of the thin border-line between education and assimilation, interest for things "Indigenous" and predatory activity or appropriation is a positive feature, and a step in the right direction, towards Indigenous-centred education, properly transmitted IK, Indigenous research or art project collaboration. So, with the tide now turning, Indigenous Studies, and Indigenous knowledge are at the centre of attention.

A very visible example of the general outlook today not being as grim as it was only over a decade ago, and of the new tendencies being felt generally in Canada, as far as its Indigenous peoples are concerned, was Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Formal Apology for the Residential School System, in June 2008, which definitely marked the end of an era of careless oblivion, conspicuous silence, and general conformity to Western supremacy, thus ushering in "*a new dawn*", a new era of "respectful and liberating relationship between us [Indigenous peoples] and

the rest of Canada”, in the words of Chief Phil Fontaine, in his response to the Prime Minister’s Formal Apology.

This feeling was confirmed and is actually shared by some of the Indigenous scholars and ex-residential school pupils I’ve had the chance to talk to recently, since, in their view, it brought the issue home, it brought it to the attention and knowledge of the general public, making them aware of a somewhat forgotten issue, and making them realize the pain Indigenous peoples had been through, as well as setting the mood for a different type of relationship from then on.

A lot remains to be done, but it certainly is exciting to witness the signs of a major change in attitude and public awareness, as well as a growth of cultural activity on the part of Indigenous peoples, now more in the open than in the past.

Indigenous scholars and community elders have been working alongside in order to bring forth a new generation of academics, and individuals who know how to understand and value IK. The main objective of these courses is:

[...] to ensure that physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of Indigenous knowledge, as reflected in traditional and contemporary world views and expressed in practice are articulated, discussed, documented, recognised and experienced. [...] Students will be engaged in learning experiences that are centred in Indigenous cultures in content and process and reflect the interaction between traditional and contemporary Indigenous knowledge within the academic context.
(Trent PhD Vision Statement)

The syncretism taking place in these courses at Trent does not lean towards the interests of Western academia, but is grounded in IK itself, with a strong community participation, which seems to be a rather innovative feature, in relation to what is taking place in other universities on the North-American continent.

There is a strong experiential component to the courses, from camps in the wild, under the supervision of professors and community elders, (to strengthen the contact with the elements and with traditional teachings on nature, etc) to ceremonies and meetings with tribal spiritual leaders and elders, on the actual communities (Curve Lake Reserve).

Although this action is taking place within the academic structure, it is not primarily an “academic” venture, in the Western sense. It seems somewhat paradoxical at first sight, but it should be seen essentially as a “post-Post-Colonial” movement rising within the very structure, the very ranks that have been used to suppress IK in the first place. Quoting Simpson again:

Academics who are to be true allies to Indigenous Peoples in the protection of our knowledge must be willing to step outside of their privileged position and challenge research that conforms to the guidelines outlined by the colonial power structure and root their work in the politics of decolonization and anticolonialism. This Indigenous approach is critical to the survival of Indigenous Knowledge and ultimately Indigenous Peoples. (“Strategies” 381)

In line with Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s line of thought, it is not enough to “deconstruct” the colonial mindset, it is fundamental to take the move one step further, and affirm the values and practices of IK, because, in Graham H. Smith’s words: “[...] We all need to work hard to ensure that Indigenous academics are able to work positively and proactively for Indigenous communities” (213-14).

The effect of this type of proactive attitude will be felt equally on settler and Indigenous societies, as Marie Battiste states:

[...] the acceptance of tribal knowledge by some scientists and scholars [...] and the elevation of tribal epistemologies in research and roundtables and thinktanks will have the profound effect of pushing modern knowledge to new questions and ways of thinking about problems and solutions. [...] The real justification for including Aboriginal knowledge in the modern curriculum is not so that Aboriginal students can compete with non-Aboriginal students in an imagined world. It is, rather, that immigrant society is sorely in need of what Aboriginal knowledge has to offer. We are witnessing throughout the world the weakness in knowledge based on science and technology. It is costing us our air, our water, our earth; our very lives are at stake. (201-2)

This is certainly being put into practice at Trent University, where ecologists and Indigenous scholars and knowledge holders have been working in close connection and collaboration, and on Indigenous terms, to learn from their

experience in adapting to a fast changing environment, as is the case with the recent climate changes in the Arctic. As an Inuvik elder states: “Making the scientific community aware of our knowledge is important. We have a long history of being on the land and we want to provide local and traditional information that science does not have” (Furga 13).

Much of the work currently being carried out within Indigenous academic and community circles around Trent has been inspired by prophecy. Such is the case with the *Nishnaabeg* (Ojibway) prophecy of the Eighth Fire, as it was made known by Edward Benton-Banai’s *Mishomis Book*, (inspiring the title of Leanne Simpson’s recently edited book, *Lighting the Eighth Fire*), and with the *Haudenosaunee* (Iroquois) *Traditional Teachings* (as published by the Native North American Travelling College).

According to the first of these prophecies, we are currently living in the Seventh Fire, a time when, after a long period of oppression and cultural loss, a new people emerge, whose responsibility it is to revive Indigenous (*Nishnaabeg* or Ojibway) language, philosophies, traditions, ways of knowing, and culture. The work of these people will determine the lighting of the Eighth Fire by all humans. In Simpson’s words:

In order for the Eighth Fire to be lit, settler society must also choose to change their ways, to decolonize their relationships with the land and Indigenous Nations, and to join with us in building a sustainable future based upon mutual recognition, justice, and respect. (*Eighth Fire* 14)

This vision is also shared by McGill University *Kanata* Journal’s student editor Pamela Fillion who writes that “[...] the emphasis [of the journal] is on a shared history, a shared present, and to inform a shared future for Natives and Newcomers alike (6).

To conclude, I would like to read a quotation from *The Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*:

Canada is a test case for a grand notion — the notion that dissimilar peoples can share lands, resources, power and dreams, while respecting and sustaining their differences. The story of Canada is the story of many such peoples, trying and failing and trying again, to live together in peace and harmony. (Minister of Supply and Services ix)

The question then remains:

Are we ready to re-learn our ways of relating to the world around and within us? Are we ready to strike up a new start together? Let us hope we are.

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ABSTRACT

From among the fragments of their cultures, the Indigenous Peoples of Canada have managed to emerge, to rise in a growing tide of recovery of their traditions, of reconstruction of their ancestral knowledge.

It can be seen as a groundbreaking affirmation of their essence, after decades or centuries of oppression.

From a not-too-distant past of suppression and acculturation, through stages of confusion and despair, to a present open to new possibilities, and to a reinstatement of their worth, the Indigenous cultures of Canada are witnessing a revival from within their own ranks, and a new surge of pride, not blinded by prejudice.

Elders and youngsters are joined together in the common interest of maintaining their traditions alive; elders and scholars are working side-by-side to make Indigenous knowledge accessible to students of all backgrounds, genuinely interested in turning the tide that has kept both worlds apart, and in discovering ancient ontologies and epistemologies, discovering their own selves in the process.

From Post-Colonial Theory to Indigenous Knowledge, the movement has been ever-expanding, and in a permanent state of self-transformation, owing much to scholars, students, and elders working at Canadian university departments.

It is my intention to try and assess the negative and the positive aspects of the resurgence of interest in Indigenous cultures in Canada.

KEYWORDS

Indigenous knowledge, suppression, survivance, resurgence, reaffirmation.

RESUMO

Os Povos Indígenas do Canadá conseguiram reerguer-se e ressurgir a partir dos fragmentos das suas culturas, numa crescente vaga de procura de recuperação das suas tradições, de reconstrução do seu saber ancestral, no que se poderá entender como uma libertadora e revolucionária afirmação da sua essência, após décadas e séculos de opressão e de silêncio forçado.

De um passado, não muito longínquo, de supressão e aculturação, através de sucessivos estágios de confusão e de desespero, a um presente aberto a novas possibilidades e a uma reafirmação do seu valor ancestral, as culturas indígenas do Canadá estão a vivenciar um renascimento dentro do seu próprio seio e a experimentar um orgulho renovado, sem espaço para preconceitos.

Anciãos e jovens unem-se em torno do interesse comum em manterem vivas as suas tradições; anciãos e académicos trabalham lado-a-lado para tornarem o saber nativo ancestral acessível aos estudantes de todas as proveniências, que se encontrem genuinamente interessados em reverterem as correntes que têm mantido ambos os mundos separados e distantes e em “des-cobrirem” as antigas epistemologias e ontologias, descobrindo-se a si próprios nesse processo.

Das teorias pós-colonialistas ao Saber Indígena, o movimento tem sido marcado por um crescimento e uma auto-transformação contantes, sendo esse impulso, em grande parte, devido aos inúmeros professores, estudantes e anciãos, que integram os vários departamentos de Estudos Indígenas, de Ecologia, de Educação, etc., das universidades canadianas.

No presente artigo, tenciono fazer o ponto da situação e vislumbrar os aspectos positivos e negativos do ressurgimento do interesse pelas culturas indígenas do Canadá.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Saber nativo, supressão, sobrevivência, ressurgimento, reafirmação.

Canada in the Making: Pastoral Ideology in the Poetry of the Early Colonial Era

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Canada in the Making: Pastoral Ideology in the Poetry of the Early Colonial Era

After the Vikings, Cabot's rediscovery and the mysterious disappearance of the brothers Corte-Real in the northern mists, Canadian early History is marked by the conflicting rivalry between the French and English interests in North America.¹ Western cultures were introduced through fishing and fur-trade, and with the first permanent European settlements in the early 17th century a local literature was born. The early colonial poems, besides their own aesthetic value, are documents written in verse mainly by political dignitaries. Along with these officials with a better station in life came the people forced to immigrate and, of course, it just so happened that some were skilled in writing verse. Compared to the standards of baroque and neoclassical excellence their poems seem to lose pace, although invaluable to the understanding of the slow cultural and social growth of the future Canada. And this was made in an era when urban technological society and "aesthetic autonomy" in art were still far from sight. Thus, the poems of the early colonials and settlers-poets of the 17th and 18th centuries supply a rich source for the study of the culture(s) of the first two centuries of colonial North-America. Not only do they form the first self-conscious expression of a poetical construct of a Canadian identity: they also convey the general New World *ethos* or character as opposed to the European. In this early period, the cultures of French Canada, English Canada and New England, although distinct and evolving in conflicting violent ways, show a striking presence of exchanges between them. Post-colonial theory and the present growing variety of literatures in

¹ For further reading on this subject see, for example, Robert Bothwell, *The Penguin History of Canada*. Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2006.

English and French may also help us in analyzing this process, for in all these distinct political areas the literary and cultural question to be answered is the same: how do colonial margins, as those of early Canada, respond to the expectations of the centre or centres?

Among the early groups of poets writing in and about Canada, a Frenchman, Marc Lescarbot (1570-1629), is remembered as one of the first, to produce a “pure” literary work in North America. He wrote a *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France* (1609)² and he is most probably the founder of New France and American drama and theatre, with *Le Théâtre de Neptune en la Nouvelle-France*,³ a welcoming masque made to celebrate the return of the explorer and conquistador Poutrincourt to Port Royal, first performed there in 1606.⁴ In *Le Théâtre de Neptune en la Nouvelle-France* the “savages” are shown on their knees celebrating (in French) their defeat by Poutrincourt, as in this example:

Voici la main, l’arc, et la fleche
 Qui on fait la mortele breche
 En l’animal de qui la peau
 Pourra servir d’un bon manteau
 (Grand *Sagamos*⁵) à ta hauteesse.

 Reçoy donc de ma petitesse
 Cette offrande qu’a ta grandeur
 L’offre du meilleur de mon coeur.
 (Lescarbot, Théâtre 26)

An aristocratic dramatic allegory of giants and dwarfs this “baroque hymn”

² Marc Lescarbot, *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France*, Charleston, SC: Bibliobazaar, 2009.

³ *Idem*, «Le Théâtre de Neptune en la Nouvelle-France», *Les Muses de la Nouvelle-France*, Paris, Jean Millot, 1612, p.18-29; see also Jerry Wasserman, *Spectacle of Empire: Marc Lescarbot’s Theatre of Neptune in New France*. Vancouver: Talon Books, 2006.

⁴ For a long period of time the Catholic Church, however, always opposed to the performance of *Le Théâtre de Neptune*, and the play had to wait for the building in 1825 of the first Theatre in Canada, LeThéâtre Royal, to be professionally staged. See E. D. Blodgett, “Francophone Writing”, Eva-Marie Kröller (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature*. Cambridge: C.U.P. 2004, p. 51.

⁵ “C’est un mot de Sauvage qui signifie Capitaine” (Lescarbot, Théâtre, 19).

hails the expansion of Western civilization on North America, and above all Imperial France. Neptune, the classical God of the Seas, is obviously the main supporter of the conquest of the New World by Petrincoart's exploratory army in the name of the French King. This neoclassical praise of power, empire and civilization also tragically celebrates the beginning of the defeat of the First Nations, in fact the main enemies of the imperial projects of both France and England. Other representatives of Western civilization, like the Jesuits, had a milder policy towards the First Nations in New France. Yet, Lescarbot thought, acted and wrote as a man of his times,⁶ and his prejudices against the native Indians (that is *Oriental men* in a *Western* territory) were common throughout the Western European colonial powers on the New World.⁷

The beginnings of Canadian poetry in English were less monumental than Lescarbot's small epic drama, and did not involve a direct praise for empire and Christianity. The baroque bias for pleonasm is shared, as well as the Renaissance cultural codes and conventions, and the general political aim. But instead of imperial praise we find a propagandist pastoral land, full of potential assets and where the alchemical elements — and seemingly their human equivalents, “the humours” — reach balance so that man may fully live. Robert Hayman (1575-1629), a merchant and early governor of the plantation at Harbour Grace, managed to publish a book of verse, called *Quodlibets* in praise of Newfoundland.⁸ This series of poems not only denote its author love for music but also his expertise in the use of masculine rhyme (Skeltonics). The four elements nowhere in the world reach a higher and better degree of balance than in Newfoundland:

The Aire in Newfound-land is wholesome, good;
The Fire, as sweet as any of wood;
The Waters, very rich, both salt and fresh;

⁶ It is also good to remember that the First Nations were also waging war between them at this time.

⁷ During this era, Michel Montaigne famous essay of on cannibals (1580) is of course an outstanding exception concerning the Western prejudice towards the Indians.

⁸ *Quodlibet* means literally “something that pleases”. In music, a *quodlibet* was a light composition which integrated several melodies or fragments of popular melodies.

The Earth more rich, we know it is no less.
 Where all good, *Fire, Water, Earth and Aire*,
 What man made of these foure would not live there?
 (Atwood 1)

The Canadian reality of the time was, however, at odds with a such a rhetorical pleonastic invitation to serve the English mercantile interests. These lines form a challenging discourse from a distant incipient periphery or margin to its cultural, social and political European centre, or not, depending on the point of view that is taken by the reader. The poem is also ironically prophetic as to the future of Canada as country, that is, as a political space with its proper centres of decision making, and capable of challenging the traditional power of the Western colonial and imperial centres at the time, whether in London or Paris, or rural England and rural France. The poem, for example, does not mention that Newfoundland was a region at that time divided between France and England. Yet, as we can conclude from the analysis of the poetic style of Hayman, the idea for a new centre capable of challenging its prototype (as Rome was able to challenge the Hellenistic standards) was to remain unfulfilled for many years. Hayman's poetic agenda for Canada or America doesn't have any explicit political or religious element. There, no Jesuits enter the land to convert the Indians and no Puritans search for the Promised Land. Nevertheless, Hayman's idea of social perfection is in fact very different from the one that his contemporary Puritan John Winthrop was then in 1630 defending for New England — not so far from Newfoundland — and its political and religious future centre: that it should be as a "City upon a Hill" (10) so that the whole world could set their eyes on it and learn from the wonders made by the adamant faith and will of an exemplar community. In due time, some English Canadians would also show a similar metaphysical and religious purpose.

Hayman happened to be a businessmen who was a poet in his leisure time. It is hard to tell how many people he lured to immigrate to Canada from England with his alchemical message: "What man made of these foure [elements] would not live there?" (Atwood 1). In other words, what poor man would not become wealthy if he would kept honestly toiling (practical alchemy) the land (of future Canada)? Women, in this patriarchal context, were not a cause of problems or oppressed (as at that time Anne

Bradstreet in New England sometimes complained to be)⁹, but are a pleonastic example to all English women in search of a better life: “Sweet Creatures, did you truly understand/ The pleasant life you’d live in *Newfound-land*/ You would with *tears* desire to be brought thither.” (Atwood 1). But it is clear that behind “enthusiastic” Hayman and his dreamy propaganda the message is simple: only by working hard would it be possible for the *poor* settler to bring forth the balance of the alchemical elements the poem depicts, by exploring and transforming the commodities available.

Newfoundland was then mostly peopled by English fishermen during the mild months, from May to September. The vast northern land of future Canada, with its ice and fog, remained basically hostile and unknown to man. More one hundred and fifty years after Hayman’s *Quodlibets*, the pre-romantic Roger Viets (1738-1811), a former American Loyalist of the War for Independence and after Anglican Rector in Nova Scotia, returned to a similar pastoral ideal paving the way to the formation of a “new man”.¹⁰ According to Viets, in Canada: “A newborn race is reared by careful hands” (46). Although already a pre-romantic, Roger Viets, like Robert Hayman, associates music and nature in his praise for (Royal) Canada:

May all the Wise, and all the Good unite,
With all the Habitants of Life and Light,
To treat the Sons of Music with Respect,
Their Progress to encourage to protect.
May each Musician, and Musician’s Friend
Attain to Hymns divine, which end. (47)

⁹ See Anne Bradstreet, “The Prelude”, *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, Jeanine Hensley (ed.), Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967, pp. 15-17. Like Robert Hayman, his contemporary Anne Bradstreet was very fond of the poetic and symbolical use of the “elements”, “humours” and of number four. Cf. “The Four Elements”, “Of the Four Humours”, *Ibidem*, pp. 18-50.

¹⁰ Or, the outcome of the European ethnic melting pot, according to the late 18th century French Americanist, Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, “What is an American?”, in *Letters From an American Farmer*, Susan Manning (ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 14.

In these neoclassical lines from *Annapolis-Royal* (1788) written in iambic pentameters, rich rhyme and where allegories dominate, pastoralism appears associated with the perfection in music while each accomplished man is a perfected musician, a “Son of Music” [i.e. a Canadian]. This “music” is, like the “alchemical work” of Hayman, the produce of toil, although here Hayman’s wishful thinking is more clearly replaced by fact. Viets’s verse underlines this conviction with pastoral romanticism and classical allegory:

Where this romantic Village lifts her Head,
Betwixt the Royal Port and humble Mead;
The decent Mansions dock’d with mod’rate Cost
Of honest Thrift, and generous Owners boast;
There Skill and Industry their Sons employ,
In works of Peace, Integrity and Joy [...]. (45)

The gloomy side of the pleasant and harmonic reality depicted by Viets is found fifty years before in the scarce and occasional verse of the explorer Henry Kelsey (c.1667-c. 1724), reportedly the first European to reach the Canadian prairies and their peoples, and to observe animal species, such as the buffalo and the grizzly bear never seen before by the white man. This hero of the History of early English Canada wrote, somewhat surprisingly in 1692, a rhyming introduction to the journal he kept of his laborious and painful exploration of the northern Prairies, that was to remain unpublished until 1928, when historian Charles Napier Bell (1854-1936) edited it.¹¹ Viets did not have the poetic talent of Sir Walter Raleigh or even Hayman, but his rhyming couplets are colored by a realistic note which is absent from Hayman’s potential ideal society. Kelsey’s expedition was extremely hard, and this may help in explaining his use of verse in the introduction to the depiction in his diary of the lonely experience of the bleak hostility of a unknown space:

For many time I have often been opprest
With fear and Cares [yet] I could not take my rest
Because I was alone and no friend could I find

¹¹ Charles Napier Bell (ed.), “The Journal of Henry Kelsey (1691-92)”. Winnipeg: *Manitoba Historical Transaction*, Series 2, n.4/ Dawson Richardson Publications, 1928.

And once [**that**] in my travels I was left behind
 Which struck fear and terror into me
 But still I was resolved this same country for to see
 Although through many dangers I did pass
 Hoped still to undergo [**them**] at the Last. (22)¹²

As in Lescarbot, the Indians reappear as merciless antagonists to the scientific and political explorations of Kelsey. Notwithstanding the nobility and heroism of the task, the exploration of new vast northern regions is shown as awful, the journey as endless, and almost not worthy of the self-sacrifice involved, albeit the strong will to undergo such an ordeal.¹³

All these poetic and cultural experiences make a decisive contribution to the early Canadian literary history. these impressive natural harsh conditions would also have a strong impact in Britain, namely during English romanticism, in William Wordsworth who happened to have read Samuel Hearne's *Journey from Prince of Wales' Fort in Hudson Bay to the Northern Ocean* (1795).¹⁴ Hearne (1745-1792) went even more northwards than Henry Kelsey did, being the first European to reach the Arctic overland.¹⁵ Wordsworth perspective of the Indians was not anymore that of Lescarbot, Kelsey or Hearne. As a matter of fact, he included in the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) the dramatic monologue "The Compliant of a Forsaken Indian Woman", a poem inspired by the *mores* of Canadian Indians who, living in a ruthless environment, show no seeming mercy for the sick, old and weak who are left behind, although "covered over with Deer-skins, and [...] supplied with water, food, and fuel, [and] informed of the track [the] companions intend to pursue [...]" (Wordsworth 109).

¹² The words in brackets and bold are my own. I want to thank my colleague Dr. Tom Grigg for the help provided in establishing them.

¹³ The tragic irony of Kelsey's fate reflects and foreshadows that of many British explorers of the icy unknown, from Samuel Hearne to Robert Falcon Scott (1868-1912), the explorer of the South Pole who died tragically in Antarctica in 1912.

¹⁴ Samuel Hearne, *A Journey to the Northern Ocean*, Touchwood Editions: Victoria British Columbia, 2007.

¹⁵ Hearne is also considered the source of inspiration to Coleridge's "The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner" (1798).

And this was also true for an helpless sick young Indian mother:

When I was well, I wished to live,
 For clothes, for warmth, for food, and fire;
 But they to me no joy can give,
 No pleasure now, and no desire.
 Then here contented will I lie;
 Alone I cannot fear to die. (Wordsworth 109)

This romantic perceived raw cruelty (justified by the context) is explored by Wordsworth, through emotional appeal (*pathos*) in order to intensify the primitivist myth of the Noble Savage by forging a tragic humanist allegory,¹⁶ where the sick Indian woman forced to leave behind her child is presented as archetypical heroine.

It is, therefore, not surprising that in the first decades of the 20th century a strong negative feeling about Canada was recurrent among Europeans, namely British, which openly contradicted the enchanting alchemy of Hayman's "music" of the 17th century. This happens to be the case of a English modernist, Basil Bunting (1900-1985) who, in another dramatic monologue "The Complaint of the Morpethshire Farmer" (1930), exposes the anxiety of those forced to immigrate to the bleakest regions of North America:

Canada's a cold land.
 Thou and I must share
 A straw bed and a hind's wages
 And the bitter air.

Canada's a bare land
 For the north wind and the snow.
 Northumberland's a bare land
 For men have made it so. (96)

¹⁶ Wordsworth's poem echoes Montaigne's essay on cannibals (1580), but also the poems of his American contemporary Philip Freneau, such as "The Dying Indian, Tomo-Chequi" (1784), "The Indian Student" (1787) and especially "The Indian Burying Ground" (1787). All these examples show similar idealized humanist, although unpopular, views of the Indian.

The interior of Canada is here, as in Henry Kelsey, a vast, desolate and frozen northern space of exile, a “bare land” of isolation, much feared by small destitute farmers of northern England and southern Scotland who, nevertheless didn’t have any choice but to immigrate.

Yet, as we have noticed in the “up-beat” verse of Hayman and Viets, Canada has been also something other than the cold, bare and icy desert of Bunting’s poem, for the experience of this land also gave remarkable contributions to the self-reliant *ethos* of the Americas. A remarkable example from the beginning of the 19th century of this New World assertive stance is found in the poem by Oliver Goldsmith (1794-1861), “The Rising Village” (1825). This Canadian poet was the nephew of his name sake Oliver Goldsmith (1728-74), the much influential Anglo-Irish pre-romantic and voluminous writer. The European Oliver Goldsmith is best remembered, among other works, for his sentimental and desolate poem “The Deserted Village” (1770, 1782).¹⁷ Later on, as an answer to this decadent European perspective of his predecessor, the Canadian Oliver Goldsmith writes an optimistic “The Rising Village”¹⁸ in which a synthesis is made of major Canadian colonial cultural and literary themes. In both poems we find the same village of Auburn. But while in “The Deserted Village” Auburn is the ideal place suited for the fashionable European rural decadence of early romanticism, in “The Rising Village” Auburn is the practical example for the laborious victory of the lonely settler over a hostile environment, under “Acadian skies”:

How great the pain, the danger, the toil,
Which mark the first rude culture of the soil.
When, looking round, the lonely settler sees
His home amid a wilderness of trees:
How sinks his heart in those deep solitudes,
Where not a voice upon his ear intrudes [...].
(Davis 55)

¹⁷ Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2009.

¹⁸ Oliver Goldsmith, *The Rising Village*, London, Ontario: Canadian Poetry Press, 1987.

But fear and despondency are soon won, for the rising of a new village in a hostile place is clearly an optimistic example within the Canadian context. Simultaneously, these lines illustrate the social dialectics between the Americas and the Old World, where success is achieved (or happiness) and decadence overcome through skill and hard work:

So may thy years increase, thy glories rise,
To be the wonder of the Western skies;
And bliss and peace encircle all thy shore,
Till empires rise and sink, on earth, no more.
(Davis 70)

This new Auburn is in the end projected in a future beyond Canada and the Americas. Almost like a post-imperial and post-national utopia made of “bliss and peace”, the new village stands at the “end” of an accomplished vision of History without frontiers, a persistent cultural narrative that since Oliver Goldsmith’s time has been smashed and felt to be true, over and over again.

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Le Maître Guillaume;

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ABSTRACT

Poetry in present day Canada begun almost simultaneously with the European colonization of those regions of the New World. Many of their first poets had been forced to immigrate into these unknown parts of the world. Albeit the stylistic belatedness (as compared to their European standards and contemporaries), their poems remain invaluable documents for the understanding of history of the literary of cultural growth in Canada, and of its social and political contradictions and tensions. In fact, long before the urban shift in North-American in late 19th century, Canadian English poets had been giving a significant contribution to the building up of a national identity, mostly through their exploration of the pastoral myth. This essay interprets some significant moments and authors of this process.

KEYWORDS

Canadian Literature, Canadian Poetry, Colonial Period, Search for Identity, French in North America.

RESUMO

A poesia no actual Canadá começou quase em simultâneo com a colonização europeia desta região do Novo Mundo. Muitos destes primeiros poetas foram imigrantes forçados e, embora revelem muitas vezes um estilo anacrónico — quando comparado com os modelos europeus contemporâneos dominantes — os seus textos constituem um conjunto documental precioso para o melhor entendimento da História do crescimento literário e cultural do Canadá, das suas contradições e tensões actuais. Com efeito, muito antes da emergência do paradigma cultural urbano norte-americano em finais do século XIX, os poetas canadianos de língua inglesa deram um contributo significativo para a construção da identidade nacional do seu país, em particular através da exploração do mito pastoril. Este ensaio interpreta alguns autores e momentos significativos deste processo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Literatura canadiana, Poesia canadiana, Período colonial, Busca de identidade,
Literatura de língua francesa na América do Norte.

“The map is not the landscape”:
Canadian and other landscapes
in Jane Urquhart’s novel
A Map of Glass (2005)

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“The map is not the landscape”: Canadian and other landscapes in Jane Urquhart’s novel *A Map of Glass* (2005)¹

For the last five years I have been strongly engaged in the research and the teaching of Canadian Literature and Culture, mainly Canadian Literature in English. The fact that the literatures in English are presently studied in their national and geographical contexts is related to the postcolonial paradigm, and, in the case of Canada, explicitly to the emancipation of the country from an identity bound up with the history of the British Commonwealth and more recently, with economical and cultural alliances with the USA.

In my teaching experience, the common reaction of an undergraduate student at the start of a course called “Canadian Literature and Culture” is a blank: no preconceived ideas or items or images seem to appear on the “horizon of expectation around Canada”, except perhaps for the occasional immigrant parent in Toronto or the tranquil assumption that the history and literature of Canada is an extension of English and French Literature. No further comment seems to be required.

This is not the time nor the occasion to explain how Canada and Canadian literature has imposed itself in the last forty years with a sense of identity rooted in the aboriginal cultures and the European colonisation with its peculiar amalgam of Francophone, Anglophone, Allophone languages, religions, and literatures that now are part of the diversity of a multicultural nation called Canada. Neither is it the place to discuss the

¹ The expression “The map is not the landscape” belongs to the philosopher and scientist Alfred Kozybiski, whose theory in general semantics has inspired a new approach in psychotherapy.

extremely interesting question of transculturalism versus multiculturalism and to go into the peculiar relationship of the cultural identity of separate local and ethnic groups in Canada and the reality of a national belonging. Suffice it to say that to study Canada and Canadian literature sometimes looks like an exercise in imagining ways of life for our present day global predicament in the twenty first century.

There is, however, one common denominator that is inescapable in the discussion of Canadian literature and that is its geography.² When thinking of Canada, it is the sheer immensity of the landscape that comes to mind, its frozen wilderness and its resistance to human interference. Landscape haunts Canadian Literature, especially the inexorability with which it assaults the vulnerable individual. It is no coincidence that one of the books that helped to define Canadian Literature is called *Survival*, Margaret Atwood's *Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. (1972). If, according to Atwood the expansive dynamics of the American Literature of the USA may be translated by the metaphor of the "frontier" and the self-sufficiency of English literature by the image of the "island", *Survival* is the word that evokes and haunts all discussions of Canadian Literature.³

The haunting of landscape and the way geological formations of the landscape are bound up with the history of the people and the stratifications of mind are recurrent themes in the work of the contemporary Canadian author Jane Urquhart, and obsessively so in her last novel *A Map of Glass* (2005).

Jane Urquhart, born in 1949, is a poet, short story writer, critic, biographer and above all, one of today's most renowned novelists in Canada writing in English. Between 1986 and 2005 she published seven internationally acclaimed novels (*The Whirlpool*, 1986; *Changing Heaven*, 1990; *Away*, 1993; *The Underpainter*, 1997; *The Stone Carvers*, 2001;

² Canada is the second largest country in the world of almost 10 million square km and harbours a small, predominantly urban population of about 34.000 million inhabitants.

³ Margaret Atwood. *Survival. A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*. Toronto: McLelland and Steward, 2004 (1st ed. 1972).

a *A Map of Glass*, 2005 and recently, in 2010, *Sanctuary Line*.⁴ Urquhart is also a widely read novelist: her book *Away*, for instance, remained for 132 weeks on the bestseller list of Canada's newspaper *Globe & Mail*, the longest of any Canadian book ever. One of the reasons that Jane Urquhart is well accepted by the public may be related to the fact that, although employing complex narrative techniques, her books preserve intimations of unity and of the life-giving possibilities of connecting realities. Even when she draws in different narrators as in *A Map of Glass*, the reader is sustained by an embracing lyrical voice, an incantatory cadence, as it were, that reminds one of what the British psychiatrist Donald Winnicott calls a "holding environment" (Phillips, 1988:9). And the reader of Urquhart's novels needs to be held because reading Urquhart means to listen to strange tales of death, loss and madness, to be surprised by startling metaphors and unsettling images, to encounter characters that are eccentric and withdrawn, characters that have "a condition" as is said of the protagonist in *A Map of Glass*. A long voyage through multiple landscapes of obsessive loss awaits the reader of *A Map of Glass*: loss of civilizations, loss of memory, loss of love, loss of landscape, loss of trees and natural resources, loss of language, loss of the integrity of the body, loss of place. "Is there no place left?" (15), a character asks at the beginning of the novel. As I want to suggest, the answer may be found in the writing and reading of the novel itself, in the survival and maintenance of inner space, the space of the imagination.

A Map of Glass (2007) is structured in four parts and covers a time span that goes from the nineteenth to the twenty first century. The novel begins with a short introductory text that, at first glance, has a mysterious

⁴ In 1992, *The Whirlpool* was the first Canadian book to win France's prestigious Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger (Best Foreign Book Award). Urquhart's third novel, *Away*, won the 1994 Trillium Book Award and in 1994, Jane Urquhart received the Marian Engel Award for her entire body of work. In 1996 she was named "chevalier" to France's "Ordre des Arts et des Lettres". In the fall of 1997, *The Underpainter*, was published to wide critical acclaim, winning the 1997 Governor General's Award for English Fiction, and becoming a fixture on the national bestseller lists. In 2005, Urquhart was named an Officer of the Order of Canada.

connection with what follows. The rest of the book is then divided in three substantial parts, each with a separate title and introduced by a small landscape photograph. Parts 1, 2 and 4 have an anonymous third person narrator. The central piece, part three, is a first person narrative, told in the voice of Andrew Woodman, the character that dies in the opening section and that plays a substantial part in the whole novel.

The very short opening sequel (4 pages) evokes the mental disintegration, the subsequent acts of forgetting and the death of a character later identified as Andrew Woodman. The novel then continues as a tripartite structure, as if it were a triptych. The first panel, called "The Revelations", introduces a character called Jerome McNaughton who finds Andrew Woodman's dead body frozen in a shard of ice; Andrew's lover, Sylvia goes in search of Jerome to hand him over Andrew's notebooks.

The central part of the triptych, called "The Bog Commissioners" (144 pages) reveals the contents of Andrew's notebooks. It is the history of Timber Island, an island between lake and river in the mouth of the St Lawrence River where five generations of Woodman created and subsequently lost an economic empire built on the exportation of wood and the construction of vessels. The ravishing of the forests and the greedy tilting of the land ends in a generalized desertification: the earth turns into sand because of disrespect for the soil.

The last panel of the triptych, "A Map of Glass" (76 pages), returns to twenty first century Toronto, to Sylvia and Jerome. The book finishes with Jerome and his girlfriend Mira reading the ending that Sylvia has written to Andrew's unfinished story. Sylvia's text is reproduced in the novel as a first person narrative and thus seems to confirm that her story continues the history of the Woodman settlers and is not a hallucination as Sylvia's husband, Malcolm, claims.

But the ending leaves the matter undecided, because Sylvia herself suggests that both Andrew's story and her own may have been a construction of her own imagination:

All the while I have been talking to you I have been listening for the sound of Andrew's voice, because they are his stories. But now I have to admit that I have been listening in the way I listened to a stethoscope that belonged to my father. When I was a child, I removed it from my office so many

times that eventually.... I was given an instrument of my own for Christmas. I loved the rubber earpieces that shut out the noise of the world. But, even more, I loved the little silver bell at the end of the double hose, a bell I could place against my chest in order to listen to the drum, to the pounding music of my own complicated, fascinating heart. (369)⁵

The question that Jane Urquhart's novel seems to ask is a question about the validity of imaginary representations and their relation to history and reality. At a certain point in the book, Jerome says "As long as a story is being told, we believe in everything" (132) and, indeed, *A Map of Glass* seems to be a book that creates an imaginary space for survival, an interior bulwark against forgetting, decay and death. In Urquhart's book, history and landscape are preserved through the mapping and remapping that go into the creation of characters, settings, histories and the traces all of these leave on the landscape.

That reality can only be recorded through mappings/representations of various sizes and provenience explains the reason why the title of the book has been chosen in order to establish a connection with the American land artist Robert Smithson whose words are quoted as an epigraph to the novel:

*By drawing a diagram, a ground plan of a house, a street plan to the location of a site, or a topographic map, one draws a 'logical two dimensional picture'. A 'logical picture' differs from a natural or realistic picture in that it rarely looks like the thing it stands for. Robert Smithson, *The Collected Writings*. (Urquhart, 2006)*

The allusions to Robert Smithson are frequent in the novel, beginning with the title that is also the title of one of Smithson's installations of 1969, "A Map of Glass". In Smithson's work, "A Map of Broken Glass" was originally sketched as "A Map of Broken Clear Glass (*Atlantis*)" and finally installed in a site with the title: "*Hypothetical Continent. Map*

⁵ All quotations taken from *The Map of Glass* belong to the Bloomsbury Edition of 2006.

of *Broken Glass: Atlantis*.⁶ Smithson's work is a construction made of shards of broken glass, heaped one upon the other in a seemingly random manner. It is this work of Smithson that Jerome recalls in the novel, while he prepares his own land artwork:

Jerome stood at the end of the ice, thinking of Robert Smithson's Map of Broken Glass, about how the legendary Smithson had transported pieces of glass to the New Jersey site he had chosen, had heaped them into a haphazard shape, then waited for the sun to come out so that the structure would leap into vitality he knew existed when broken glass combined with piercing light. Smithson had been mostly concerned with mirrors at the time and yet he had chosen glass rather than mirrors, as if he had decided to exclude rather than to reflect the natural world. According to something Jerome had read, however, Smithson had come to believe the glass structure he had created was shaped like the drowned continent of Atlantis. Perhaps this explained his need to use material that would suggest the transparency of water. But Jerome was drawn to the brilliance and feeling of danger in the piece: the shattering of experience and the sense that one cannot play with life without being cut, injured. (18)

The description of the structure of pieces of glass "leaping into vitality" under the influence of the sun is an apt description of Urquhart's novel in which the broken fragments of the past "come to life" under the light of the imagination. What seems to matter, then, is not the question whether the imaginary construct bears a resemblance to the past (verisimilitude), but that it brings the past to life by keeping in motion the workings of the mind. This is what the characters need, for both, Sylvia and Jerome, "exclude" the world, entrenched as they are in their own selves. Sylvia suffers from "a condition": she is withdrawn, cannot suffer change or read people's faces. Jerome, on the other hand, is described as "a hermit in winter". Ever since his father's violent alcoholism and death, he has isolated himself in a place full of anger. A poster of the painting of his patron saint,

⁶ [http:// www.robertsmithson.com](http://www.robertsmithson.com). Accessed 20 March 2010.

St Jerome, hangs in his studio. It is a painting by the Flemish artist of the sixteenth century, Joachim Patinir, who is known as the pioneer of landscape painting as a genre and whom Dürer called “Der gute Landschaftmaler”.⁷ Like St Jerome, his namesake lives in the wilderness. And just as Saint Jerome is accompanied by a lion, Jerome tames a wild cat whom he calls Swimmer because “of the soundless fluidity of the animal’s movements” (27).

Fluidity, flow, life is what Jerome longs for, encapsulated as he is in his grief and unable to alter the picture of the hated dead father that he carries in his memory. In a dream of Jerome, however, it is the father himself who longs for change in an anticipatory movement that announces the shift in perspective of Jerome’s memories that will occur in the novel. Again, Jerome’s dream of his father is connected to Smithson’s *Map of Broken Glass*:

... it was his father, not Andrew Woodman, that he found trapped in the ice near the docks of Timber Island, trapped but still alive. On his ravaged face was an expression of such tenderness that Jerome reached forward to touch the frost-covered face. But when his fingers made contact with his father’s cheek, the whole head fragmented, collapsing into a confusion of thin transparent pieces on a flat surface, and suddenly he was looking at Smithson’s Map of Broken Glass. Each shard reflected something he remembered about his father: a signet ring, a belt buckle, a dark green package of cigarettes, an eye, a cufflink, the back of his hand, and Jerome knew that his father was broken, smashed, ... In the dream this was satisfying rather than distressing. In the dream it seemed that the alteration in his father was what he had wanted all along. (144-145)

The alteration that Jerome’s father seems to want in the dream may be the alteration that both Sylvia and Jerome long for. The two characters have installed themselves in unyielding positions and have become immobilized, Sylvia frozen in her “condition”, Jerome fixed in the intransigent picture of

⁷ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joachim_Patinir. Accessed 18 March 2010.

his alcoholic father. As long as they keep themselves isolated from change, they feel protected. But they also fend themselves off from the mobility inherent in life and experience vitality as the destruction of a familiar pattern and not as a potentiality for what is new. They therefore see life not as a promise, in anticipation driven by desire, but are forced to look upon it as an inevitable falling off, a going backwards, “*an exercise in forgetting*”. The expression is repeated twice in the text, once in speaking of Jerome, once in Sylvia’s direct speech.

In Jerome’s case, the expression is used when he arrives on Timber Island to create his land art, an art made in the snow and on the land “to document a series of natural environments” (11). Jerome thinks of himself not as an artist but as a chronicler, someone who explores nature in order to “mark the moment of metamorphosis, when something has changed from what it had been in the past” (11). Remembering the ingenious campfires his father used, he now sees their ignition as “*the burning of history of the country in miniature, a sort of exercise of forgetting first the Native peoples and then the settlers, whose arrival had been the demise of these peoples, settlers in whose blood was carried the potential for his own existence*”(15)⁸.

Three hundred pages later, Sylvia will express a similar idea and take up the idea of life as an exercise in forgetting, a gradual deletion of the spaces and the persons that make up the landscape of life:

*Perhaps, Jerome, all life is an exercise in forgetting*⁹. Think of how our childhood fades as we walk into adulthood, how it recedes and diminishes like a coastline from the deck of an oceanliner. First the small details disappear, then the specifics of built spaces, then the hills fall below the horizon one by one. People we have been close to, people who die, are removed from our minds feature by feature until there is only a fragment left behind, a glance, the shine of their hair, a few episodes, sometimes traumatic, sometimes tender, I have not been close to many people, Jerome, but I know that once they

⁸ Emphasis mine.

⁹ Emphasis mine.

leave us they become unsubstantial, and no matter how we try we cannot hold them, we cannot reconstruct. The dead don't answer when we call them. The dead are not our friends. (367)

It is no coincidence that the two characters who uphold the central part of the triptych, the part that chronicles the history of the settlers, think of life in terms of forgetting, decaying, dying. One could say that both Sylvia and Jerome exist as tombs for their lost ones. Sylvia carries her dead lover in the safety of her untouched and untouchable person, as if she were pregnant of a dead body. Jerome is immobilized by the anger with which he guards his father's memory. To give themselves over to movement — to history — would imply the loss of what they are most keen to safeguard: their image of the dead they watch over.

Yet at the end, after having gone through the history of their forebears both Sylvia and Jerome are changed: Sylvia is able to imagine a different relationship with her husband, Malcolm, while Jerome discovers love for a death father he thought he hated. Through reading and speaking, through commerce with words, through time shared and taken out from the rest of their lives in order to listen to one another, Sylvia and Jerome have drawn a map — fragile as glass perhaps, but not powerless — of the landscape where they and their dead may live.

The dead may not be our friends, as Sylvia says, but the novel as a whole claims that it is up to the living to remain friends with the dead, to honour not so much their absence, but to honour them *as* absence. *A Map of Glass* shows that one can come to life by speaking of the dead, create inner space by recording their disappearance, and thus remember by evoking forgetting. If a topographical map cannot adequately represent the reality it stands for, as Smithson claims, neither can a written text because it always remains a work that represents what is NOT there. On the other hand, and precisely because language — as representation — is always already founded upon an absence, it also becomes the privileged way to map absence, to make absence visible, to trace its various configurations in the gaps and fissures of the tapestry of words.

A Map of Glass begins with a celebration of loss, a lyrical evocation of the disappearance of inner space, the deletion of words and memory, the forgetting of names, the obliteration of a sense of self, a loss of everything. This is a four page prelude, a kind of lyrical fugue on the theme of loss, which, in its apparently inchoate form contains the intricate structure and the themes of the novel. It introduces “an older man walking in winter” (1) surrounded by shards of sounds and words drifting in and out of his disintegrating memory like flakes of the snow in the landscape. Before succumbing to the cold, the man pronounces the words: “I have lost everything” (5). The narrator comments: “And there is nobody there, to hear his voice, nobody at all” (6).

The tripartite text that follows constitutes an implicit response to the narrator’s comment: for every reader of the novel will come to hear the voice of “the one that lost everything” and come to know his loss through the many traces and witnesses recorded in the text. Multilayered fragments and splinters of all sizes and shapes will be heaped up to tell the story of Andrew Woodman, the man who forgot who he was, but whose own written words will be saved and disclosed (“revealed”) by the woman whom he was able to touch.

This woman is Sylvia whose name is associated in the text with the woods and thus, by extension with the name Woodman. Sylvia and Andrew Woodman seem predestined to meet by virtue of their names.¹⁰

Sylvia shows signs of what seems to be a mental illness, always referred to by the expression “the condition”: she is withdrawn, resistant to change, cannot bear to be touched, and concentrates on objects or enumerations in order to escape the unpredictability of people. She is cared for and loved by her husband Malcolm who respects Sylvia’s wish not to be touched and goes and lives with his wife in her parental home in order not to change her “familiar landscape”, the frame that guarantees her security and sense of self. Never is Sylvia’s “condition” referred to by a

¹⁰ There is an allegorical quality to the novel. The text itself reflects on the names of the characters and of places, thus inviting the reader to do the same. Is Jerome McNought linked to the emptiness (nought/nothing) that inhabits him?

medical term.¹¹ And yet, medical terms are mentioned in the novel as possible maps of the body. For instance, when Sylvia reads the scientific titles of her husband's medical books, she thinks of them in terms of maps of the sick body:

Clinical Gastroenterology, Pathological Basis of Disease, An Index of Differential Diagnosis, Medical Mycology, The Metabolic Basis of Inherited Disease, Principals of Surgery. She went to sleep comforted by the thought that someone, anyone, had taken the trouble to attend to a tragic alteration of the body, as if they had wanted to **draw a map of its regions, then explore its territories.** (315-316)¹²

Sylvia's husband will later dismiss Andrew Woodman as "the Alzheimer patient" (353) and with three words destroy the full dimension of the "man walking in winter" who the reader feels to have known intimately in the musical piece of loss of the first pages. Malcolm will also explain away Sylvia's love for the dead man as a product of "hallucinatory imagination", fuelled by too much reading.

In the novel, Malcolm is drawn as a caring and loving husband of a mentally ill woman. But he is also presented as entrenched in the (good) opinion he has of himself and of his diagnosis of his wife's condition. In the end, Sylvia feels responsible for the image her husband nurtures of herself and senses that to dare "not to have a condition" (as her blind friend Julia claims she has not) could destroy his balance. Thus Urquhart opposes scientific labels to imaginary constructs to confront the issue of naming and categorizing as forms of "mapping" that may not only be highly reductive of the complexity of a person but may serve intricate relations of power and ownership.

¹¹ Sylvia's symptoms do very much call to mind stereotypes associated to the syndrome of autism, but the word is never used in the text. In almost all Urquhart's novels strange characters appear who share a reluctance to enter the order of "common" sense or commonly shared habits and ways of action. It would be very interesting to study the author's work from the point of view of the "outsiders" that inhabit them and of the "outsider art" they often produce.

¹² Italics in the book, emphasis mine.

Sylvia is a typical Urquhart character, a character resistant to change because it refuses the categorizations imposed upon her by others. Therefore and paradoxically she becomes herself an agent of chance.¹³ In a sense, all Urquhart's novels deal with the refusal or rejection of familiar labels and the need for new ways of speaking in the face of new and overwhelming experiences. In her books, the necessity for a novel language is linked to the experience of the Canadian landscape and the way its sheer otherness invites "deterritorialization" (Goldman, 2005:102) and wipes out the traditional languages coming from the European continent, especially the British Isles and the USA. Change, movement, the essence of life, Urquhart's books suggests, come about through an intrinsic relationship between the "alterations of the body" and the alterations of the landscape" that must find a new language to be made real. To inhabit the new world, the "common sense" and "established metaphors" of the old world must be re-shaped and find new forms to come into existence.

In *A Map of Glass*, the change is brought about through a series of mappings and re-mappings that show that naming and being named cannot be avoided, that they are necessary to life, because — as Sylvia says — "*there is always, always a condition*" (359). One never escapes being categorized. Yet, as the psychotherapist Alfred Kozybiski famously remarked in words that echo those of Smithson, "the map is not the landscape", reminding that words and things do not necessary coincide and that some realities may change by invention of new and better stories

¹³ Cf. *The Whirlpool*, the *Underpainter*, *The Stonecarvers*... In her first novel, *The Whirlpool*, set in Canada of the 19th century, it is said that no daffodils are to be found in the Canadian landscape, a clear allusion to how the perception of language in the English world is shaped by the nineteenth-century Romantic Poetry and how inadequate this poetry is to describe the new world. In the *Whirlpool*, the incapacity to embrace new ways of seeing and speaking will lead to the death of one of the characters and to the disappearance of the Browning-obsessed female protagonist who walks away from the confinement of a ritualized domestic life and disappears into the wild Canadian landscape. Interesting enough, it is also a small, strange boy who becomes the agent of liberation for another character, Maud. Refusing to speak, treating words like sonorous objects without meaning, the boy imposes his own, peculiar order on his mother's world and thus liberates her of what she comes to recognize as an obsession with death.

to describe them. Interesting enough, the book that describes the psychiatric methods based on Kozybiski's theories, bears as epigraph a quote from Jorge Luis Borges about representations and reality: "A good book changes the outlook on reality. No book is a mirror of reality but something that is accrued to reality" (Lefevere de Ten Hove, 2000: 9). Making a map leaves its trace on the landscape and changes it.

In a *Map of Glass*, all characters, however fugitive or secondary, are engaged in the making of maps. Some maps are drawn on parchment like the maps of the bogs that Joseph Woodman was commissioned to investigate in Ireland; Annabelle, his daughter, has a "book of relics, her splinter book" (205) in which she keeps remnants of floors, vessels, floors, wooden constructions, and trees, "all dated, identified, and catalogued" (205). Jerome, the landscape artist, makes markings on the snow and removes with pick or hands everything that has accumulated in its contours thus revealing layers of ice "like strata on a rock face" (20)¹⁴. Sylvia makes tactile maps for her blind friend Julia. She uses everyday materials: buttons, silver paper, "colorful ribbons and scraps" of fabrics (352) to enable her friend to see landscapes, itineraries and places. Andrew, the "historical geographer" (77), "studies geological phenomena and traces of human activity that were left behind on the surface of the earth" (68). It is perhaps Andrew's ability to read the geological formations underlying surface structures that allow him to walk through the barriers that entrench Sylvia and to touch her. Andrew compares Sylvia to an anthropological or archaeological discovery (325) because she is "emplaced", "intact", "preserved" into the soil by generations of fixedness: (325). Embracing Sylvia thus becomes bringing into life landscapes that do not want to give themselves over to change, that wish to remain intact. Sylvia's "emplacement", what her husband Malcolm calls her "condition" may thus be read as a refusal to be part in the greedy destruction and exploration of the Canadian landscape, a guardian of the landscape that "is disappearing" (343), a preserver, in her own body, of history because, "she knew the histories of the old settlers as well as she knew her own body" (37).

¹⁴ Hence the title of the first part of the triptych: "The Revelations".

On the other hand, Sylvia's need to tell someone of her love for Andrew, to speak the dead one into life so to say, also shows how unbearable a position of emplacement is, how the flow of life is inseparable from movement and chance. Living, *A Map of Glass*, seems to say, implies the risk of trust, of engaging in conversation, in work, in creation. All elements of life, all people and objects and items leave traces on the landscape: to observe those traces and to re-arrange them in a never ending remapping is the work of the settler, the artist and the lover. Life is not an exercise in forgetting, it is an exercise in rearranging, opening space for death and destruction, for the wounds caused by shards of glass, for the transparency that, illuminated by the imagination, makes "the structure leap into vitality".

One wonders what kind of aesthetic such a life work requires. One of the possibilities is Smithson's *Map of Broken Glass*, an installation that emphasizes the sharpness that cannot be thought away, the shards that refuse to melt and unify the dissonant parts and yet does not inhibit the vital flow of light. Another is Urquhart's *A Map of Glass*, a book that speaks of dissonance, but clearly privileges fluidity and, in an almost titanic structure, celebrates the transforming power of the imagination in bringing back the past to renewed life. Both forms point to the possibility of other configurations and beckon us to draw the map of our own geographies and thus to engage in and honour life.

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ABSTRACT

The title of Jane Urquhart's novel of 2005, *A Map of Glass*, is borrowed in an acknowledged gesture to the landscape artist Robert Smithson, in particular his installation *A Map of Broken Glass*. The novel is also broken up and structured as a series of narratives set in different times and spaces but all evoking multiple landscapes of loss: loss of civilizations, loss of generations of settlers, loss of memory, loss of love, loss of trees and natural resources, loss of language, loss of the integrity of the body, loss of place. At the same time that the remnants of loss are mapped out, however, new landscapes emerge and are des-covered in the telling and reading of narrative itself which thus presents itself as the privileged landscape of memory that guarantees the maintenance of inner space, the space of the imagination.

KEYWORDS

Memory– Landscape-Map-Art-History/Canada.

RESUMO

O título do romance de Jane Urquhart, *A Map of Glass*, de 2005, foi emprestado do artista paisagista Robert Smithson como forma de reconhecimento do seu trabalho, em particular da sua instalação *A Map of Broken Glass*. A estrutura do romance também se encontra desfragmentada numa série de narrativas que se desenrolam em diferentes espaços e tempos, embora evocando sempre múltiplas paisagens de perda: perda de civilizações, perda de gerações de colonos, perda de memória, perda de amor, perda das florestas e recursos naturais, perda da linguagem, perda da integridade do corpo humano, perda de lugar. Todavia, ao mesmo tempo que os remanescentes da perda são delineados, outras paisagens emergem e são des-cobertas através da escrita e leitura da própria narrativa que, desta forma, apresenta-se como o espaço privilegiado da memória que garante a subsistência do espaço interior: o espaço da imaginação.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Memória, paisagem, mapa, arte, História/Canadá.

From Alice Munro's *Sowesto* – Not so Much Happiness After All

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From Alice Munro's *Sowesto* – Not so Much Happiness After All

D*ance of the Happy Shades*, published in 1968, was Alice Munro's debut as a short fiction writer. Since then she has become a Governor General's Award-winning-author of other collections, and the recipient of the 2009 Third Man Booker International Prize for her achievement in fiction.¹

Alice Munro is known for her irony, apparent in *Too Much Happiness*,² her most recent collection, and the object of our analysis in this paper. Joyce, one of her characters, looks upon the short fiction writer as one who “is just hanging on to the gates of Literature, rather than safely settled inside” (“Fiction” 49-50). Munro can afford teasing her reader as much as she likes. She has crossed the threshold of the gates long ago, being “safely settled inside” the literary realm as one of the craftiest storytellers in the English-speaking world.

In one of her interviews,³ Munro says that to reread Chekhov is a “humble experience” joining, in her reverence for the Russian author, many a storyteller, including modernists like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf or Katherine Mansfield, regarded as inheritors of the “Chekhovian tradition” (Head 2009:16). They brought formal innovations into the conventional

¹ Alice Munro, whose fiction is translated into over thirty languages, has written for such magazines as *The Canadian Forum*, *The Montrealer* and *The New Yorker*.

² All further references are to the following edition: *Too Much Happiness*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2009. The titles of the stories will be indicated in the text.

³ Munro, Alice. www.randomhouse.com/vintage/read/goodwoman/munro.html. “Reading Group Centre. A Conversation with Alice Munro.”

English short story,⁴ designated nowadays as short fiction, a term better suited to a genre with such fluid boundaries encompassing, among other forms, the sketch, the story and the novella.⁵

Despite her preference for the story told “in the old-fashioned way”, Alice Munro admits to “violate the discipline of the short story form” so that the reader may feel astonished not with “what happens”, but with the “way everything happens” in her stories involving, she adds, “quite a bit of interruption, turnarounds and strangeness”. Munro implies digressions, continuous shifts in time and changes in verb tenses since the narrated events are purported to have happened in the past, memory retrieving them at random and so impeding linearity as well as cause and effect relationships. Sometimes, warns the writer, memory “gets lost” and the “start of a story” becomes “unrecognizable” in the end, breaking the circularity in most of her stories. They can reach a dramatic peak before the final revelation, the meaning of which appearing often meaningless to the reader,⁶ defied, thus, to ask: What is it all about? However ambiguous, her

⁴ Modernist writers subverted traditional notions on perspective, unity and closure, having also rescued the short story character from its psychological seclusion by stressing “inner characterization,” as expanded in Virginia Woolf’s essays, “Modern Fiction” and “Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” (*Selected Essays* 2008:6-22; 32-36). R. B. Kershner also underlines the protagonist’s “inner dialogism” in “The Dead” by James Joyce: “On the one hand Gabriel’s experience is shaped by the series of outwardly manifest dialogical encounters with others, culminating in his dialogue with his wife; on the other, his perceptions are increasingly dominated by an internal dialogue between his every inner monologue and the disturbing, unwonted inner voice that calls him lyrically to the outdoors, to the snow, to the west, and to the dead” (*Joyce, Bakhtin* 1989:139-140).

⁵ Per Winther, Jakob Lothe and Hans H. Skei privilege the term *short fiction* owing to the interdisciplinary scope of the genre: “As pointed out by Susan Lohafer, discussions of the short story now tend to be ‘genre-bending and interdisciplinary,’ and the editors felt that a slight shift in nomenclature might help to signal an allegiance to this wider view of the genre. This certainly does not represent a disavowal of a break with former short story theory, but rather a willingness to align our analytical efforts with recent developments in the theory of the genre” (*The Art of Brevity* 2004:ix).

⁶ John Bayley mentions the “duality” of a “good” short story generally expressing “... our human awareness that everything in life is full of significance, and at the same time that nothing in it has any significance at all. Every situation or event may have a story in

fiction lends itself to a contextual analysis, the literary “artificiality” of the genre not precluding its “re-presentation” of the social world (Head 2009: 185-205). The unfamiliar, or “strangeness”, as Munro calls it, entails odd coincidences, weird types, quirky events and eruptions of violence touching the gory.⁷ Unlike many contemporary writers, Alice Munro does not threaten the reader with an impending catastrophe, but some of her stories mirror the world as a scary place in which to live. One of her enigmatic short sentences can send “a chill along the reader’s spine”, to paraphrase Raymond Carver, himself a remarkable storyteller (2009:730).

As for characterization, Alice Munro wants “to give as much of” her characters “as she can”. Actually, the Canadian author makes use of any narrative device available to reveal her characters’ inner conflicts, from the confessional account by a first-person narrator who has lived through it all, to perceptions and feelings *seen* from within the character’s mind by the use of free indirect style, as in “psycho-narration” (Cohn 1978:21-57). Munro’s fiction requires more than a “synchronic”⁸ reading owing to the various times in it, including the character’s inner temporality conditioning the plot.⁹ A character may engage in a self-reflexive evaluation of human behaviour resembling the metatextual commentary in postmodern fiction. Marlene for instance evokes childhood fears to justify her hatred for a girl

it, but the short story’s best art will also reveal an absence: the absence of its own meaning” (*The Short Story* 1988:182).

⁷ One of Alice Munro’s goriest stories is “Carried Away” (*Carried Away* 2006:231-275), in the collection that goes by the same name. Having ordered someone to clean up the mess caused by a terrible accident, Arthur Doud, the owner of a piano factory in Carstairs, picks up the worker’s bleeding head, severed by a machine shaft from his body, and wonders what to do with it. According to the narrator, “[t]he answer to that came too. Set it down, put it back where it belongs, not of course fitted with exactness, not as if a seam could be closed. Just more or less in place, and lift the jacket and tug it into a new position” (259). Doud was unaware that the head belonged to the corpse of Jack Agnew, a war veteran who, while serving in the Army, had exchanged love letters with Louise, who, some time later, became Arthur’s wife. This time, the trick played on the reader is a macabre one.

⁸ See Mary Rohrberger, “Origins, Development, Substance, and Design”, 2004:1-13.

⁹ Letters, poems and dreams may add to the “inward turning” of her stories, as in “Dimensions”; “Wenlock Edge”; “Face”; “Child’s Play”; “Too Much Happiness”.

named Velma who, Marlene claims, possessed special powers (“Child’s Play” 188-233). For being different, Velma was treated as a freak in a community bound by secrecy, prejudice and intolerance. Words like *coolie*, *darkie* and *jewing* were common among the youngsters attending a summer camp where, paradoxically, the motto was *loving-kindness*.

The rotation interchange of narrative techniques in each of Munro’s collections not only provides variety, but also underlines what Dorrit Cohn describes as “the interdependence of narrative realism and the mimesis of consciousness” (1978:8). One *listens* to Kent’s inarticulate speech, while he explains to his mother, Sally, the reasons for his conversion to the hippy culture thriving high in Toronto during the 60s (“Deep Holes” 93-115). Just a few pages ahead, one *sees* the *workings of the mind* when a man, born with a purple birthmark, tells of how his facial flaw turned his life upside down (“Face” 138-163).¹⁰ Ashamed of their child’s handicap, his parents kept him at home and so avoided having him exposed to the outside world, his boorish father not missing an occasion to humiliate him. The boy’s forbearance stopped when Nancy, his sole playmate, painted one side of her face red in order, she said, to look like him. He went into a rage, the colour having to do with it. He thought that half of his face was brown, as mirrors in his house were high enough for him not to see his reflection. For her prank, little Nancy was punished by her own mother, who sliced into her daughter’s cheek with a razor blade to make the girl appear as physically flawed as the boy. Soon afterwards, both Nancy and her mother moved away, no one knowing what had become of them. As a result of the incident, he was sent to a boys’ school, later becoming a kind of *disneur*, reading poetry inside a radio studio where he could not be seen. With his parents both dead, the lonely man was about to move into a new house, when he came across a poem that brought back his childhood incident. He thought of what it would be like if he spotted Nancy in the Toronto subway, each recognizing the other through their facial marks. However, the hypothetical reunion made him ask and answer his own question: “You think that would have changed things? The answer is of course, and for a while, and never” (163). Fearing that his past would haunt him

¹⁰ Like in other stories of the collection, the first person narrator remains nameless throughout.

regardless of where he went, the man gave up the idea of moving into a new place, staying where he had always been, likely carrying his burden for the rest of his days. A man of his age and so socially alienated would hardly be the one to challenge fate or something of the sort, the open-ended story turning into irony.

As with most postmodern authors, Munro challenges genre boundaries,¹¹ also succumbing to “the pastime of past time”, as Canadian scholar Linda Hutcheon refers to the postmodern tendency of exploring the interrelationships between past and present through fiction (1988:105-123). In the last story that gives the title to her collection, the lure of the past takes Munro to cosmopolitan nineteenth-century Europe, the scenario for the life story of Sophia Kovalevski, the Russian-born fiction writer and mathematician (“Too Much Happiness” 246-303).¹²

In her late thirties, Sophia had found love with Maxsim, a Russian and exile himself. Alice Munro has the two lovers express their feelings through dialogue, starting, ominously, in a cemetery. Their love-story, built through spatiotemporal juxtapositions, depends largely on Sophia’s inner self, shown by an omniscient narrator that moves in and out of her mind adapting constantly to her changing moods. Maxsim is perceived

¹¹ Munro crosses the borders between the short fiction and the novel, in *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971), or between the short story and the biography, in *The View from Castle Rock* (2006). In the letter, the Canadian author traces the story of her ancestors back to eighteenth-century Scotland, in Ettrick Valley.

¹² Sophia Kovalevski happened to be a runaway aspiring to a formal education and a professional career, both denied to her in her homeland. After having received her doctorate from the University of Göttingen in 1874, Sophia moved to Stockholm, where she was offered a teaching position, the Swedes being “the only people in Europe willing to hire a female mathematician for their university.” (252). Munro shows glimpses of Kovalevski’s life, her marriage of convenience to Vladimir, who later committed suicide; her closeness to her sister, Anyuta, who went to live in Paris; her studying under Karl Weierstrass’ supervision, in Berlin. Munro’s portrayal of Sophia, who suffered from bouts of depression, resembles a nineteenth-century romantic heroine, her life better described as a “struggle for happiness”, the title of a play that Sophia herself co-authored with Anna Leffler. Alice Munro ends her story with a poetical obituary: “Sophia’s name has been given to a crater on the moon” (303). It pays homage to the Russian woman’s achievements in astronomy, also turning her into something from outer space, as Sophia must have appeared to some who knew her.

as a man not big enough to cope with Sophia's brilliant career, his cool manner towards her triggered by envy. It did not prevent the unmarried couple from travelling all over Europe causing scandal in some conventional circles. The Bordin Prix, awarded to Sophia by the French Academy of Sciences, only made things worse. Before dying of pneumonia, Sophia was heard whispering the words "too much happiness" recalling, one might guess, the happy moments she had with her Cossack. He attended her funeral in Stockholm, but spoke of her "as if she were a professor of his acquaintance", acting out of resentment. The ending of the story exposes what was left of Sophia's self-delusion. By focusing on Sophia's love life, Munro dilutes the feminist overtones that might be detected in her portrayal of the Russian woman, a pioneer in the struggle for women's rights.

Her recreation of Sophia takes Munro back in time, and miles away from her Sowesto, the physical setting that has become the frequent spatial referent in her fiction.¹³ The bush also defies Munro's imagination. Roy, not your usual Canadian lumberjack but a fine woodworker, is trapped in the bush with a broken ankle ("Wood" 224-245). Afraid of not surviving, he reviews his life, miserable since his wife's sudden change from a warm, "nice-looking" woman into a drag, with no interest in anything including her husband. To Roy's surprise, she is the one who comes to his rescue, her former "vitality" regained. A bigger revelation was still to come when Roy looked back and noticed that the bush had turned into a dark "Deserted Forest" not to be trespassed by a human being. This sort of parable is a warning to those who dare interfere with Mother Nature.

Unlike some of her own fellow Canadians, Alice Munro chose to stay in her homeland. After having lived for over twenty years in British Columbia, she returned to her native Ontario, by then no longer as culturally Calvinist and colonialist as when she grew up in Wingham, her hometown. Before the 70s, parts of Ontario were still dominated by a

¹³ It relates to flat farmland bordering Lake Huron and Lake Erie, in south-western Ontario, the Canadian province sandwiched between two other provinces, Quebec, in the East, and Manitoba, in the West; in the North, endless forested land reaching Hudson Bay and James Bay, and, in the south, four huge lakes form a sort of frontier with the United States of America. On the shores of Lake Ontario rises Toronto, one of the most cosmopolitan cities in North America.

Protestant ethic and the notion that a woman, preferably barefoot and pregnant, had her place in the kitchen, to paraphrase the old saying, child bearing and motherhood being more like a duty than a joy. In her fiction, Munro captures the stifling atmosphere lived in a small town, in and after the Great Depression, in wartime and post war years.¹⁴ Hints of bigotry, gossip, family feuds and pettiness are as much a part of the lore as shopping at Canadian Tyre, eating butterscotch sundaes, or watching *Hockey Night in Canada*. A cluster of winners and losers, mostly women, try to escape from their dreary lives.

Doree rides back and forth through heavy snowstorms to visit her husband, Lloyd, serving time in a prison psychiatric ward, in London, Ontario, for the murder of their three children (“Dimension” 1-31). On the bus, she plays word games as meaningless as her life of neglect and abuse since childhood. Lloyd still has a hold on her, Doree being as much a prisoner as he is. During one of her trips, she gets off the bus to help a boy who had an accident, obviously a sudden turnabout. One will never know if Doree takes the next bus to London, or if she will ever free herself from her emotional dependency on Lloyd. The story ends there.

Doree is not the only one involved in some kind of imprisonment. There is Nina, a “party girl” in a Chicago bar before meeting Mr. Purvis, who brought her to Canada (“Wenlock Edge” 62-92). Creepy Mr. Purvis, who enjoyed listening to Housman’s poetry read by naked girls, did not let go of Nina having her under surveillance for fear that she might walk out on him.¹⁵ As with Doree, the reader wonders if Nina will ever make it on her own. She and the old man disappear never to be seen again. It is difficult to feel sympathy for Nina, portrayed as an ignorant little tramp by a class-conscious female narrator, a major in English and Philosophy.

There is still a “home wrecker” like Nita, recently widowed and dying of cancer (“Free Radicals” 116-137). Nita postpones her own death

¹⁴ For instance, by mid-seventies, a singsong like “There’ll Always Be an England” would hardly become a favourite among young campers, as in “Child’s Play”, the bizarre story told by Marlene.

¹⁵ Nina’s fling with Botts, a worker with the Canadian National Railways, might have been one of her attempts to break away from Purvis’s grip and go on with her life.

at the hands of a young psychopath who, like Lloyd, had killed three family members, flaunting their pictures taken before and after being shot. Nita tells him a story in which she makes herself pass for a cold-blooded murderer, their criminal pasts creating a bond between them.¹⁶ The young man buys her story, and spares her life, taking off with her car keys. The next morning, a constable knocks at Nita's door announcing that a man "wanted for a triple murder" had stolen her car, later having been killed in an accident. Not aware of her terrifying experience, the officer adds: "You were lucky you didn't run into him." Nita did escape an earlier death, but she had not much time left anyway.

The Munroian world is never a tidy one. Startling revelations are no epiphanies either, leaving the reader perplexed as to how, why or what, questions one asks in everyday life whenever things are perceived as beyond our reach of understanding. Female characters scarcely leave their small town environment. If driven by ambition, they move on to Toronto, like Roxanne, a girl "from some lost little town in northern Ontario", who, before becoming a masseuse, worked as a cleaner finally making it as a "sales girl" in Eaton's "glove department" ("Some Women" 164-187). Others, as Christie O' Dell, go further than that ("Fiction" 32-61). A daughter of an alcoholic unwed mother, Christie becomes a successful fiction writer, not that usual among Canadian women during the 40s and 50s, Literature still being a man's world.¹⁷

¹⁶ Despite her not being a real murderer, Nita saw herself as a sinner, a "home-wrecker," for having stolen Rich, her deceased husband, from Bett, Rich's first wife, something that lingered in Nita's mind as she recalls her whole life before letting the young man into her house.

¹⁷ Before the 60s, the most read female writers were Gabrielle Roy and Lucy Montgomery. Roy became well known for her novel, *Bonheur d'occasion* (1945), later translated into English as *The Tin Flute*. Montgomery was the creator of the little red-haired orphan in *Anne of Green Gables* (1908). Neither novel tells a happy story. "What one misses, though, is joy", writes Margaret Atwood as she comments on a number of Canadian novels (*Survival* 1972:141). Regarding the scarcity of women writers, Atwood comments elsewhere: "Many reasons could be given for this state of affairs, but suffice to say that such was the reality, and it — as well as the observable fact that men have historically been more interested in literature as a game than women have been — accounts for the scarcity of female writers in this collection. More women writers of all

In English-speaking Canada, culture was imported either from London or New York¹⁸ and book publishing was generally in the hands of British and Americans. It took some time before Can Lit,¹⁹ as it is called today, was introduced as such in the academic curricula, the first journal on *Canadian Literature* appearing in 1959. The situation would eventually change during the 60s, when a Canadian publishing industry began to develop against all odds. Curiously, Munro's Books opened in Victoria Old Town, British Columbia in 1963, the owners being Alice Munro and her first husband. The bookstore, still in business, survived the couple's legal separation. It is not *par hazard* that infidelity, partner switching, divorce and remarriage are common topics in Munro's fiction.

But there are limits to sexual promiscuity, as shown in the story narrated by the woman "amazed" to think of how old she is ("Some

kinds would appear in Canada shortly. Margaret Laurence would come to prominence, Alice Munro and Marian Engel would publish at the tail end of 1960s, and many more would follow, some of whom wrote "experimental" fiction and are included in this book. But writing in the 1960s was pretty much a guy thing, in Canada as elsewhere, in experimental literature as well as in the "mainstream" (*Moving Targets* 2004:298).

¹⁸ In the early days of Television, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, one of the media to boost *the mystique of Canadianism*, had to compete with the major television networks from south of the border. They lead the ratings, though, with *Hockey Night in Canada*, the event, like the sport, bringing Canadians together from coast to coast.

¹⁹ Under the British colonialist rule, literary boundaries were somewhat fuzzy owing partly to the "old-style" way of teaching literature, as Margaret Atwood puts it. The writer recalls the times when children, like herself, were given excerpts to read from "English literature, mingled with bits from [Canadian] native singers and songstresses" (*Moving Targets* 2004:203) After having completed high school, the youngsters had heard of so many English-speaking-writers that at least one of them, they thought, had to be a Canadian. Elleke Bohemer also mentions the Canadian difficulty in finding an identity different from Britain and the USA: "Canadians, the novelist Margaret Laurence observed in the 1970s, needed to 'write out of what is truly [theirs] in the face of an overwhelming cultural imperialism' directed from both Britain and the United States ('Ivory Tower or Grassroot'). Reiterating a question Frye had posed — 'Where is here?' — Margaret Atwood in *Survival* (1972) also argued that Canada had to make itself known to itself, to develop a distinct self-consciousness, to conceptualize its 'here' in relation to a colonial 'there' always regarded as more sophisticated" (*Colonial & Postcolonial Literature* 2005:205).

Women” 164-187). She not only reproduces her past consciousness, but also remembers the drama lived in the Crozier’s household, as if it were still unfolding before her eyes. She was only thirteen when hired to take care of Bruce Crozier, while his wife, Sylvia, a college teacher, was away twice a week. Young Bruce had been stricken by leukemia soon after returning safely from the war. The locals criticized his wife for not staying home all the time to look after her sick husband, claiming that her marriage vows were to be taken to the letter. Bruce, her husband, did honour them, despite, or in consequence of, being close to death. When he noticed that foxy Roxanne had an interest in him other than a therapeutic one, he made sure that the masseuse would not come near him by locking himself in his bedroom, all this with the thirteen year old girl’s connivance, who kept the key to be given only to his wife. It is not clear, though, whether a man as sick as Bruce would cope with Roxanne’s “carnality”, or whether he was just being faithful to his marriage vows, an extra-marital affair, however brief, out of question. Looking back, the old woman thinks that Bruce and Sylvia had gone through health and sickness, till death did them part, Bruce passing away with Sylvia by his side amidst the idyllic scenery of a Canadian lake in early autumn. “I grew up and old”, says the woman, cutting off the Crozier’s love story. At thirteen, she had learnt about love and death, probably as much as she would for the rest of her days, having lived long enough to realize that.

In the same story, Munro has a real flesh and blood figure make a cameo appearance; Barbara Ann Scott, the skating star once known as Canada’s “sweetheart”, drops into Eaton’s store, and buys a pair of “white kid gloves” from Roxanne. The Olympic Gold Medal winner, herself from Ontario, might have been one, among many, who helped shake Canadians out of their hibernation to wake up for an identity quest²⁰

²⁰ The search for an identity became a thematic in Canadian literature from the 60s onwards, as seen in Alice Munro’s fiction, and her generation of women writers, among them, Anne Hébert, Marian Engel, Marie Claire Blais and Margaret Laurence. Post-colonial times prompted the recovery of stories that told about the struggles of early settlers, regarded as heroes and heroines, as the characters in the *Jalna* saga, a CBC television series based on *The Whiteoak Chronicles* (1854-1954) by Mazo de La Roche. *Roughing It in the Bush*, a diary written by an English immigrant, Susanna Moodie,

reaching beyond regional frontiers²¹ and eventually leading to a Canadian sense of nationhood.

In Munro's story about the woman who visits her Flower Child son in the Toronto of the 60s, Sally feels embarrassed about what folks from her part of the country would say if they saw people, in the big city, using "turbans, saris and dashikis", as if, she says, "you were in the Congo or India or Vietnam. Anyplace but Ontario" ("Deep-Holes" 107-8). Sally also realizes that foreigners "hadn't just arrived ... they had got past the moving-in phase". Implicit in her remarks, though, was that the colonialist times of the "fair domain" were fading away, and a new Canada was emerging becoming, in less than two decades, a bilingual country and a multicultural society.²²

Yet, the past haunts Munro's characters, incapable, it seems, of shaking it off their minds so guilt-ridden had they become, a long buried secret suddenly bursting out as an explosion. Munro, who never hurries to

became not only a piece of travelling writing on pioneering life in nineteenth-century Ontario, but also an intertext for further literary interpretations by authors like Margaret Atwood and Carol Shields. Moodie, who had come from a family of literati fashioned on Victorian writing, described her ordeals in a bush farm in the backwoods of Ontario. Despite her ambiguous feelings regarding the Canadian wilderness, her account might have discouraged "gentle-folk" like herself from settling in Upper Canada, as it was known at the time. However, snow storms, mosquitoes, even bears did not deter successive waves of people — lower, middle or uppers — who immigrate to Ontario, as the Empire Loyalists had done before, when the American Revolution broke out; or, the Irish, threatened by starvation due to the potato famine; or, the poor and jobless who, after the Napoleonic Wars, looked for a home in Canada. Some of the new comers were on their way to the Western provinces, particularly after the Great Depression and the Second World War.

²¹ Breaking with regional frontiers meant the end of the "garrison mentality," an expression used by Northrop Frye, the inventor of the "archetypal criticism," Frye himself being an archetype of a "Canadian sensibility".

²² In 1968, Canada became officially bilingual, French and English receiving equal status. In 1982, the remaining constitutional links between Canada and Great Britain were severed through the Canada Act, and the Canadian Constitution was repatriated from London to Ottawa. Canadian novelist Nino Ricci writes about those times in his fictionalized biography of Pierre Elliot Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada. See *Pierre Elliot Trudeau* (2009).

“satisfy the reader’s curiosity” (May 2004:17), waits till the end before disclosing who had killed Verna, her head having been pushed below the water by Marlene and her friend Charlene, the two girls bound by their “Don’t tell” pact (“Child’s Play”). The reader had anticipated the worst all along, only wishing that things would somehow turn out differently.

At the end, the unexpected dialogue between the people who ran the camp is a shift of “narrative focus” (Winther 2004:61) meant to make them responsible for Verna’s drowning, and clear Charlene and Marlene of their crime, committed while swimming in the lake on their very last day in the summer camp. When someone noticed that “special” Verna was missing, it was too late, both culprits “gone by then” (223), Marlene’s final words. The pact broken by Charlene’s death, disavowal is Marlene’s way of coping with her troubled past, for how long the reader cannot say.

Munro’s characters are less than lovable representations. Mostly old and close to death, they relive critical episodes in their pasts presumably in atonement for their wrongs. If forgiveness is within their reach, one will never know. But the whole story is never told anyway, just glimpses, enough to keep the reader astonished with “the way everything happens”.

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ABSTRACT

Too Much Happiness (2009) is Alice Munro's latest volume of short fiction. In this paper, we intend to analyse the main narrative strategies used by the Canadian author, one of the craftiest storytellers of the contemporary English-speaking world. Our commentary also points to the relevance of such a sophisticated literary genre as short fiction to the understanding of the Munroian universe, with its thematic threads, dense characterization, self-conscious retrospective accounts and often startling inconclusive endings. At the same time, we will examine Munro's writing in the light of a broader literary and social context going back to colonial times, before a Canadian self-consciousness began to emerge from the middle of the last century onwards.

KEYWORDS

Short fiction; narrative strategies; metafiction; inconclusiveness; Ontario.

RESUMO

Too Much Happiness (2009) é o título do último volume de ficção curta escrito por Alice Munro. Nesta comunicação, propomo-nos analisar as estratégias narrativas mais importantes utilizadas pela autora canadiana, conhecida como uma das *storytellers* mais talentosas do mundo de língua inglesa. O nosso comentário também chama a atenção para a relevância de um gênero literário tão sofisticado como o da ficção curta para entender o universo Munroiano, com linhas temáticas específicas, uma densa caracterização, relatos intimistas retrospectivos e, na maioria das vezes, desenlaces inesperados e inconclusivos. Ao mesmo tempo, examinaremos a escrita de Munro à luz de um contexto literário e social mais vasto, o qual remonta aos tempos coloniais, antes da existência de uma consciência nacional dita propriamente canadiana, algo que se iniciou e se vem desenvolvendo desde meados do século passado.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Ficção curta; estratégias narrativas; metaficção; fins inconclusivos; Ontário.

Introduction to *Away from Her*

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Introduction to *Away from Her*

Introduction to the screening of the film Away From Her, directed by Sarah Polley, and based on Alice Munro's short story "The Bear Came Over the Mountain"

I am deeply grateful to Marijke Boucherie for having introduced me to the world of Alice Munro, as well as for the gift of Sarah Polley's film. Not only has the film touched me, but it has touched both medical and arts students to whom I have showed it over the last couple of years and who have been asked to engage with the issues addressed in it. And yet, it is not an easy film to watch, since it faces us with our deepest fears, indeed so deep that they tend to remain inarticulate. Perhaps that is where the delicately compelling quality of the film lies: in its ability to bring us face to face with the black hole, or the white blankness, that we dread but nonetheless carry within us.

This is an all-Canadian film, bringing together the vision and talent of two of Canada's most accomplished creators in their respective areas and generations: short-story writer Alice Munro, born at Wingham, Ontario, in 1931, whose work has earned her the appreciation of readers, writers, and critics alike. Her attention to "the way everything happens" may not make for comfortable reading, but may instead astonish and unsettle her readers, as Laura Bulger argues in this journal, and as indeed happened with the younger Canadian woman in this partnership, actress and film director Sarah Polley, born in Toronto, Ontario, in 1979. Known to Canadians first as a child actress when she performed Sara Stanley on the popular CBC television series *Road to Avonlea*, Polley later worked as an actress with such highly regarded film directors as David Cronenberg, Atom Egoyan, Hal Hartley and Michael Winterbottom. *Away from Her*

was her first experience both as film director and screenwriter, and brings together a remarkable cast which includes Julie Christie, Gordon Pinsent, Olympia Dukakis, and Michael Murphy. As Julie Christie notes, for all her youth, Polley directed the film “with the confidence, surety and security of an ancient old pro, a John Ford” (Christie 2007). In fact, *Away from Her* earned Polley nominations and awards as director and screenwriter: she was nominated for the Academy Awards 2008 in the category of Best Adapted Screenplay, and as Best Director by the Director’s Guild of Canada in 2007; she won the Director’s Guild of Canada 2007 award for Best Feature Film and the Genie Awards 2008 both as Best Director and for Best Adapted Screenplay.

As Polley candidly explains in her 2007 Preface to Alice Munro’s story “The Bear Came Over the Mountain,” adapting the text into film was itself the fruit of a long and deep personal involvement with a story that “seemed to enter [her] like a bullet” (Polley viii-ix). Having lost her mother to cancer at the age of eleven, in her twenties Polley was facing the imminent death of her maternal grandmother, who suffered from Alzheimer’s disease, like Fiona in the story. Polley was also entangled in what she describes as a series of “unstable, destructive relationship[s]” (Polley ix), yet remained too addicted to the “initial insanity” of love affairs to accept the “unromantic” (Polley xi) notion of love as “endurance” that her would-be husband David had to offer.

What then attracted and intrigued the young and restless Sarah Polley in Alice Munro’s story, which she first read when it was published in *The New Yorker* (27 Dec. 1999)? What made Polley describe the story as “perhaps not the greatest love story I’d read, but the *only* love story I’d read” (Polley xii)?

The story is about Fiona and Grant, who married in their youth because he “never wanted to be away from her”; they had no children, endured some betrayals, and now face Fiona’s rapid degeneration due to Alzheimer’s. Whereas Fiona is aware that this is an irretrievable process and wants to move to a nursing home so that Grant is spared the task of becoming her caregiver and of “presiding over her degeneration,” as caregivers must, he is reluctant to accept such a hopeless prognosis and finds himself struggling with past guilt and present challenges: how can he not “be away” from Fiona when her mind and body are going away from him

and from her own past self? What is left of her when her memory deserts her? How can he stay close to her when she “is going” to an inscrutable somewhere? After struggling through anger, guilt and perplexity, Grant learns to share in her present life by “giving her space,” while remaining present in that space. In the nursing home every resident is eventually submerged by the forgetfulness that anticipates the final dissolution of death. Yet, as a persistent presence in her everyday routine, Grant becomes a witness to Fiona’s past *and* present life, an embodied reminder to her and to everybody else that her life includes, but is not confined to, her terminal disease.

If, as Margaret Atwood claimed in 1972, “survival” is the “central symbol for Canada” (Atwood 32), then Alice Munro’s story and Sarah Polley’s film set before us the challenge of facing what happens when survival is no longer possible. This is a story of survival and endurance, including endurance in the face of one’s imminent death, and survival in the face of a loved one’s death. Yet both require the acceptance of death, for it is only by accepting the inevitable that Fiona follows her way, just as it is only by ultimately accepting that Fiona’s condition is irreversible that Grant can find a way to become part of her present. It is also this acceptance that forges new complicities and opens up unexpected bonds.

Fiona’s story is set against the white wintry Canadian landscape, which is as luring as it is harsh. Glimpses of other seasons remain in the past: Fiona’s long-term memory retains visions of Grant’s summery affairs, and her short-term memory recalls a spring walk with Grant. Yet if nature can regenerate winter into spring, as signalled by the flowers that Grant brings to Fiona, the story depicts how irretrievable winter is in human life. As Fiona tells Grant when she decides to go to the nursing home, “I don’t think we should be looking for something we like. I don’t think we’ll ever find that. I think what we can aspire to in this situation is a little bit of grace.”

Whatever “little bit of grace” they find testifies to the power, the need and the trials of interpersonal bonds in various shapes and forms. In characteristic Alice Munro fashion, no bond is exempt from tensions and contradictions: this applies to conjugal relations despite the hurt and disappointments of marriage; to intergenerational bonds despite the discomfort experienced by the young in the face of their dying elders; to

the bonds between those affected by illness, and to those developed among the caregivers. Yet, it is precisely the ability to steer through these tensions that strengthens the bonds and honours the complexities that mark the human condition. Perhaps it is precisely this sharp insight into human relations that made Alice Munro's story so compelling to Sarah Polley, and makes her writing compelling to her "astonished" readers.

Let us then watch Polley's fine rendering of Munro's story of love, death and endurance.

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ABSTRACT

Brief introduction to the screening of Sarah Polley's award-winning film *Away from Her* (2007), an adaptation of Alice Munro's short story "The Bear Came Over the Mountain", originally published in *The New Yorker* (27 Dec. 1999). Described by Sarah Polley as "perhaps not the greatest love story I'd read, but the *only* love story I'd read," Munro's story focuses on Grant and Fiona, who married in their youth because he "never wanted to be away from her", had no children, endured some betrayals, and now face Fiona's rapid degeneration due to Alzheimer's. Aware that this is an irretrievable process, Fiona chooses to move to a nursing home, while both story and film ask Grant and us to contemplate the multiple implications of "being away" from someone, and present us with the ultimate challenge of honouring life in the face of death, our own or another's.

KEYWORDS

Sarah Polley, *Away from Her*, Alice Munro, Canadian cinema, Alzheimer's disease.

RESUMO

Breve apresentação do filme *Away from Her* [*Longe Dela*], de 2007, da realizadora canadiana Sarah Polley, que adapta ao cinema o conto de Alice Munro "The Bear Came Over the Mountain", publicado pela primeira vez na revista *New Yorker* (27 Dez. 1999). Descrito por Polley como "porventura não a melhor história de amor, mas a *única* história de amor que alguma vez li", o conto de Munro centra-se na relação entre Grant e Fiona, que casaram na juventude porque ele "não queria estar longe dela", não tiveram filhos, enfrentaram traições e deparam-se agora a debilidade progressiva de Fiona, que sofre da doença de Alzheimer. Ciente de que se trata de um processo irreversível, Fiona decide mudar-se para um lar. É aí que, tal como Grant no conto e no filme, também nós somos confrontados com as múltiplas implicações de "estar longe" de alguém e com o desafio de honrar a vida ao mesmo tempo que encaramos a morte, a nossa ou a de outrem.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Sarah Polley, *Longe Dela*, Alice Munro, cinema canadiano, doença de Alzheimer.

“From c To c: A Prepositional Poetics”

Fred Wah

“From c To c: A Prepositional Poetics”

“From Sea to Sea” is an *imago mundi* that has defined Canada’s national consciousness from “the last spike” to the present. It has served to hegemonically override a range of prepositional possibilities that poetry and poetics in our time have used to relocate a citizen imagination. In much the same way Fernando Pessoa played out ‘Portugalization’ by reciting the heteronymic constituents of nation, Canadians have been forced to perform themselves through a metaphor of nationhood signed by coercive mottos, coats of arms, flags, animals, and other symbols. This poetic essay seeks to eke out a cultural lexicon that might usefully help locate a different national and transnational discourse by relying, not on the abstract patriotism framed by two or three oceans, but by going to the minute, truthful, and particular initiated by those two prepositions in the motto, “from” and “to.”

I propose that the prepositions clinging to the *imago mundi* of Canada’s motto (and, implicitly, slogan), “From Sea to Sea,” are truer testimony to the experiential condition of that biblical saying than the national imaginary (the ‘Canadaization’) it usually represents to its citizens and the world. I titled this talk “From c to c” using the little “c” not only as a tongue-in-cheek displacement of the proprietary magnitude of such a spatial appropriation, but also as a means to shape a more pertinent hearing of *et dominabitur a mari usque ad mare* (“He shall have dominion also from sea to sea” — King James version) to open the phrase to the more spatial relationship that the metaphor of an “octave” might offer.

The official claim, of course, is “From Sea to Sea TO SEA,” a somewhat more extensive land claim than the original apple of John A. MacDonald’s eye and a seminal frame for the notion of this Canadian nation. The dominant chord in this grammatical “key” is the nominal, the

expropriating SEAside nouns. I'd like to apply what I called in an earlier essay a "molecular poetics" ("Loose Change") to the composition and expose a scalar imagination that seems more amenable to chord changes, shifts, and structural development. That is, I'd like to problematize that dominating chord by improvising around some of the prepositional and adverbial particularities to generate a more substantive *imago mundi*, one that honours the functional, the material, and the dynamic, those opaque little words that, in fact, must perform the scale necessary to hear the full octave.

I know there are some mixed metaphors here but I am speaking, primarily, from a mixed, i.e. hybridized, position (informed by many years of trying to articulate my own mixed racialization). My interest in what I've called "alienethnic poetics", "half-bred poetics", and "hyphenated poetics" have helped me pay attention to some of the background noise in language that is frequently made transparent by the tyranny of form and ideology. So it seems natural, given this motto, to recognize that the prepositions in "From Sea to Sea" might also be read as locating a time and space outside and between what is signified on the surface. Prepositions, and other little tool-words like adverbs and conjunctions, are a kind of grammatical GPS (Global Positioning System). We've even tried to rule on their "betweenness" function: "Never end a sentence with a preposition." But where's that rule at? They are usually just the static behind big ideas.

The preposition "from" that opens the motto is the site of a "constructive tension," a paradox of intention and coercion. The intention, of course, is that "From Sea to Sea" would make a PLACE where its citizens would be free from the departures, separations, avoidances, and differences of those "source" nations FROM which its citizens originated. But the coercion in our motto is using FROM in a negative and confining role. If you say you are FROM Canada, no, where are you from, really from. (Just broke the rule again!) So that, in a very real sense, to be from Canada is to also not be from Canada. The tension invoked by this paradox continues to generate a prepositional reality that forces the citizen self to constantly juggle public attention.

I come from the sea, across the sea, just across from here, from another place, far from here, and from what I've been told the ships sailed from Norway, Spain, China, in other words from Nations, from which the "we" thought it should become a

Nation too, as if "it" was from some form of dictation, from on high, say, like from Psalm 72:8, from which Nation is translated from Dominion, Rule, Kingdom and from other potentials for coercion analysis, like "The immigration officer blocked the citizen from returning to her own country," so the preposition "from" can team up with barrier verbs, if you ban *X from doing Y* then Y did not happen, and that kind of thinking is useful when they want to keep people away from here, like refugees from different places who are always suspect from the colour of their skin, and "from" is also useful for collecting taxes and for taking away from the citizen her rights, and if you are from "there" you are not "here," so try to keep from shaking and don't stop yourself from running away, from here to kingdom come!

The preposition "to" underlines a very nominal role in that it's like an arrow to place and name. This prepositional "to" is very minute and cellular in its particularity, in its use of specificity. The connection here to "story" (history) and "histology" (the study of cells) is dynamic and attractive to the poetic imagination.

To his parents he wrote that he went to the Philippines. Too far away they thought. Too good a lie to pass up, to hide from too much family. But really he went to Victoria on Hong Kong island and then to Victoria on Vancouver Island. Islands are too small for big ideas. Then right away to Vancouver to work as a cook on the spur lines that shuttled out to a lot of small towns on the prairies. Too flat. After five years he went back to China to get a wife but when he returned to Canada the Head Tax was too much to bring his family to Swift Current. Too difficult. Too cold. Too white. Then he got married to a white woman, to the cashier in his cafe and for a few years they moved to Medicine Hat but that was too small so they returned to Speedy Creek and stayed there through the depression and the war. Too sad. Too poor. While after WW1 her parents moved to Göteborg and took the boat to Halifax and then to Saskatchewan to her Grandfather's farm. But by the time she was in school they had moved to Swift Current to the middle of that mass of Pleistocene sediment plate wedge arrow sky

beak horizon and that's where they met and then moved to Trail and then to Nelson where I met you and then we were on the move too, but always come back to where we are, or 'sposed to be, Bonavista to Vancouver Island, Arctic Circle to the Great Lakes waters, this land to you and me.

The homophone of "to" is *too* attractive to resist; a lovely slip of one letter's sound and attention to modify and open up another space. Not the "too" as "more" but the "too" as "part of, also" inclusive. So, this adverbial-adjectival shift seems useful in how it might suggest another kind of location: ALSO. Not a prepositional but an adverbial; but still positional, the way I use it in a piece called "Me, Too" as a post-positional locator.



In February 2004 I was at the Walter Philips Gallery in Banff looking at a show of Roy Kiyooka's photos, videos, and soundscapes titled *Accidental Tourist*, a show that foregrounded for me the "diaristic" in his art. Many of his photo-text projects resonate with the *utanikki*, the poetic diary. Walking around the show, I accidentally pass *between* one of the slide projectors and the carousel of images projected on the wall. My shadow is cast *into* the image on the wall and I have the strange sensation

that old friend and artist Roy Kiyooka is taking a posthumous photo of ME, framed in a familiar landscape, from within the darkness of a stairwell on Hastings Street in Vancouver around 1979.

That little adverbial "accident" in experiencing Kiyooka's show by seeing myself BETWEEN the projector's light and Kiyooka's photograph opened up the positionality of hybridity that has become so important to any articulation of race, ethnicity and culture. How to occupy that site of "betweenness" without dramatizing and privileging the polarities of dominance and homogeneity is the problem I keep trying to answer in my writing. The poem ends by pointing to the hyphen, the *trait d'union*, as a specific cipher to hang onto.

ME TOO feels like some small cry from way back when. My own too facile digital photos now insert a self into the "pre-emptive silences" of a past that reiterates an amongness, a betweenness, that has always been that ME.

Caught the shadow
puppet
of my former self
not all there
accidental (not
occidental)
tourist
an old story

Between Us an I calls out to include my self in the light and to stay right there (don't move) before it is claimed by the shudder of repetition: "both" lie "recumbent" in a "me" that "riddles [our] sollicitudes."

Me too, then
three, then four
more than
another some
one else
on Hastings Street
on Hastings
trait
d'Union.

(from "Me Too!", *Sentenced to Light*, Talonbooks, 2008:69)

This is useful segue to another poetic essay called “Count Me In: Writing Public Selves” (unpublished presentation for conference of the same title, Vancouver, 2007, and part of “Discount Me In” published in *is a door*, Talonbooks 2009) to, perhaps, illuminate this site of “betweenness,” as a dialectic that is constitutive and generative in its recognition of a kind of “ambiguity of agency” (Butler, 129) confronted within the creative and the critical, the social and the political.

Some of the fodder for this piece is provided by two recent essays on poetics that posit conceptual approaches to the notion of “the linguistic turn” or “the turn to language.” Michael Davidson’s essay “The Dream of a Public Language: Modernity, Manifesto, and the Citizen Subject,” in a recent issue of *Xcp: Cross Cultural Poetics*, questions both the linguistic turn “that locates identity within a common language” (the example he uses is Adrienne Rich’s *Dream of a Common Language*, that thematizes the problem of identity and agency) and the linguistic turn of language poetics that configures the social “within the matrix of signifying systems.” Instead, Davidson suggests instances of “public language” that offer “tentative intervention[s] into the power grid”: “The spaces of global amalgamation and production offer the possibility of a public language that speaks not only across borders but on the border, not through the author but through authors produced in acts of reading and interpretation” (Davidson 86).

Jeff Derksen’s introduction to a recent issue of *West Coast Line*, No.51, edited by him, “Poetry and the Long Neoliberal Moment” offers further pertinent and useful readings on the question of the “linguistic turn” in cultural theory and its implications for globalization and poetics. Like Davidson, he argues for a turn to language that designates “the site of intervention,” a “poetics [that] points to the gap between the language and promises of neoliberalisma poetics that reaches down to the sign as a contested and productive arena and a poetics that reaches up to grasp the vectors of contradictions and the global-local logics that define neoliberalism” (Derksen 9).

I’ve used their essays to get at, to get back at some hunches I have about “betweenness,” the hyphen as a site of intervention, the gap as a space in which to generate the news and contest the manipulation of power and information by the state. I used the title of that conference, too, to

improvise around notions of identity and location. I'd like to foreground a few of the poems that morphed out of that title.

Count (1947*)

[1947 was also the year that the Chinese Exclusion Act was lifted. While this was a major step, it didn't mean the gates were wide open for Chinese immigrants. At first, it was really only the wives of Canadian citizens and unmarried children under the age of 18 who were added to the list of admissible Chinese immigrants. It wasn't until 1967 that Chinese immigrants were admitted under the same criteria as people of other origin.

Prior to 1947, the right to vote federally had been denied to all Asians in Canada, which included Chinese-, Japanese- and Indian- (South Asian) Canadians. Both Chinese- and Indian-Canadians were allowed to vote by 1947. And by 1948, Japanese-Canadians had the right to vote in federal elections.]

So in that census, I could finally be "counted in".

Trust me, I was somewhere
else. In 1947 I don't think
I was counted. I must have
been Chinese. From the summit
of myself I was on the other side,
part of an exclusion act. Wonder
if the census counted my mother
as another Swedish ghost, my half
self already paying down the social
insurance number so hard to remember.
Just look it up, again and again
the numbers get jammed, the lock
tumbled into the Family Universe Index.
I didn't know where I was
always ending up somewhere else,
floated over Saskatchewan west with the vote
a British Columbian Subject still living
outside of the state, unaccountable since
birth.

I keep looking for a signifier

to cling to. These days iteration
 might not find me home except
 it's late and I want to play
 my part post-immigration, the shadows
 of numbers to include the click-clack
 of Mah-jong above Pender, casinos
 of NAFTA still bussing the loot
 24 hours a day to International
 Village. Global count a digital Olympics
 so you can trust me I'm
 usually somewhere else the census catches
 up and so does the vote
 to be counted and be caught.

Me (1892)

[In my thinking through writing I've tried to shift the Me as ego and self outside the self. "Until she calls me chink I'm not one." This offers a site of uncertain ambivalence, the name's usually what we go by but is also so complicated by that Althusserian notion of "interpellation"]

Charlie Chim Chong Say
 Wong Liung Chung John
 no Jim he says first to remember
 Henry and his dad walking down
 Granville Street first heard of Ghengis
 Khan you remember that'd make the
 grandfather a son called Kwan Foo-lee
 that is Jim says you know
 Kuan Yü of epic San Kuo
 I tell Doctor Aung not Mah
 my dad was really Soon.

Remember nothing immigration man
 across the table you may sit
 and make the name a mind
 a stamp upon these disappearing
 slanted eyes no Charlie left to Chan
 the movie or the memory find

your name is my name our name
left-over slash of bones alone
left-over commander front-to-back
after sign in Chinatown slowly
call again he spell me off
he sigh him as a middle name
official smile hey you
who me

In (1923*)

*re the "Chinese Exclusion Act" see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_Canadian

In Hum
humiliation
Hum however
Hum heavy birthday
Dominion Hum
Except/Accept
Hum libre, liberalize
Hum heafy head tax
Hum go back
where you came from
Hum the acts
Hum immigration
Hum exclusion
Hum citizenship
Hum enemy alien
Hum Komagatamaru
Hum subject British
Hum citizen white
no yellow Hum
cheap labour
Hum husbands and fathers
Hum ex and ex
taboo the tea girl
in your cafe
Hum however again

However waves and waves
 Hum horde
 Hum yellow peril
 Hum white sugar
 Hum white blue-collar
 but include within the hum in “in”
 the shout of “out”!

Selves (15th C)

(This is a turn to language so maybe we might use another measure of length, thinking of the “long” neoliberal moment, the shift in the value of long vowels, the Great Vowel Shift.)

Selves is a plural noun dormant within the outside though it
 is not a pronoun so when *I* chatter *we* don't get colder
 it tricks language into an intense recitation of *I we I we I we*
 as a way to keep warm around the pockmarked tongues of
 other selves
 a translation of winter that comes after winter
 left holding the math of multiple history
 just like Lorca's ghosts the frogs of south America are wide
 awake
 see, this is how difficult post-hibernation gets when plurality
 reveals its linguistic DNA, when the Great Vowels shift and all
 the pronouns splash into the pond like single green needles
 shiver under the perfect presence of after

The colon in the title, between “Count Me In” and “Writing Public Selves” acts almost prepositionally; if we look closely we might find some way to disperse the dominance of polarity around the hyphen.

Between You and Me There is an I (2007)

Between two stools
 The hyphen lies
 The eggs and the nest

The blind and the fold
The hinge of the city
The door and the jamb
The map and its edges
The wars I've not fought
The life and its lease
The rope but which end
The brink and disaster
The bank and the laughter
The spike below Chinaman's Peak
That spot where the two rails meet

From between two stools
Hear the silence rise
The smoke 'round your neck
The tongue and the dash
The cat and the cradle
The dog dead in the creek
The slash and the burn
The shadows of NAFTA
The head and the tax
Rock bluff and river
The laundry its mark
The height and the trestle
Cata and strophe
Not caboose but what's after

Which is really just a reiteration of:

How voice the silent dash? Say blindfold, hinge, thorn, spike, rope, slash. Tight as a knot in binder-twine. Faint hope. Legally bound (not just the feet), "Exclusion Act," head tax, railway car to an internment camp, non-status outskirts of town nomad other side of tracks no track. Mi-nus mark, not equal sign. A shadow, a fragile particle of ash, a residue of ghost bone down the creek without abridge for the elusive unacknowledged "im" of migratory tongue some cheek to trespass kick the gate the door the either/or, the lottery and the laundry mark, the double mirror, the link between. How

float this sign, this agent of the stand-in. Caboose it loose and let it go, it's "Not in Service" anymore.

("Half-Bred Poetics" in *Faking It*: 94-95)

But this "loose change", these little words, is not so much the locus of value as a conscious intervention into the realm of the possible. Social consciousness operates within iteration, sequence, and continuity, not the isolated image, in this case, of the nominal frame "Sea to Sea". The phrase "Know Your Place" that John Havelda and I chose as the title for a 2003 collaboration synthesizes the image/text response to a cluster of ideas, such as Blake's "Songs of Innocence" response to "containment" ("And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds, / And binding with briars my joys and desires".) or Maurice Blanchot's note on betweenness ("Nonunifying words which would accept not to be a gateway or bridge (*pont*), which do not "pontificate", words able to cross both sides of the abyss without filling it in and without reuniting the sides (without reference to unity".) Our project intends to linguistically and imagistically prick the cachets of containment and betweenness.



The project has had several installations over the past six years, due mostly to John Havelda's use of it in Europe. One of the "events" of "Know Your Place" was the production of a limited edition boxed set of cards in 2007. Each card has on one side the image of a pair of faces from a school photo, as seen in the card-catalogue drawer handles in the installation, and on the other some text solicited at the initial installation in 2003 that in some "tongue-in-cheek" way responds to the Blake and Blanchot quote above. The text and photos thus engage the dynamics of a systematic chance operation and the poetics of non-intentional composition (see Jackson MacLow, John Cage, et al). In other words, identity and location, in this case, play as chance signifiers and break through, momentarily, the containment and bondage of the nominal. The texts and the photos offer the compositional opportunity of error, accident, slipping and sliding, tropisms unmediated by an "irritable reaching after fact and reason".

The leakage of the preposition into the world of adjective and adverb engages a similar dynamic. In other words, one way to generate a social consciousness of value is to acknowledge the iteration and continuity of sequence more available to the preposition than the noun.

o navegante
 é un traballador
 on avenue Can&Cannot
 he untroubled the door
 on Vancouver Island on business
 but in Canada in the business
 of difference aboard
 the Komegatamaru
 a board in the bush
 excluding the tariffs
 including First Nations
 until they give up
 until Nunavut throats
 sing alongside the anthem
 along the Rideau Canal
 near museums of power

near the Blasted Pine
 but outside the group
 born inside the Jaw of a Moose
 as the artist of Forget Saskatchewan
 as for me and my house
 along (read across) the CPR tracks
 along (read across) the border we swarm
 like bees to honey
 like the loon on the Looney
 behind the Queen's hairdo
 behind the Head Tax's pigtails
 despite cries for Redress
 despite the warmth of the fur
 save the seals and the beaver
 save for Hockey Night in Canada
 on top of the world
 but under the tarsands
 before the Olympics
 versus onto the steroids
 past the Canada Goose
 beyond the shit on the lawn
 beneath whose Crown is the land
 just opposite the CN Tower
 across the Great Divide
 home&less — my love's embodiment

Sometimes "From Sea to Sea" could be the same sea. As I'm constructing this presentation in Lisbon I find certain "beacons", as my friend and fellow-poet Erin Mouré would characterize those points (or *ponts*), in Fernando Pessoa's *Mensagem* (*Message*). For a few weeks in Lisbon I've brought with me Pessoa's *The Book of Disquiet* and Erin's translation of *O Guardador de Rebanhos* (*Sheep's Vigil*) and her variations on the Galician-Portuguese *cancioneiros*, *O Cadoiro*. Translation as a composi-

tional tool has been used in a variety of ways by many of my mentors and contemporaries. Erin Mouré sometimes calls her work in this "Trans(e)lations". I've used Coleridge's term "transcreation" for some of my writing within the TRANS-. So, in the context of "From Sea to Sea", I naturally found my way to Pessoa's *Mensagem*, a collection of poems that Helder Macedo distinguishes as "the poet's dramatization of self through the metaphor of nationhood". (Macedo 7) Though Pessoa's patriotic tribute to Portugal is steeped in an *imago mundi* similar and connected to Canada's heraldry, I've found the diction and syntactic turns used by the translator Jonathan Griffin usefully provocative in opening the syllabic doors to my own *tropisms* vis-à-vis the symbolism of mottos, nations, and citizens. The following poems tilt and bastardize the Portuguese, it's true, but language is also memory.

Turn Left Wing Albuquerque

You are the key, the prize too
 But your eyes are tired from staring away from the sea
 You can't see the trees for the destiny
 Think about it, death's not a question
 You're so fast you're looking at the back of your head
 That would be one meaning of *sub*continent
 Turn down that road and don't step on the grass
 So be it, under your tread
 Trade Empire for another wing but don't bet on it
 And don't fly away angry

Person Dom

Midnight, can't sleep, so writing you this letter.
 In which I plant my love
 Familiar murmur, but you can't hear the silence.
 The words rumour the harvest of pines
Our nation locked out by the beetle.
 The song of our lake is so pure
 we can drink it.
 Ocean of us.
 Pillow talk of forest and tides, distances.
 "older but knowing no better

still in love, wanting
 that good song to be sung
 inging it ahead into the dark
 beyond the high beam
 hoping”

Ode to Castles

A little European jazz at the elbow
 But on this side China stretches East
 They told him not to have eyes for her
 They told him these new Greeks would win the battle.

The octave from C to C is desperate for itself
 Dissonant at the angles of disposition
 Called an Italian sixth, the altered sub-continent
 Dizzy black England now blows away
 American fleur-de-lis, a gasping face
 Finito, fatal chord in sync
 O Occidente, the future is not passable
 That autumn rust it fits, eh Canada.

Person 1

quest or guest
 shadow or meadow
 emblem or blaming
 fog or hour
 myth or message
 sphingical or chilling effect
 her stare or hysterical
 heteronym or British Columbia
 fatal or fade out
 agonize or Greek eyes
 persuade or pout
 crest or wave
 shield or shyed
 pretending or defending
 motto or lotto
 ocean or ocean

Ode to Castles Out

The rope is just the ribbon of desire
The oriental accident just fits a better country
Rampant told the Lion and the Unicorn
To go out on a limb and hold

A coat of arms out at the elbows
A river out of wandering
At first it is a useful coat
 out of sun, snow, rain, and prairie wind
As tidy as England's ponds and fashion
Among us roasting maple leaves and thistles
It fits, coming from the sulphur of Saskatchewan
Out west, the end of earth
The face that stares,
 that multi-coloured coat of envy.

Epitaph

Here is the lie:
 the shore is always small and changing
The Captain of Contain. Drunk, in awe.
Don't be afraid; we're mesmerized to sameness.
The last one picked is highest in the tree.

The preposition is "about."

9. (*about to be*)

About to be a runner
About to be a manner
About to play the clarinet
About to be a lover
About to be alone
About a sack of bones
About that smoke around your neck
About to be unknown

(from "Articulations," *Sentenced to Light*: 110)

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ABSTRACT

"From Sea to Sea" is an *imago mundi* that has defined Canada's national consciousness from "the last spike" to the present. It has served to hegemonically override a range of prepositional possibilities that poetry and poetics in our time have used to relocate a citizen imagination. This talk is a critical and poetical reading of some of the most dynamic prepositions in this cultural lexicon that might help locate a more situational discourse of public selves and relationships.

KEY-WORDS

Preposition, hybridity, citizen, public, *imago mundi*.

RESUMO:

From Sea to Sea é um *imago mundi* que tem vindo a definir a consciência nacional Canadiana desde o *last spike* até ao presente. Tem sido empregue para substituir hegemonicamente uma gama de possibilidades pre-posicionais das quais a poesia e a poética dos nossos dias se têm servido para questionar novamente a imaginação do cidadão. Este texto é uma leitura crítica e poética de algumas das mais dinâmicas preposições deste léxico cultural, que poderá ajudar a localizar um discurso mais situacional das identidades e relações do domínio público.

PALAVRAS CHAVE

Preposição, hibridismo, cidadão, public, *imago mundi*.

NOT SO CMFY: Ken Lum's Word Art

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NOT SO CMFY: Ken Lum's Word Art

Since the 1960s Vancouver has become a major international centre for visual art and specifically image/text and language based work. Why that happened would be the subject of another paper, but it may be relevant here to remember that the USAmerican artists Ed Ruscha, Lawrence Weiner and Martha Rosler all visited Vancouver and left their mark. As well as this USAmerican influence, Vancouver's writers and artists have a long history of collaboration. Artspeak, one of the most important artist run centres and galleries in the city, came out of the writers' collective, the Kootenay School of Writing. This fusion of energies generated the exhibition *Behind the Sign* at the Artspeak Gallery in 1988 in which five pairs of writers and artists — Roy Arden and Jeff Derksen, Donna Leisen and Calvin Wharton, Kathryn MacLeod and Doug Munday, Peter Culley and Sara Leydon, and Stan Douglas and Deanna Ferguson — presented works which reflected shared interests.

The most internationally celebrated image/text artist from Vancouver is Ken Lum. He has produced work in a wide variety of media and materials, from painting, photography, and furniture sculpture to banners, billboards, and advertising signage. In most of his work, language and the relationship between text and image are central. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Lum grew up in East Vancouver, a culturally diverse area of immigrants. As he has said:

Every day, walking around in East Vancouver, there was a kind of juggling you had to do, in terms of how you reconciled or acknowledged other people of different backgrounds.... People from completely different backgrounds, not in command of English, with different sets of cultural values... have to interact every day.... I think that provided a kind of basis for my work. ("Growing up", online)

In 1987, Lum employed a professional sign painter to produce a series of works called the *Language Paintings*, which consisted of invented words written in hyperbolic advertising scripts. (Fig. 1)



Fig. 1. Ken Lum, *Untitled Language Painting*, 1987, oil on wood, 244 x 183 cm, in Chris Dercon and John Tupper (eds.), *Ken Lum* (Rotterdam and Winnipeg: Witte de With and Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1990): 68. © The authors and the Winnipeg Art Gallery

These pieces draw on the innovations of Mallarmé,¹ Futurism and Dada and take language back to its prenotational level while referencing advertising, in which words should, at most, wittily retard comprehension, or more usually claim utter transparency. Looking at the *Language Paintings* mimics the frustrating and alienating experience of immigrants trying to make sense of the cacophony of signage in multilingual cities such as Vancouver. Lum points to the genesis of these works by referring to the banners carried by political dissidents as well as the signage of modest, often family run shops in urban centres throughout the world.

They appear in every color and design, possessed with equal measure of crassness, exuberance, and desperation. These language-paintings go beyond the consideration of taste that one finds on upscale signage. They blurt out in every language.

¹ Ian Wallace seems to have been to a large extent responsible for introducing Mallarmé into the conversation of Vancouver artists with *image/text* exhibited in 1979 at the Vancouver Art Gallery.



Fig. 2. Ken Lum, *Poem Painting (Punjabi)*, 1988. Oil on vinyl, 183 x 152 cm, in Chris Dercon and John Tupper (eds.), *Ken Lum* (Rotterdam and Winnipeg: Witte de With and Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1990): 72. © The authors and the Winnipeg Art Gallery

Misspellings are common. Syntactic violations proliferate. Oftentime, words are invented expressing convergences of thought between one's native and adopted cultures. They have the presence of discontinuous beings, transnational, transcultural, looking forward and backward at the same time, brimming with memories of ancient cultures and dead ancestors, suffused with anticipation and futurity. They are the non-site markers of nomadic peoples. (Lum, *Ken Lum* 11)

Begun in 1988, the *Poem Paintings* (Fig. 2) are a selection of lyric poems from languages including Chinese, Armenian, Yiddish, Inuit and Sanskrit lettered on to tarpaulin, a material that is easily folded and transported.

Jeff Wall has referred to them as “companions for a nomadic existence” that constitute “a kind of anthology of world poetry, and so express a global nomadism,” suggesting “a tendency toward a transnational art which gathers its substance from the leaking vessels of national cultures. (25) Viewed from this perspective, these tarpaulins have something in common with Norman McLaren’s polyglottal titles and credits of his National Film Board productions such as *Begone Dull Care* and

Neighbours. While I might applaud both Lum's and McLaren's gestures against the hegemony of English, they exclude far more languages and cultures than they actually include, (let's not forget McLaren ignored Portuguese) and, in Lum's case, end up running the risk of approximating "world poetry" that might be accompanied by "world music."

These pieces are announced as "poems," in contrast to the previous groupings of letteristic fragments called *language* paintings. What makes the texts on tarpaulin work as poems? Presumably, the texts *are* lyric poems, although they may well be as abstract and semantically meaningless as the language paintings. Neither the *Language Paintings* nor the *Poem Paintings* are intelligible in any conventional sense to the vast majority of an English speaking audience. Why then, the *Poem Paintings* seem to ask, are we comfortable in accepting their status as poems? Why are the painted signs merely "language"? The viewer's attitude is manipulated by a shift in nomenclature: the title *Poem Paintings* encourages a naive veneration. Linda S. Boersma suggests that "[we] find ourselves victims of the mysterious romanticism which we attribute to every text that is not written in the roman [sic] alphabet" (21).

Lum is probably best known for his paired portraits and logos or panels of text that he began to produce in the 1980s. The caricature of the dour "white man speak with forked tongue" Indian, manufactured by canonic nineteenth Canadian artists like Paul Kane and Edmund Morris, is subverted by Lum in his family portrait *Mounties and Indians* (Fig. 3).

Four Indians, three of whom, smiling widely for the camera, are framed by two stony faced mounties, in full red coated regalia standing (with beautiful irony) "at ease." Most prominently and at the centre of the photograph, a Native woman in denims and a headband (the signifiers of Cowboys and Indians echoed in the title of the piece — *Mounties and Indians*), her arms relaxed by her side, is presented as the matriarch of the group. To her left are two males — an adult Native, whose expression suggests the stereotype insensitive Indian, serves as a contrastive ground to the confident beaming youth in shorts whose stance echoes that of the mountie he partially obscures. To her right is another Native woman in a tight, red (leather?) dress, and red stilettos — a sexually charged restyling of the mountie's red coat. This is a clichéd tourist shot but the tourists shouldn't be Indians, should they? Indians, like mounties, exist *for* tourists.

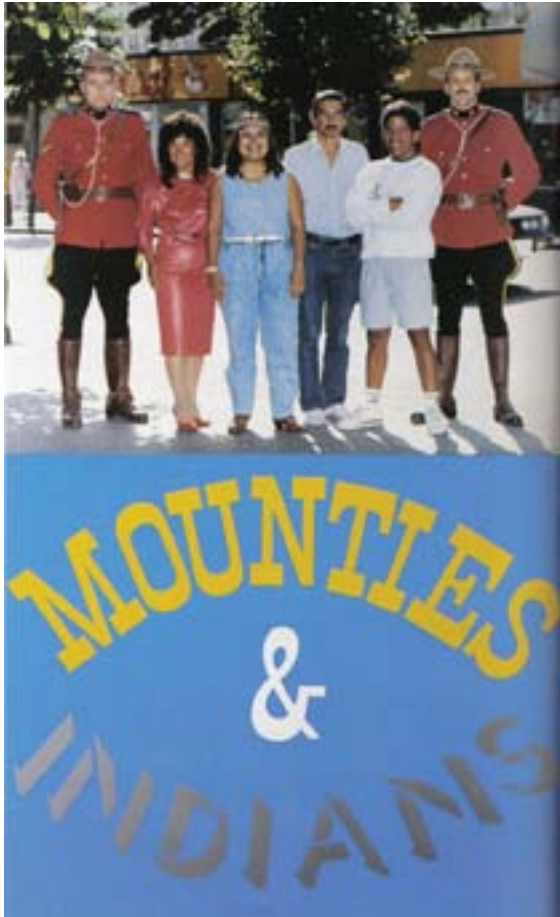


Fig. 3. Ken Lum, *Mounties and Indians*, 1989. Plexiglass and photograph, 102 x 229 cm, in Chris Dercon and John Tupper (eds.), *Ken Lum* (Rotterdam and Winnipeg: Witte de With and Winnipeg Art Gallery, 1990): 28. © The authors and the Winnipeg Art Gallery

The dutiful, red breasted, Expoland icons fit perfectly in this snapshot of “Oh Canada”. The Indians on the other hand are just not playing their part. The humour of the piece is enhanced by an excessively prominent “MOUNTIES” in a crass, yellow, cartoon western style font on a bright blue ground (or perhaps sky), which contrasts to “INDIANS” in unclear, sober silver grey.

In 2000, Lum was invited to present work on a 54m x 10m façade in central Vienna. His digitally printed portraits and accompanying texts, *There Is No Place Like Home* (Fig. 4), covering a whole side of the Kunsthalle's temporary exhibition box, was on display from December 1, 2000 to the middle of January 2001.



Fig. 4. Ken Lum, *There Is No Place Like Home*, 2000, acrylic lacquer on vinyl, 4.39 x 20.42m (approx.), January 25, 2008. <http://www.mip.at/creations/there-is-no-place-like-home>

The work was also published in the *Der Standard* newspaper, and appeared on screens in the Vienna underground. An immediate effect of the sheer volume and colour of the piece is to defamiliarize public signage. *There Is No Place Like Home* is impossible to ignore: billboards look like postage stamps in comparison. Lum temporarily gives city dwellers (the piece travelled to other locations including Innsbruck, Venice, Ljubljana, Montreal, Rotterdam, Brussels and Warsaw) something of the dizzying experience of the sudden transformation of blank façades into clamouring

text that occurred in European cities in the middle of the 19th century.

Lum decks the Kunsthalle in Vienna with huge portraits of people from various backgrounds wedded to colour-coded texts. *There Is No Place Like Home* clearly raises questions about the meaning of “home” at the turn of the millennium. Where and whose is it? Lum himself addresses the question:

“Home” has come to mean the idea of a free-floating and destabilizing yearning for place and settlement. If the ground of identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, then home is the site for such repetitive acts. The reenactment of a set of meanings over and over again at the same place produces a sense of home. In our cybernetic age, such reenactments can occur as an exclusively mental exercise. In other words, home can simply be a state of mind. (“Art as Counter-Narrative”, online)



Fig. 4. Ken Lum, *There Is No Place Like Home*, 2000, acrylic lacquer on vinyl, 4.39 x 20.42m (approx.), January 25, 2008. <http://www.mip.at/creations/there-is-no-place-like-home>

Migration has become synonymous with globalization. The “freer” flow of labour has changed countries of previously high emigration, such as Portugal, into hosts: “a minha terra” is visibly in flux. *There Is No Place Like Home* examines the term as a site of struggle.

There is an apparent immediacy typical of advertising in the piece. Initially, the texts seem to be straightforward thought bubbles or statements by the subjects. A besotted, white (American?) tourist looks across a landscape and seems to be thinking “Wow, I really like it here/ I don’t think I ever want/ to go home!” A veiled, young Muslim woman seems to be saying “I’m never made to feel/ at home here/ I don’t feel at home here”. A bespectacled, Asian man, his brow furrowed, seems to be angrily responding to someone out of frame, “I’m sick of your views/ about immigrants/ This is our home too!” A troubled white working class woman seems to be wearily stating, “You call this a home? / This ain’t no goddamn/ home.” A glum, black child seems to be complaining “I don’t want to go home/ Mommy/ I don’t want to go home”. A furious white working class man brandishing his fist seems to be yelling at an invisible immigrant “Go back to where you come from! / Why don’t you go home?”

The photographs and texts nudge us into building narratives, and mine are hardly flourishes of semiotic acumen. If anything, they are rather obvious. Common sense, even. Yet it is precisely by often appearing transparent that Lum’s work unearths the ideological assumptions of the viewer. Jeff Derksen brings this into focus by asking:

Do the photographs of the joyous White tourist, the introspective Muslim woman, the angry Asian immigrant, the lined face of someone living in poverty, the unhappy frowning Black child, the shouting worker threatened by job-loss because of immigration correspond to the texts beside them, each subtly colour-coded to its image? Or are we reading existing assumptions about these social categories back into the portraits? (“Fixed City”, online)

Do our nods of recognition at *There Is No Place Like Home* not say something disturbing about what we take for granted? The piece puts us in the awkward position of recognizing the way we have assimilated stereotypes. It comes as no surprise that a young Muslim woman would not feel at home in Europe, doesn’t it?

Derksen's argument is relevant to many of Lum's less monumental portraits and accompanying panels.

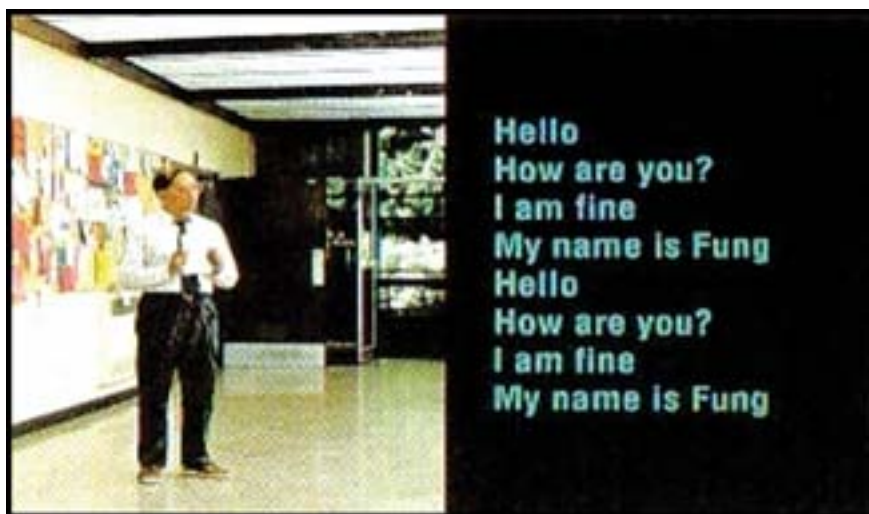


Fig. 5. Ken Lum, *Hello My Name is Fung*, 1993. Chromogenic print with lacquer and enamel on aluminium, in Grant Arnold (ed.), *Ken Lum* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Douglas and McIntyre Publishers Inc., 2011): 78-79. © Vancouver Art Gallery and D & M Publishers Inc.

In *Hello My Name Is Fung* (Fig. 5), from the series *Portrait-Repeated Texts*, an Asian man standing in a school corridor appears to be practicing the words of the accompanying text. It could be a still from a hackneyed movie called *The Joys of Globalization* — the good but comic immigrant dutifully wrestling to learn “Unit 1: Greetings.” As in *There Is No Place Like Home*, it's the assumption of business as usual which is disturbing: Asian-Canadians, after all, do have a hard time learning English. But why couldn't he be the teacher? This kind of racist ideology is dredged out of the viewer's subconscious.



Fig. 6. Ken Lum, *Je Je Suis*, 1994. Laminated C print on sintra, lacquer, enamel and aluminium, 72" x 9" x 2" in Grant Arnold (ed.), *Ken Lum* (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery and Douglas and McIntyre Publishers Inc., 2011): 80-81. © Vancouver Art Gallery and D & M Publishers Inc.

Je Je Suis (Fig. 6) is a portrait of an elderly white woman learning French in the woods (in the bush maybe), practicing her adjectives of nationality — an Anglo trying to fit into Quebec, or “improving herself” in Beautiful British Columbia? However, why don’t we read this image as an immigrant struggling to assimilate? The error of the capitalised first letter of the adjectives reminds us that this is an Anglo world and one with dreams of uncomplicated identities — *je n’ai pas le choix d’être quebecoise, et pas du tout chinoise — canadienne.*

The *Shopkeepers’ Series* is a group of advertising signs reminiscent of modest suburban shops. A fixed name and logo is juxtaposed with a text in moveable plastic letters, so convincingly executed that, at first sight, the pieces appear to be found objects removed from Vancouver’s Kingsway and resituated in a gallery. However, the texts are too personal/ too political for the context.

Jim and Susan’s Motel advertises “CLEAN & COMFY RMS” (Fig. 7) complete with “authentic” abbreviations to hurry to the main business of the text — an embarrassingly sincere punctuated and uncontracted: “SUE,



Fig. 7. Ken Lum, *Jim & Susan's Motel*, 2000. Acryl-glass and acryl-letters, 62" x 73", in *Ken Lum* (Vancouver: Contemporary Art Gallery, 2001): 23. © Contemporary Art Gallery, Michael Turner and Ken Lum

I AM SORRY/ PLEASE COME BACK." Paul's Auto Repair announces "HELLO WORLD// NO MORE LIES/I AM GAY!" It is as if the owners are desperate to make their private lives public. So much commerce, so much faceless capitalism eventually cracks and can't help but yield to the desire to express itself publicly to anyone who will listen.

More overtly than *There Is No Place Like Home*, these signs challenge our hermeneutic confidence. Adrian Piper calls mechanisms that we use to defend our personal ideologies "the illusion of omniscience."

This illusion consists in being so convinced of the infallibility of your own beliefs about everyone else that you forget that you are perceiving and experiencing other people from a perspective that is in its own ways just as subjective and limited as theirs. Thus you confuse your personal experiences with objective reality. And forget that you have a subjective and limited *self* that is selecting, processing and interpreting in accordance with your own limited capacities. You suppose that your perceptions about someone are truths about her or him, that your understanding of someone is comprehensive and complete. (Piper 132)

It is precisely this arrogant omniscience that is challenged in the political leakages of these signs.

Analyzing the semiotics of advertising, Roland Barthes argues that “in every society various techniques are developed intended to fix the floating chain of signifieds in such a way as to counter the terror of uncertain signs; the linguistic message is one of these techniques.” (39) The “linguistic messages” in these adverts, in all of Lum’s work, revel in such “terror.” The images are never tidily anchored by the text.

Lum unhinges the sign, dramatising the failure of the official Canadian mosaic fantasy in west coast multicultural utopias.



Fig. 8. Ken Lum, *Grace Chung*, 2001. Perspex, powder-coated aluminium, enamel paint, glue and plastic letters, 198 x 198 cm, January 13, 2008. <http://www.winiemko.com/writings/deal1.html>

This is most obvious in *Grace Chung* and *Amir* (Figs. 8 and 9). The former, a “Financial Consultant” uses the advertising space to stand up to ominous, implicitly, racist threats, “PLEASE LEAVE/ MY FAMILY ALONE/ WHOEVER YOU ARE/ DEAL WITH ME”. *Amir* announces a “CLOSING OUT SALE/ EVERYTHING MUST GO/ MOVING BACK 2 ERITREA”. The inappropriately jokey, homolinguistic translation of the preposition, foregrounded in red, speaks of an inability to assimilate. Furthermore, the

Canadian mosaic seems to have failed when repatriation to Eritrea is preferable. However, again how much am I assuming about the motives for this move?



Fig. 9. Ken Lum, *Amir*, 2000. Plexiglass, powder-coated lacquered aluminium, plastic letters, enamel paint, 152.4 x 213m36 x 5 cm, in *Ken Lum* (Vancouver: Contemporary Art Gallery, 2001): 21. © Contemporary Art Gallery, Michael Turner and Ken Lum

Some of the signs contain overt political statements. *Taj Kebab Palace* (Fig. 11) calls for “PEACE IN KASHMIR/ END CONFLICT/ INDIA AND PAKISTAN”, while *Mundo Nudo* (Fig. 10) concludes with the imperative “SAY NO TO/ RACISM &/ HOMOPHOBIA”. The former challenges the stereotype of the open all hours, apolitical immigrant to Canada. The bizarre politically correct posturing of the “Mundo Nudo” ironically excludes a concern about sexism. The imperative is preceded by “TUES: WET T/ WED: JELLO”. Implicitly, on those two days, we are to eschew racism and homophobia, but for the rest of the week we can take a well earned break.

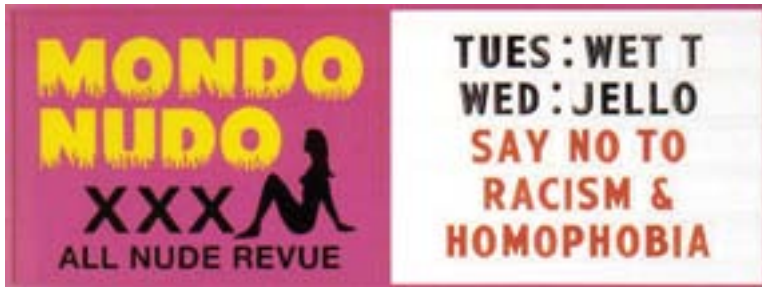


Fig. 10. *Mondo Nudo*, 2000. Plexiglass, powder-coated lacquered aluminium, plastic letters, enamel paint, 122 x 274 x 11 cm, in *Ken Lum* (Vancouver: Contemporary Art Gallery, 2001): 25. © Contemporary Art Gallery, Michael Turner and Ken Lum

In both of these signs, the language is too visible for a seedy strip or a kebab joint. In a sense, they are “Poem Signs.” The visual and acoustic properties of the language used are far in excess of normal expectations of such signage.



Fig 11. Ken Lum, *Taj Kabab Palace*, 2000. Plexiglass, powder-coated lacquered aluminium, plastic letters, enamel paint, 214 x 214 x 11 cm, in *Ken Lum* (Vancouver: Contemporary Art Gallery, 2001): 25. © Contemporary Art Gallery, Michael Turner and Ken Lum

The assonance of “Taj Kabab Palace” is fairly typical of lower scale businesses, but the half rhyme of “Tikkas” and “Take Out” prefaces the poetry of the text. In the second line, “BE” in “BEFORE” is positioned to emphasise the rhyme with “FREE” in the first (a freebie and a free life) and “PEACE” in the third, and “OR” in “PAKORAS” is echoed by “FORE” in “BEFORE.” “PAKORAS”, “CONFLICT”, “KASHMIR” and “PAKISTAN” are knitted together by alliteration, and “7”, “IN”, “END”, “INDIA” “&”, and “PAKISTAN” by assonance. The lettering, however, is unostentatiously homogeneous. The visual equivalence of “PAKORAS”, “PEACE” and “PAKISTAN” is reminiscent of the news streams in which events of international importance are juxtaposed with trivial titillation or anaesthetic.

If the *Shopkeeper Signs* (Fig. 11) can be read as attempted declarations of autonomy in the homogeneity of a globalized world, Lum’s later *Rorschach Shopkeeper Works* blur the legibility of commercial signs, which take a look at themselves and become other.



Fig. 11. Ken Lum, *Keep*, 2007. Print on canvas on aluminium stretcher, ca. 117 x 146 cm, January 20, 2008 <http://www.artfacts.net/en/artist/ken-lum-3714/artwork/keep-8839.html>

Lum describes the manufacture of the pieces as follows:

I take an already existing sign and I alter it such that the effect of it being halved and reversed or quartered creates a look in which the originating parts are somehow defused of their

purpose. The signs are not necessarily split at the half-way point, but at a point whereby a Rorschach effect is maximized. (“Rorschach”, online)

The Rorschach Shopkeeper Works look back to the *Language Paintings* and *Poem Paintings* in that they are legible at one level as visual or even concrete poetry. Semantic meaning is deferred. Often English words are split and mirrored to become letters of what might be an invented alphabet, umlauts appear in what seem to be English phonemes, and a mirrored “2” becomes an underlined cartoon heart.

More importantly, the viewer is tempted to complete any linguistic fragments, and therefore subjects herself to a linguistic Rorschach test. In *Palace* (Fig. 12), for example, “PAI” is truncated “PAINT”? “PAIN”? “PAIR”? Whatever comes to mind goes some way to figuring the viewer’s identity.



Fig. 12. Ken Lum, *Palace*. 2007. Print on canvas on aluminium stretcher, ca. 147 x 170 cm, <http://www.artfacts.net/en/artist/ken-lum-3714/artwork/palace-klein-from-the-rorschach-series-palace-16729.html>

Bruce Nauman has argued that “the point where language starts to break down as a useful tool for communication is the same edge where poetry or art occurs.” (Cordes 354) Throughout Ken Lum’s exploration of words and images, or words as images, tidy communication is skewed, and the viewer checks into a motel that might look functional or even CLEAN &

CMFY from the highway but there's no one at reception and no clear signal on the cable.

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to explore the intermedia art of Ken Lum, the most internationally celebrated image/text artist from Vancouver. He has produced work in a wide variety of media and materials, from painting, photography, and furniture sculpture to banners, billboards, and advertising signage. In most of his work, language and the relationship between text and image are central. The “linguistic messages” revel in what Roland Barthes in “Rhetoric of the Image” refers to as “the terror of uncertain signs.” The images are never tidily anchored by the text. Lum unhinges the sign, often dramatising the failure of the official Canadian mosaic fantasy in west coast multicultural utopias.

KEYWORDS

Image, Text, Lum, Canada, Multicultural.

RESUMO

Este ensaio procura explorar a arte “intermedia” de Ken Lum, o artista de imagem/texto com a maior reputação internacional de Vancouver. Lum tem produzido trabalhos usando um grande leque de media e materiais, incluindo pintura, fotografia, escultura de mobília, bandeiras, outdoors e publicidade. Na maioria dos seus trabalhos, a linguagem e a relação entre texto e imagem são fulcrais. As “mensagens linguísticas” brincam com o que Roland Barthes em “A Retórica da Imagem” descreve como “o terror de signos incertos.” As imagens nunca estão facilmente ancoradas no texto. Lum desdobra o signo e muitas vezes dramatiza o falhanço da fantasia do oficial mosaico canadiano nas utopias multiculturais da costa oeste do país.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Imagem, Texto, Lum, Canadá, Arte Multicultural.

The Battle of Poetry against Itself: On Jim Andrews's Digital Poetry

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The Battle of Poetry against Itself: On Jim Andrews's Digital Poetry

“Codework” is a generic term used to describe works of electronic literature that make expressive use of computer code or pseudo-code. This term is particularly apt to describe the creations of those artists who are also the programmers of their own work, exploring the potential of programming languages at the level of code. Jim Andrews is one of those artists. Several of his works are aesthetic and mathematical investigations of the materiality of digital textuality as both a representation and a performance of reading. His texts generally integrate computer game functions and structures, such as iterations at increasing levels of complexity or difficulty. Readers are required to interact with the textual field by means of buttons that execute a number of operations upon sets of objects and of events.¹

Two formal features distinguish his works. On the one hand, they show a minimalist and a serialist approach to poetic form: each work is composed by a relatively small number of constituent elements which are then subject to a large number of permutations. The generative properties of natural language are thus mirrored in the generative properties of computer language. Digital textuality is investigated as an extension of the material space of phonological and grammatological difference, i.e., as writing and reading space. On the other hand, most of his works combine deterministic with randomized patterns: they have several pre-programmed sequences of events, each of which has to be activated by the reader/player,

¹ Several articles and books have looked at the particularities of animation in digital poetry, but the scripting, simulation and modelling of reading through textual motion has received little attention. See, for instance, Ikonen 2003, Lee 2002, Simanowsky 2002, Wardrip-Fruin 2005, and Funkhouser 2008.

but the actual patterns displayed on the screen are always a random instantiation of a large number of potential occurrences. Minimalism, serialism, determinism, and randomness are connected by readers' interventions in those sign fields.

This programmed interaction is often used to make the reader perform the meaning of the text. As happens in many visual and concrete texts, the operation of reading the text becomes part of the referential meaning of the text. By creating a feedback loop between interpretation and material form, such works direct the reader's attention to the perceptual and conceptual processing of the signifiers themselves. Reading is materialized on the surface of the text because the text makes the reader perform what it says. As textual reference points to the action of constructing meaning, the very act of reading stands out as the major signifier in the work's field of signs. Readers see themselves performing the act of reading and that particular performance becomes the meaning of the text. Their semiotic intervention at the textual level is also a simulation of the interpretative re-production of the textual field. Meaning can only be re-produced as the effect of a specific reading motion or act. Programmed interaction in Jim Andrews's computer poems enacts the drama of reading as a turbulent field of motions from sign to sign, and from sign to self.

Enigma n (1998, 2004, <http://www.vispo.com/animisms/enigman/meaning.html>) and *Arteroids* (2001-2006, <http://vispo.com/arteroids/onarteroids.htm>) are two works in which we can see the performance of reading being enacted by the text. As in other works by Jim Andrews, reader's interventions co-determine certain aspects of the display, including readability, sequentiality, and spatiality of textual fragments. Andrews is particularly interested in exploring the programming features of digital media in order to make the playfulness of art and poetry into a formal element of the works themselves. He uses certain conventions and tools of computer games as rhetorical devices in his digital multimedia works. Digital textuality allows him to edit sound, image, motion, and writing in both patterned and randomized permutations. Reading thus becomes a self-conscious play with the ensemble of material and formal elements of a given work. Interactivity is programmed in ways that enhance self-consciousness of reading acts as part of the signifying field. The reader becomes entangled in the sign field that s/he is trying to process.



FIGURE 1. Jim Andrews, *arteroids* (version 3.11, 2006): main menu [screen capture].

Arteroids, a “visualkineticaudio text”, is a formal parody of *Asteroids*, an early computer videogame, originally designed for the Atari computer in 1979.² Like software applications and computer games, *Arteroids* now exists in three major versions, developed over a period of five years: version

² From the *Wikipedia* entry: “*Asteroids* is a video arcade game released in 1979 by Atari Inc. It was one of the most popular and influential games of the Golden Age of Arcade Games. *Asteroids* uses vector graphics and a two-dimensional view that wraps around in both screen axes. The player controls a spaceship in an asteroid field which is periodically traversed by flying saucers. The object of the game is to shoot and destroy asteroids and saucers while not colliding with either, or being hit by the saucers’ counter-fire.” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asteroids_\(video_game\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asteroids_(video_game)) (accessed 12 Nov 2009).

1.0 (2001-2002), version 2.0 (2003-2004), and version 3.0 (2005-2006).³ Changes and additions to the original code have extended its interactive capabilities. One of the functionalities imagined by Andrews (but still unrealized in the work's latest version, 3.11) is the possibility of saving and e-mailing textual sequences generated by readers. Andrews has described this work as “a literary computer game for the web” (version 1.0, 2001) and “a literary shoot-em-up computer game — the battle of poetry against itself and the forces of dullness” (version 2.5, 2003).

The poem is structured in two modes: the “game mode” and the “play mode”. In the game mode the player-reader has no control over the four parameters (velocity, density, friction, and mortality) that define the behaviour of his/her entity. In play-mode, those four parameters as well as the textual fragments that the player-reader has to shoot at may be adjusted according to predefined controls. The number of permutations is also different: in the game mode, the game-poem has 216 combinations (levels), while in the play mode it has 3360 levels [$12*20*14=3360$]. The role of the original shooting spaceship is played by the word “desire” in play mode (as well as by other words introduced by the player) and by the word “poetry” in game mode.⁴ Textual asteroids are organized into four sets of lines (inner green, outer green, inner blue, outer blue). Players can define both textual asteroids and shooting word by overwriting the default elements.

³ The first version is divided into two cantos: ‘Canto 1: Streaming (Texts)’ and ‘Canto 2: Writing (Arteroids)’ [controls: Space Key-bomb mot; S-forward, A-backward, K-left, L-right]. Later this binary structure is redefined as ‘play mode’ and ‘game mode’, a distinction that Andrews elaborates in terms of the difference between art and game.

⁴ This distinction also comes from computer games: in the *play mode* players can configure the spatial architecture, characters etc, customising certain display features of the graphical interface, while in the *game mode* they use the predefined controls to interact with the programmed objects, trying to get to the end of each stage and move on to the next level.



FIGURE 2. Jim Andrews, *arteroids* (version 3.11, 2006): game mode versus play mode [screen capture].

Andrews uses the semiotics of the computer game as a way of probing into the dynamics of language and signification in general. He describes *Arteroids* in this way: “*Arteroids* is about cracking language open”. This description captures the dynamics of his work as both a self-reflective engagement with the digital materiality and an exploration of the combinatorial properties of verbal language. Digital code makes it possible for all sorts of objects to be treated as “material objects of information that have editable properties” (not just alphabetic writing, but sound, image, motion, and any other spatial or temporal material component). The editability of digital entities is foregrounded in the lettristic explosions of words and phrases into visual constellations that are accompanied by sound

explosions.⁵ Language is decomposed into its graphemic and phonemic elements. As minimal constituent elements of a signifying process that translates their system of material differences into a syntactic and semantic layer, they also resemble the operations that translate computer code into readable and interpretable forms.

Shootings and collisions point to the dynamics of creation and destruction of meaning as a function of semiosis, that is, the process of substituting signs for other signs. While this dynamics is inherent in the way language works, we are often unaware of such inner workings as the formal and material source for the possibility of meaning, and thus for the creation and redefinition of the human. Naturalization of certain discursive structures prevents us from being aware of the extraordinary fluidity and power of language as an infinitely renewable source for the transformation of meaning. In its disarming simplicity, *Arteroids* offers us a digital simulation of those deep furnaces of language.

⁵ Jim Andrews on the editing and organization of sound in *arteroids* 3.11: “The sounds of exploding arteroidal texts are male, female, young and old, human and semi-human, semi-human and animal. Every sound in *Arteroids* is my voice and nothing but — with a little help from Sound Forge. The sounds range from cartoonish to adult, sound poetry to computer game, Kurt Schwitters to Mel Blanc and Gregory Whitehead in their associations.

When the player executes a text, one of 21 sounds is selected. A random pitch-change is then made to the sound anywhere between ten semitones above the original pitch and 20 semitones below the original pitch. It is the pitch-change that gives *Arteroids* its sonic range into the animal and semi-human, the female, and the child, primarily. Pitch-change also provides greater variety with 21 petit death sounds, so that the sound is suitably rich in variety.

As you can hear in the MP3's linked to the *Arteroids* home page, sound recordings I made of games I played, the audio, when the game is played well, is listenable in its own right as a kind of sound poetry punctuated into different ‘verses’ between the explosion of poetry.

Part of the idea of the audio is to create a high energy sound track for a game, and make it ultra human, or hyperhuman, as the case may be. Really alive, in any case, and lively.” <http://vispo.com/arteroids/onarteroids.htm> (20 Feb 2010).

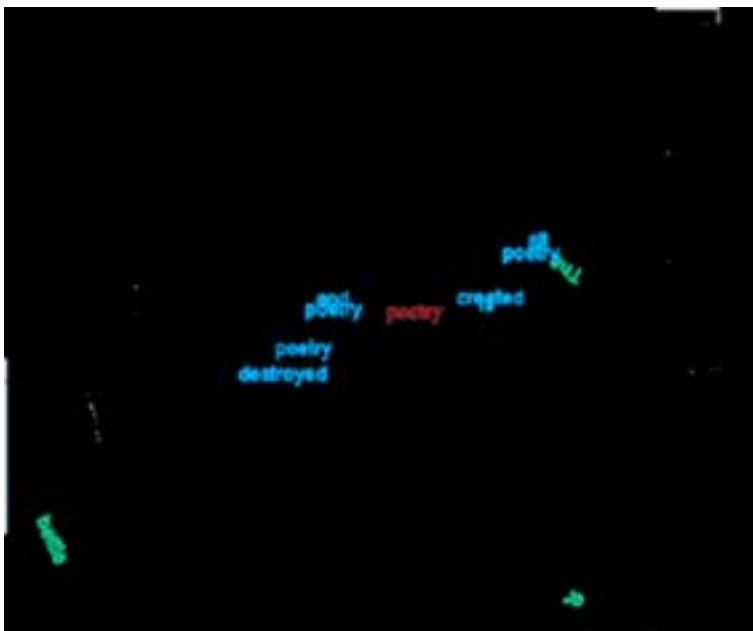


FIGURE 3. Jim Andrews, *arteroids* (version 3.11, 2006): game mode [screen capture].

The battle of poetry against itself is a suggestive image of our linguistic predicament as symbolic creatures who have to constantly struggle and fight with language in order to produce ourselves as subjects. By making words shoot at words on the computer monitor, Andrews has turned certain features of digital textuality into literary and artistic tropes. The reader is required to perform retroactivity as part of the work's content and not just as a tool for achieving a set of goals or for producing a series of effects. The tension between the immersive and the interactive is formally enacted at each level of the game by the tension between readability and the fragmentation of textual elements into its sound and graphic particles.

The player experiences the correlation between the inner motions of language in its formal workings and the outer motions of reading as yet another layer in the constitution of the textual field. While the player can abandon him/herself to the pleasures of the game, s/he can also become

aware of playfulness itself as the source for new forms and new perceptions. The text becomes a series of quantum states that respond to the reader's interventions in its dynamic field. In Andrews's programmed poems reader's interventions take place not just at the level of interpretation. Readers become co-producers of the text's semiotic texture whose particular formal and material instantiation is not entirely constituted before readers intervene. Meaning is a function of the potentiality of semiotic structures in their response to actual haptic actions by the reader-player. Random fluctuations allow for the emergence of new kinaesthetic patterns.

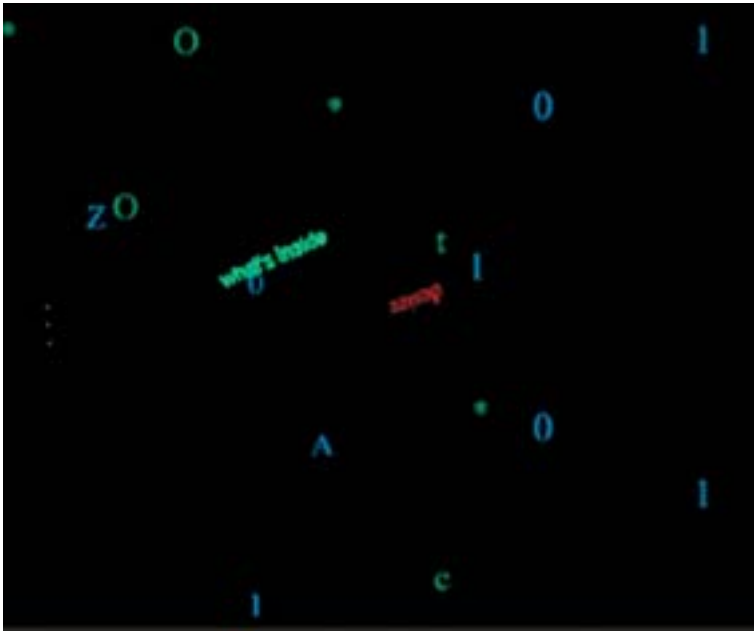


FIGURE 4. Jim Andrews, *arteroids* (version 3.11, 2006): play mode [screen capture].

Another work by Andrews, *Enigma n* (1998), is a magnificent simulation of the autopoietic features of the textual field. Instability of meaning arising from the textual instability of signifiers is the specific theme of *Enigma n*. In this poem, readers can perform eight different iterations on seven letters

(“Prod”, “Stir”, “Tame”, “Spell”, “0/1”, “Colour”, “Discombobulate”, and “Speed”). The letters (which are the same of the poem title, *Enigma n*) move according to different trajectories and they can be stopped at any time, forming multiple and unpredictable patterns. When stopped they sometimes form the word “meaning”, in various configurations, or just a constellation of its letters. The order of interactions of the letters can vary, changing both the sequence of kinetic events and the sequence of display screens resulting from the readers’ interventions. Variations affect several textual properties, including speed, trajectory, size, colour, and 3d effects. The sequence of those changes can, in turn, be recombined in multiple ways, raising the number of occurrences of textual patterns.

This work may be seen as a cybertext, in Espen Aarseth’s definition (1997). To the extent that this text is also textual engine, i.e., an algorithm for generating semi-determined textual objects, the outcome partly depends on a non-trivial textual intervention by the reader. This type of textual action combines a hermeneutical (interpretive) and a semiotic dimension (sign manipulation). In effect, the act of reading is the very process of engaging in the textual game as much as it is any particular textual state produced by that game. What does it mean to read a work like this? It means that the reader, interacting with a pre-programmed field of textual possibilities, generates part of the textual forms that he/she sees and reads. The reader actualizes a certain number of potential configurations. The play of signifiers in the process of differentiation that generates meaning takes place at both material and interpretational levels, suggesting the correlative materiality of semantic and graphical form. In programmed works, the representation or display of writing is dependent on the lines of code that determine movement and textual changes. It is also dependent on the operations of reading as semiotic recoding rather than just hermeneutical decoding.

Enigma n is not fully produced without the reader’s intervention in its field of signifiers. This text asks readers to produce certain instances of itself. By using the text’s commands readers generate a number of unique textual occurrences. Although these are ultimately performed by the underlying code, readers’ interventions randomly select certain textual constellations. And it is these constellations that constitute their text, a specific enactment of many potential formal instantiations. The code is



FIGURE 5. Jim Andrews, *Enigma n* (1998): 'Enigma n start'. [screen capture].

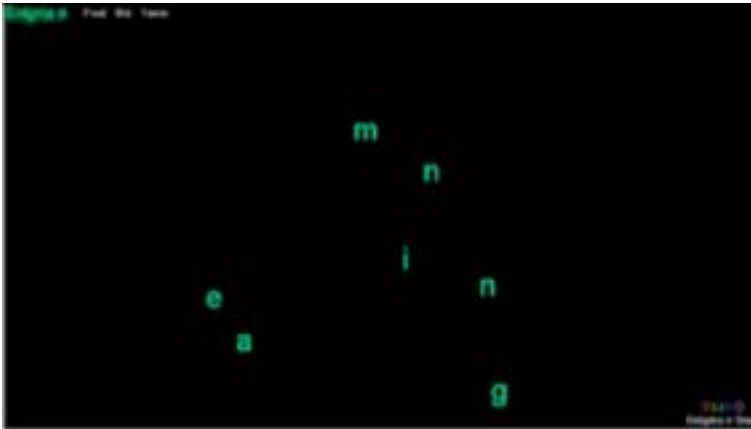


FIGURE 6. Jim Andrews, *Enigma n* (1998): 'stir' [screen capture].

generating the text for the reader but, at the same time, the reader is asked to generate certain textual occurrences by intervening in the stop/motion procedure. The textual forms of *Enigma n* remain partially undetermined before readers' interventions. Once an intervention has occurred, the text reveals its dynamical co-dependence on a particular intervention. The source code [of which a sample is given below, see "Appendix", pp. 91-103] is the meta-text that generates the display text which is further subject



FIGURE 7. Jim Andrews, *Enigma n* (1998): 'discombobulate' [screen capture].

to readers' textual interventions to realize the potential textual semiotic coding contained in its meta-textual possibilities.

Jim Andrews's animated ideogram wants the reader to perform the enigma of meaning. Twentieth-century linguistics and philosophy of language have unveiled some of the properties that make it possible for language to mean. Saussure has described language as a system of differences. Signifiers cut-out conceptual and referential space as a function of their phonological differences. Relations between signifier and signified, as well as relations between signifier and referent, are stabilized by the way social conventions and discourse formations enact the language contract. However such relations remain open to the turbulent generative processes that constitute language at the phonological, syntactic, and semantic levels, and which allow for the continuing formation and transformation of self and society within language. Even if we subscribe to certain universal evolutionary properties of language structures and thought processes, such as mental categories and language structures, the possibilities for recombination and proliferation of meaning seem endless. Culture and ideology, for example, operate by stabilizing certain modes of reference and meaning, and by naturalizing certain kinds of privileged associations. For poststructuralism, this instability of connections between signs and meaning is seen as inherent to signification, since meaning stems from the very motion in the chain of signifiers. The ability to reassociate and resignify is at the core

of the way human beings use the engine of language which constantly converts literal into metaphorical, and vice versa.

Cinema, phonography, and typewriting separated optical, acoustic, and written data flows. According to Friedrich A. Kittler, the media ecology of the early twentieth century disrupted any straightforward association between signifier and signified as function of the “inner self”, the “soul” or the “individual”. These “were only the effects of an illusion, neutralized through the hallucination of reading and widespread literacy” (151) which were maintained by the particular literary and educational practices of the nineteenth century.⁶ The standardized letters of the typewriter severed the connection between paper and body, and typewriting became part of the technologizing of information: “From the beginning, the letters and their arrangement were standardized in the shapes of type and keyboard, while media were engulfed by the noise of the real — the fuzziness of cinematic pictures, the hissing of tape recordings” (Kittler: 14). Jim Andrews’s spiralling letters seem to externalize the symbolic grid of writing as a self-recursive stream of signs ready for human and machine processing. Their motion highlights the materiality and differentiability of linguistic and written signs, while the interface involves the human reader in the stochastic disorder of letters.

In the semiotic and hermeneutic exercise proposed by Jim Andrews, to make sense is both to stop and to restart the motion of letters. This dialectics produces “meaning”, that is, the graphemic and phonological string we recognize as the word “meaning”. But it can also result in various sequences and random combinations of the letters themselves — not just in the visual patterns they form but in their graphic materiality (size, colour, speed, trajectory, etc). Paradoxically, to produce “meaning” seems to be the very act of stopping the motion of meaning which is the defining

⁶ Meaning as a ‘reading hallucination’ depended on the particular performance required of print before the invention of optical and acoustic media: ‘As long as the book was responsible for all serial data flows, words quivered with sensuality and memory. It was the passion of all reading to hallucinate meaning between lines and letters: the visible and audible world of Romantic poetics.’ Friedrich A. Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Transl. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999, p.10.

characteristic of meaning. Making sense, as a frozen material instantiation of form on computer screen, is suggested as both a redundancy and a tautology: that is, it is played out as the coincidence of the word "meaning" with itself. On the other hand the animation frames where letters take their proper orthographic and orthophonic order are challenged by those frames where their random arrangement suggests endless possibilities in their chaotic and turbulent motions. Thus, this may be the answer the poem offers to its own enigma "n": meaning may be defined by its exponential proliferation to the potency n . It is always materially enacted through the motion of an unstoppable signifying textual production and reception process. This process, while it subjects us to its own pre-constituted relations of meaning production and consumption, also gives us the chance to step into the gap between signifier and signified, in order to find and produce other meanings. In other words: multiple meanings rather than any singular meaning.

Enigma n (1998, 2004), *Arteroids* (2001-2006) and other works by Jim Andrews have turned certain features of computer programs into new kinds of literary tropes. Poetry is enacted and embodied in his digital texts as the battle of language against itself, and the battle of self against its language. Retroactions between self and language are emulated as retroactions between reader and machine. The loop in the code becomes a self-referential device for playing out the game of meaning. Readers/players experience the co-dependence between a given field of signs and their own interventions in that field. As he/she responds to the programmed iterations, he/she also modifies the textual and visual patterns available for reading. From those unanticipated and semi-determined patterns meaning emerges. As an emergent phenomenon, meaning is produced by the differential relations within the work's syntactic and semantic structures, and by the retroaction between human subject and computer code through the computerized algorithms. The simulation of this process within the text instantiates what Hayles has described as the intermediating dynamics between human beings and machines (2008). As technotexts, they also make their readers experience the algorithmic character of digitality. Jim Andrews's interactive kinetic poems require readers to materially perform the patterns and motions of meaning. Readers become aware of the ensemble made by signs and the human-machine processing of those signs.

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ABSTRACT

Jim Andrews, a Canadian artist and programmer based in Victoria, British Columbia, has been developing new digital web-based forms and genres since 1995. His works investigate computer programming code as an expressive means for integrating image, sound, and word. In this chapter I look at the electronic poetry of Jim Andrews as a reflection upon the materiality of digital media and also as an exploration of the World Wide Web as writing and reading space. Jim Andrews's digital poetics transforms interactive, kinetic and multimedia features of digital literacy into poetical tropes. Feedback loops between reader's interventions and textual displays highlight the co-dependence between the poem as algorithmic machine and the interpretative operations of reading as part of the signifying field. The selected cybertexts are analysed as models for semiotic and interpretive processes.

KEYWORDS

Jim Andrews, digital poetry, cybertext, electronic literature, textual instrument.

RESUMO

Jim Andrews, artista e programador Canadano de Victoria, British Columbia, tem desenvolvido novas formas e géneros de arte digital para web desde 1995. As suas obras investigam os códigos de programação computacional como meios expressivos capazes de integrarem imagem, som e palavra. Neste artigo analiso a poesia electrónica de Jim Andrews enquanto reflexão sobre a materialidade dos média digitais e também como exploração do espaço de escrita e leitura da World Wide Web. A poética digital de Jim Andrews transforma as propriedades interactivas, cinéticas e multimédia da literacia digital em tropos poéticos. Loops retroalimentados entre intervenções do leitor e ocorrências textuais acentuam a co-dependência entre o poema como máquina algorítmica e as operações interpretativas do acto de leitura, revelando-as como parte do campo significante. Os cibertextos seleccionados são analisados como modelos de processos semióticos e hermenêuticos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Jim Andrews, poesia digital, cibertexto, literatura electrónica, instrumento textual.

L'Ingratitude Postcoloniale de Ying Chen

Luís Dias Martins
FLUL

*L'Ingratitude*¹ Postcoloniale de Ying Chen

Ma communication a trois parties. Dans la première j'essaierai de pointer le concept de postcolonial appliqué au Québec et aux littératures migrantes. Puis je donnerai quelques informations très courtes sur l'auteur et finalement je m'intéresserai au roman de Ying Chen *L'Ingratitude*.

Comme le dit Jean-Marc Moura, la littérature québécoise n'est plus sur le terroir et les origines, à la recherche d'une identité à contrecourant de la culture dominante, anglo-saxonne et protestante. La modernisation, qui avait débuté pendant les années de la Première Guerre Mondiale et s'est développée pendant et après la Deuxième, a conduit le Québec vers une situation paradoxale. D'un côté, la vitesse de cette modernisation impliqua une résistance nationaliste qui surgit plutôt à cause des transformations des structures économiques et sociales, que d'une identité originelle construite autour de narratives d'un temps bien révolu. De l'autre, ce changement a produit des liaisons économiques entre le Québec et les autres provinces canadiennes qui ont dilué les raisons et les arguments de ce nationalisme séparatiste, qui avait atteint des niveaux dangereux de rupture sociale et politique d'avec le reste du Canada. Après les deux plébiscites, qui ont résulté en deux victoires des défenseurs du maintien du Québec dans le Canada, et les transformations constitutionnelles, qui avaient comme but garantir une plus grande autonomie politique et culturelle au Québec, et aux autres provinces, la sécularisation et la modernisation de la société québécoise sont assurées. Plus récemment, l'arrivée de nombreux nouveaux

¹ Ying Chen, *L'Ingratitude*, Montréal/Arles: Leméac Éditeur/Actes Sud, 1995. Par la suite, les références à cette édition seront données par le nombre de la page entre parenthèses.

émigrants originaires d'autres continents que l'Europe a transformé le Québec en une société multiculturelle et cosmopolite. Aujourd'hui, plus ou moins la moitié de la population est d'origine française, dix pour cent d'anglophones ou d'origine britannique et le restant de la population est constitué par des aborigènes (la population originale du territoire: Indiens et Inuits), des européens de l'est, des portugais, des grecs, des haïtiens et des asiatiques. Ainsi, la société actuelle du Québec est très ouverte et tournée vers l'extérieur, son rapport au monde et aux différentes cultures ayant dilué les aspects plus dramatiques et plus marquants d'une histoire traumatique à la recherche d'une identité qui s'est déplacée constamment avec les changements démographiques, économiques et culturels.

Le postcolonial appliqué au Québec doit être compris comme une réaction au domaine anglo-saxon de l'ensemble du Canada. Il est clair que la suprématie de la culture de langue anglaise et la correspondante réaction pendant la Révolution Tranquille des années soixante du siècle dernier peut et doit être comprise sous l'angle du postcolonial, particulièrement dans ses aspects idéologiques. Si bien qu'on ne puisse pas parler du Québec comme d'une colonie, de plein sens, du Canada de langue anglaise. La modernisation sociale et culturelle du Québec est peut-être mieux comprise comme une appropriation québécoise du temps moderne, tel que ce dernier s'est fait sentir et vivre dans la société québécoise.

Quant aux littératures migrantes, issues d'une globalisation accélérée, leur postcolonialité peut être expliquée par cette ligne de rupture en continuité entre les sociétés traditionnelles et langues d'origine, et la modernité et langue des sociétés d'accueil. C'est peut-être pour cela qu'elles sont aussi postmodernes, parce que, d'un côté, ces littératures font la critique de certains aspects de la culture d'origine, au même temps qu'elles révèlent une grande nostalgie envers leur pays et culture de départ, et, de l'autre réagissent à la sensation de déracinement et de solitude ressentie dans le pays d'accueil et dans des sociétés très développées. Si l'on regarde le postcolonial comme une tentative d'échapper aux déterminations de l'histoire et du temps (ce qui, d'ailleurs je crois être une simple caractéristique due à des circonstances idéologiques et temporelles; ceci, de mon point de vue, doit comprendre aussi la postmodernité), et le postmoderne comme une réécriture de la modernité qui en reprend et y questionne les termes et l'histoire, l'on peut conclure que l'écriture de Ying Chen est la superposi-

tion de ces catégories. Cependant, nous ne devons pas oublier l'inclusion de Ying Chen entre les écrivaines fortement conscientes de la place de la femme dans la société, soit-elle chinoise ou québécoise.

Ying Chen est une écrivaine québécoise née à Shanghaï en 1961 et qui appartient à la littérature issue des mouvements migratoires que l'accélération de la globalisation a transportée à travers continents et océans. Elle a fait ses études universitaires dans cette ville chinoise très moderne et multiculturelle qui est Shangaï, y ayant obtenu une licence-ès-lettres françaises. En 1989, elle arrive au Québec et fait des études à l'Université McGill. En 1992 est publié son premier roman *La Mémoire de l'eau*, *Les Lettres chinoises* sort l'année suivant. Le roman dont je vais parler, *L'Ingratitude* est de 1995 et a reçu le prix Québec-Paris, décerné en 1996. Son roman suivant *L'immobile* est de 1998. Depuis, elle a publié, *Le Champ dans la mer* (2002), *Querelle d'un squelette avec son double* (2003), *Quatre mille marches: un rêve chinois* (2004), *Le Mangeur* (2006), *Impressions d'été*, écrit en chinois et traduit par l'auteur (2008), et finalement dans l'année courante *Un Enfant à ma porte*. Ying Chen est très difficile à caractériser dans le cadre actuel des catégories littéraires québécoises, d'abord parce que les situations fictionnelles que le lecteur trouve dans ses récits son universelles et puis car sa postmodernité fictionnelle est transitionnelle. Je veux dire par là que l'auteur cherche à rapporter la situation du sujet-femme comme une hésitation et une position indécidable, dans un *in-between* construit entre la tradition et la modernité, la mort et la vie, le suicide et l'accident, l'amour et la haine, le désir et la frustration du désir. Pour être femme il faut se rebeller, pourtant cette révolte implique une séparation et une annihilation du féminin tel que l'éducation et la société l'ont construit. Tout de même nous pouvons dire que l'écriture de Ying Chen appartient clairement à deux courants littéraires: migrant et féminin. Ce qui fait que ses livres provoquent un grand intérêt, tant des lecteurs communs comme des critiques de revues et journaux, comme aussi des critiques universitaires.

L'Ingratitude est un récit, qui tient place à Shanghai, d'une morte (Yan-Zi) qui raconte sa vie et ce faisant donne les raisons pour son intention de se suicider. La manière dont débute le roman est intéressante car elle explique aussi quelques aspects du récit. La morte (Yan-Zi) est prête à enterrer, et elle "dit":

Ils jettent mon corps sur un petit lit roulant, au milieu d'une salle blanche et sans fenêtres. Leurs mouvements sont brusques. Ils me traitent de criminelle. Quand maman n'est pas là, ils ne dissimulent pas leur dégoût. (Chen 9)

Ce début si ambigu par rapport à l'espace (nous ne savons si c'est l'hôpital ou une chambre funéraire) dont le rythme suggère autant le discours intérieur du Proust d'*À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* comme le début de *Molloy* de Samuel Beckett, est un murmure qui le lecteur accompagnera au cours de tout le récit. Une sourdine qui rapportera les faits de la vie de Yan-Zi de manière fragmentée et non chronologique, comme les débris d'un espace ruiné par un temps qui avance à reculons, comme le temps et l'espace de l'ange mélancolique (*Angelus Novus*) de Klee et de Walter Benjamin. En effet la protagoniste rappelle et raconte le passé en reculant vers la mort. Ce récit est préparé et, de certaine manière, justifié par un discours de la grand-mère de Yan-Zi:

Je te prie de rester encore un peu avec nous, vient me dire grand-mère. Nous ne supportons pas ce silence infini où tu enterres les tumultes de ton âme. Il faut que tu parles. Tu peux maudire ta pauvre mère, si tu le préfères, maudire tout le monde et m'accabler d'injures. Mais parle! Sur notre tête décharge ton chagrin. Ainsi, tu auras un voyage facile. Et nous ne serons pas consolés autrement... (Chen 10)

L'argument de *L'Ingratitude* est donc un accablement d'injures et de haine dirigé principalement contre la mère et il dure pendant le temps qui découle entre la mort physique et la sublimation de l'esprit au sein de l'éternité. Mais cette haine et cette certitude du bien fondée de la résolution d'une vie par la mort voulue, et qui au deuxième chapitre est déclarée de la manière suivante "Après tout je trouve bonne ma solution", est déjà au premier chapitre ressentie comme un exil:

J'inspire et retiens mon souffle pour me donner du poids. Je plonge. Je veux m'approcher de maman. J'aimerais moi aussi mettre une main sur son épaule inaccessible. Mais la fumée me repousse constamment. Sur la frontière entre la vie et la mort, cette fumée se comporte en gardienne implacable. La senteur de l'encens me suffoque, sa fumée m'aveugle. Je réalise alors la conséquence de mon acte. Je suis en exil

maintenant. Le retour est impossible. Impossible, ne serait-ce que pour un court instant, dans l'honnête intention de toucher l'épaule de maman une dernière fois. Déjà elle est très loin, emprisonnée dans cette pièce nue, penchée sur mon corps qu'elle tente de reconnaître, qu'elle n'a jamais reconnu. (Chen 11)

La mère de la protagoniste-narratrice apparaît comme la représentante de la morale traditionnelle, patriarcale et masculine, en ayant le rôle social d'inscrire sur sa fille la position fixe que cette morale affiche à la jeune femme: servir le mâle et lui obéir. Ainsi, pendant tout le récit la narratrice rapporte un parcours distancié et critique envers sa mère et au mâle, concourant à l'objectif d'ouvrir un espace subjectif identitaire et féminin. La solution du suicide surgit comme une suspension du temps, de l'histoire et du terroir qui permet la signature d'une subjectivité qui n'avait pas été jusque là reconnue, comme la dernière citation le souligne.

Autres aspects se révèlent à la lecture des livres de cet auteur, ce sont les relations que l'on peut établir avec la littérature européenne de l'époque de transition entre la modernité ironique d'un Proust (ironie que l'on comprend comme produite par un temps qui change et qui transforme les sujets en déchets risibles et ridicules) et la situation intenable du sujet beckettien dont la vie est sans objectifs et sans issue vivable, dont le plus court et synthétique exemple est ce texte titré *neither*²:

neither
to and fro in shadow from inner to outershadown
from impenetrable self to impenetrable unself
by way of neither
as between two lit refuges whose doors once
neared gently close, once turned away from gently
part again
beckoned back and forth and turned away
heedless of the way, intent on the one gleam or
the other
unheard footfalls only sound

² Samuel Beckett, *The Complete Short Prose 1929-1989*, New York: Grove Press, 1995; p. 258.

till at last halt for good, absent for good from self
 and other
 then no sound
 then gently light unfading on that unheeded
 neither
 unspeakable home

Cette insoutenable situation, qui empêche le confort subjectif devant le temps et l'avenir, est très claire dans les récits de Ying Chen (particulièrement dans *L'Ingratitude*) et, la possibilité de sa représentation dans le récit est seulement possible par le recours rhétorique à la métaphore du suicide qui se résout en accident. En toute rigueur, ne devait-on parler d'*antimétaphore* au sens de Nicolas Abraham et Marie Torok³? Au moins, je crois qu'il est légitime d'identifier ici, dans ce suicide raté et transformé en accident fatal, une métaphore incomplète ou interrompue, où la symbolisation souhaitée devient impossible. La conjonction de la plénitude de la vie et du vide est ainsi la seule forme de représenter cette situation subjective singulière du sujet exilé de soi-même. À la fin du récit la morte, Yan-Zi, le reconnaît dans une pensée intérieure qui tente de donner cette réalité que le sujet ressent à chaque moment, sans le différent temporel que le discours impose:

Quel soulagement enfin de se trouver hors de ce jeu interminable, d'être à l'abri du temps, de ce bouillonnement rythmé des amours et des rancœurs, des plaisirs et des ennuis, des naissances et des morts, des parents et des enfants... Mais comment connaître ce bonheur nouveau, intemporel et vide sans avoir vécu à l'intérieur du temps, sans avoir étouffé dans sa plénitude? Comment é prouver la joie glaciale de l'étranger sans avoir déjà eu une patrie? Et enfin, comment apprendre à se débarrasser d'une mère sans être jamais né? Être l'enfant d'une femme est donc une chance qui permet le bonheur de ne pas l'être. Une chance à laquelle on doit beaucoup de gratitude. (Chen 132)

³ Abraham, Nicolas et Torok, Marie, *L'Écorce et le Noyau*, Paris: Flammarion, 1987; p. 268.

Il y a ici, á la fin du récit de Ying Chen, une analogie avec les dernières lignes du texte de Beckett, *neither*, cité avant⁴:

till at last halt for good, absent for good from self
and other
then no sound
then gently light unfading on that unheeded
neither
unspeakable home

Mais, si j'ai bien compris l'ambiguïté entre le suicide et l'accident présente dans *L'Ingratitude* et qui est un sarcasme dirigé contre la situation de Yan-Zi, la protagoniste et narratrice du roman, alors nous pouvons approcher ce roman de la parodie *Murphy*⁵, de Samuel Beckett, où le protagoniste meure aussi par accident, mais d'une explosion de gaz. Ici, dans le roman de Ying Chen, Yan-Zi est trucidée par un camion quand elle tente d'échapper à la persécution de son fiancé qui se méfie des intentions de suicide de la jeune femme. La subjectivité féminine est, dans le récit, toujours sous sursis, soutenu jusqu'à la mort, et sans pouvoir s'épanouir dans sa complétude subjective. La mort, elle-même, d'abord comprise comme une libération, est finalement ressentie comme une fuite qui, par l'accident remplaçant l'attentat contre sa vie-même, ne réalise pas les objectifs du sujet. La citation suivante est la représentation de cette insoutenable situation et de l'insuccès de son plan:

Non seulement j'ai mal vécu, je pense, mais je suis «mal» morte. Ce camion imbécile, en écrasant mon corps, a complètement transformé l'aspect des choses. Maman supporte beaucoup mieux un accident qu'un suicide. Sa conscience ne sera pas troublée, tant qu'elle ne se croit pas la cause directe de ma mort. C'est pourquoi, pendant ces jours de deuil, elle est capable de se tenir debout. Son dos ne se courbe pas autant que je l'ai souhaité. Le devant de sa chemise est trempé de

⁴ Samuel Beckett, *The Complete Short Prose 1929-1989*, New York: Grove Press, 1995; p.258.

⁵ Beckett, Samuel, *Murphy*, London: John Calder, 1963.

larmes. Mais cela ne suffit plus pour me consoler. D'ailleurs les larmes soulagent. Autrefois, quand maman me faisait souffrir, je n'avais pas de larmes. J'avais les yeux secs et vides. (Chen 129)

Dans le roman de Beckett le protagoniste, Murphy, meurt dans un accident dû à sa mauvaise manipulation d'un appareil à gaz, après avoir eu la connaissance objective du vide qu'il cherche comme libération des vicissitudes de l'"intérieur du temps". Il trouve ce vide dans la personne de M. Endon (un schizophrénique profond), et se rend compte de l'impossibilité de vivre les deux, la plénitude de la vie et le vide, quand, se voyant dans les yeux de M. Endon, Murphy comprend que celui-ci ne le voit pas et ne s'est jamais rendu compte de son existence. Au fond, Murphy comprend que vivre le vide et la jouissance consciente de ce vide est impossible. La mort qui suit cette connaissance du paradoxe n'est qu'un sarcasme final, et il n'y a pas chez elle rien de symbolique. Dans *L'Ingratitude*, cette morte, qui parle de sa vie antérieure, a la possibilité d'en parler pendant cette durée temporelle entre la mort physique et l'annihilation de la mémoire et du temps, montrant ainsi que le décès du sujet est ici symbolisme de l'exil. Ce n'est pas d'une vraie mort qu'il se traite mais d'une mort symbolique et voulue qui a comme but la mort sociale de la mère, qui cependant ne survient pas car la fille n'arrive pas à se tuer, car qu'elle est trucidée par un camion avant d'agir contre sa propre vie. La mort, dans le *Murphy* de Samuel Beckett, annonce l'avenir de l'écriture beckettienne, la démolition du sujet héroïque de la modernité. Tandis qu'ici, chez Ying Chen, la mort, et le discours qui s'en suit, représente la singulière situation du sujet séparé de son origine, existant entre une tradition qui empêchait sa plénitude subjective et "ce bonheur nouveau, intemporel et vide" de la modernité social du pays d'accueil. Cette situation *in between*, entre deux réalités incompatibles, est seulement représentable par le discours de la littérature qui permet le rentrayage de la plaie ouverte par l'exil. Enfin, l'ingratitude, dont nous parle le titre du roman, est non seulement dirigée contre la mère, le père et la tradition mais aussi contre le temps présent de l'écriture. D'une autre manière, la plaie ne se fermera jamais.

PETIT RÉSUMÉ

Ma réflexion se centrera sur *L'Ingratitude* de Ying Chen et j'essaierai de montrer que, dans ce roman, l'écriture de l'auteur est une allégorie de la situation vulnérable du sujet postcolonial dans un contexte postmoderne.

Après la période identitaire de la littérature québécoise liée à la terre et à l'opposition traditionnelle à la modernité, identifiée avec le Canada anglophone, c'est le moment de l'émergence d'une écriture qui prend ses distances par rapport à la l'identification communautaire. Il se produit un croisement entre le postcolonial et le postmoderne qui configure paradoxalement une opposition non résolue: comme une blessure ressuante et inguérissable, due à l'impossibilité d'une rentraiture entre le passé et le présent ou à une jointure aporétique entre le sujet et la communauté.

MOTS-CLÉS

Identité, tradition, terroir, déplacement, aporie.

RESUMO

A minha reflexão centrar-se-á no romance *L'Ingratitude* de Ying Cheng e nela tentarei mostrar que a escrita desta autora é a alegoria da situação periclitante do sujeito pós-colonial em contexto pós-moderno.

Após o período identitário da literatura quebequiana ligada à terra e à oposição tradicional à modernidade, identificada com o Canadá de língua inglesa, chega o momento da emergência de uma escrita que se afasta de um sentido comunitário da mesma. Assim, surge um cruzamento entre o pós-colonial e o pós-moderno que configura, paradoxalmente, uma oposição não resolvida: como uma ferida ressumante e incurável, devida à impossibilidade de uma juntura entre o passado e o presente ou a uma juntura aporética entre o sujeito e a comunidade.

PALAVRAS CHAVE

Identidade, tradição, território, deslocalização, aporia.

Prose Representations of Literature of Portuguese Background in Canada

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Prose Representations of Literature of Portuguese Background in Canada

Introduction

Although the Portuguese have settled relatively recently in Canada, they have played a part in the country's cultural mosaic, both the Portuguese immigrants and the second-generation Portuguese-Canadians. The second edition of the *The Portuguese in Canada*, subtitled *Diasporic Challenges and Adjustment* (2009)¹, is a major contribution to the scholarly literature in this field as it deals with the multiple aspects of the presence of the Portuguese in Canada as a component of the Canadian mosaic.

Teixeira and Da Rosa's essay "Historical and Geographical Perspective" frames the Portuguese diaspora to Canada by calling into the introductory paragraph the year 2003, when the Portuguese-Canadian community commemorated the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the first group of immigrants to Canada: "It all started on 13 May 1953, when eighty-five Portuguese immigrants landed in Halifax aboard the *Saturnia*. Since then Canada has become a major destination for the Portuguese diaspora". (Teixeira and Da Rosa 3) The Atlantic Ocean, the main route for explorers and navigators of the 15th and 16th centuries, became the main route for emigration of the Portuguese people. Though historical contacts with Canada date back to the 15th century, this group of Portuguese men in the *Saturnia* stands as a reference for modern Portuguese immigration to Canada, which began in the early 1950s. Data from Statistics Canada 2007 on Portuguese immigration between 1950 and 2007 is thus summarized:

¹ The editors Carlos Teixeira and Victor M. P. Da Rosa entitled the first edition of the book *The Portuguese in Canada – From the Sea to the City* (Toronto: UTP, 2000).

[...] early Portuguese settlers in Canada arrived mainly during the 1950s, when Canada was promoting such immigration in order to meet its need for agricultural and railway construction workers. Sponsorship and family reunification accounted for the acceleration of the process, mainly through the 1960s and 1970s. From the mid-1970s on, numbers diminished considerably, partly because of changes to Canadian legislation in 1973. (Teixeira and Da Rosa 6)

The unique cultural values the Portuguese brought to Canada became part of a common heritage and a component of the cultural mosaic. However, the cultural retention by the new generations of Portuguese Canadians raised and educated in Canada will be a crucial factor to the survival of culture and traditions of Portuguese background.

This paper looks at the contribution of Portuguese immigrants and second-generation Portuguese-Canadians to literature in Canada, focusing on narrative texts written or published in this country. Portuguese experiences in Canada, represented in those narratives, fall into three main categories. The first category concerns prose representations of immigrant experience that explore the feeling of being neither here nor there, best expressed as the “Paradox of Nowhere” (Joel 228). The second draws on representations of postsettlement experiences, which unlike first-generation Portuguese experiences reflect the day-to-day life and relationships of Portuguese immigrants in Canada. Representations of third-generation Portuguese experiences in Canada, as illustrated by the narrative of second-generation Portuguese-Canadian writer Erika de Vasconcelos, stand for the third category.

1. Literature of Portuguese Background in Canada

Patim (2009) acknowledges the precursor contribution of Joel’s study on Literature of Portuguese Background in Canada (LPBC) as it remains a landmark in the understanding of the Portuguese contribution to literature produced in Canada, both by resident Portuguese writers and by Canadian writers of Portuguese descent. LPBC, according to Joel, “faces a problem that also affects other writing in this country: it fails to achieve the status of mainstream literature” (Joel 223). The marginal status of this literature

is ascribed, in the Portuguese case, to content, form, and language-related factors. Content factors concern texts which only relate to representations of homeland ways of life, standing as “ethnographic exercises of memory and nostalgia rather than literature” (Joel 223), whereas the form factors which ascribe LPBC a marginal status concern texts assuming the form of chronicles, first published within the so-called ethnic newspapers, either in Canada or in Portugal. Joel connects these two factors by stating that texts that do achieve an acceptable literary form may nonetheless be framed as marginal because of their content. As for the third factor, the language issue, the fact that the works are published in Portuguese, without the involvement of a Canadian publisher has contributed to the marginal status of LPBC (Joel 223).² The critic believes these characteristics have helped to create “a self-imposed segregation, sometimes cast within the tradition of a single writer who epitomizes the homeland’s literature” (Joel 223).

Joel’s study (2000) is framed by two criteria. He selected only prose texts that related to or described first-, second-, or even third-generation Portuguese experiences in Canada and that represented the diversity of contributions to LPBC (Joel 224). He therefore set aside many of the titles compiled by Teixeira and Lavigne in 1992 and 1998 with a bibliography that surveys LPBC from 1935 to 1996, whereas Joel’s socio-literary study analyses literature of Portuguese background in the context of contemporary literature in Canada, and specifically of Canadian literature in English.

However, other writers demand another look at the contributions of literary works to LPBC. From this perspective, the language issue, once the language factor which ascribed LPBC a marginal status, as mentioned above, has to be revised in the sense that the Portuguese and English languages are both used by writers who stand as a reference at present for contributions to LPBC: Paulo da Costa and Irene Marques, whose titles were not referred to in previous compilations. The linguistic expression of Marques and da Costa’s literary works does not seem to ascribe their fictional

² Joel gives as examples the writers M. Carvalho (*Um poeta no paraíso* 1994; *Parc du Portugal* 1997), F. F. de Melo (*Os visitantes da América e reminiscências* 1994; *Nadine: A sereia dos corais e reminiscências* 1994), A. Joel (“Impressões do Outro Lado: Chronicles” in *A Voz de Chaves* 8) and A. S. Vincente (*A vida e tradições nas Aldeias Serranas da Beira* 1995).

works a marginal status. What is more, Marques and da Costa, unlike Laura Bulger as we will see, publish different works in Portuguese or in English.

Besides the language issue, the texts of Marques and da Costa require a new look at the criteria chosen for the study of LPBC, at present, concerning genre: short stories, chronicles and poetry also stand for the diversity of contributions to LPBC. Marques is the author of a book of chronicles, written in Portuguese and entitled *Habitando na Metáfora do Tempo – Crónicas Desejadas* (2009): whether the form factor itself which, according to Joel, had ascribed LPBC a marginal status, will apply to this title or not, should be observed as we believe those factors alone do not apply at present.

This demand for revision in the study of the contributions to LPBC at present is not only associated to the change of criteria that would enable the inclusion of other literary genres besides narrative texts; nor is it only related to the language works are written in. If the criteria set by Joel were to be kept, at present, in an analysis of LPBC focusing only in narrative texts, the novel *Barnacle Love* published in 2008 by Anthony De Sa would have to be added. This work would be approached as one more reference of LPBC at present, along with Erika De Vasconcelos who stood as the single reference of a Canadian writer of Portuguese descent writing novels in English language and publishing in Canada (Joel 2000, Patim 2009).³

In addition to clear references which present new possibilities beyond the criterias of previous studies of LPBC, the technological development in the last two decades is a factor which requires our attention in the sense that the number of resources and titles found in the internet renovate the expression of the form and the language of the literary works, reconfiguring the relations between Portugal and Canada in the study of the contributions to LPBC, both in those countries and in the world.⁴

³ This study will be presented in the conference 'Canada and Beyond', to be held in May 2010, at the University of Huelva, with the title 'Beyond the geography of words'.

⁴ See, for example, <http://manuelcarvalho.8m.com/> and <http://www.lusoartists.com/>. The fact that some of the works are available online, whether in Portuguese or in English, enables the attention of other readers around the world, including readers of Portuguese- or English-speaking countries.

2. LPBC in the context of Literature in Canada

To develop a brief analysis of LPBC within the broader context of literature written and published in Canada we have to focus on some terms of the literary and critical discourses. The terms “ethnic fiction,” “immigrant fiction,” “minority writing,” or “multicultural fiction” (all used in contrast to “mainstream literature”), when used in reference to literature produced or published in Canada, account for the diversity and plurality of voices and writing in this country. Some writers and writing will be either included or excluded from the corpus (and from bibliographies, anthologies, and encyclopedias) depending on the terminology and criteria adopted in order to define literature in Canada. The tendency to label literature “of ethnic background,” according to Joel (224), has brought about several studies and bibliographies of Portuguese writing that have identified and defined such literature, and these remain significant sources for any study of the field.⁵ Yet Teixeira and Lavigne’s two bibliographies of literature of Portuguese background in Canada from the 1970s, in English and Portuguese respectively, do not include recent authors whose contributions are remarkably important. Similarly Joel makes only a single reference to a Canadian author of Portuguese descent currently writing narrative works of fiction in English and publishing in Canada: Erika De Vasconcelos and her first novel, *My Darling Dead Ones*, published in 1998. De Vasconcelos’ second novel, *Between the Stillness and the Grove*, published in 2001, confirms the writer’s concern to go beyond immigrant experience *per se*. Her focus is not on the act of migration itself but on the process of a woman discovering who she is, i.e., her self (Patim 2004, 2009).

⁵ Mentioned examples of studies and bibliographies include N. T. Baden 1979 (‘Portuguese-American Literature, Does It Exist? The Interface of Theory and Reality in a Developing Literature.’ *MELUS* 6, no. 2: 15-31); J. Miska 1990 (*Ethnic and Native Canadian Literature: A Bibliography*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press); C. Teixeira and G. Lavigne 1992 (*The Portuguese in Canada: A Bibliography*. Toronto: Institute for Social Research, York University); C. Teixeira and G. Lavigne 1998 (*Os Portugueses no Canadá: Uma bibliografia (1953-1996)*. Lisbon: Direcção-Geral dos Assuntos Consulares e Comunidades Portuguesas); and R. Simone 1995 (*The Immigrant Experience in American Fiction: An Annotated Bibliography*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press).

At the outset of writing in Canada, travel and exploration narratives such as David Thompson's *Narrative of His Explorations in Western North America 1784-1812* not only helped to determine the physical space but also placed the self in that new geographical landscape: "By charting, naming and defining this space, the explorer initiates a kind of indigenization that shifts the European 'Self' from the position of outsider to the position of imaginative ownership" (Macfarlane 358). Writing from the perspective of an "outsider," to a certain extent continues in nineteenth-century literature of immigration, but it is inverted: the "normal" is no longer the voice of the narrator or character faced with the exotic landscape; now the character must face the necessity of having to fit into that landscape, as strange and different as it may be. The question becomes "Who am I now that I'm here?" instead of "Where's here?" (Macfarlane 2003). This literature involved (re)defining not only the self but also home.

Such (re)definition of self and of identity is rooted in a juxtaposition, in the presence of two nations within a single identity — and the same could be said of Portuguese Canadians. That terminological process can be useful to identify the diversity and multiplicity of voices in the Canadian body of literature, but it has also prompted inclusive and exclusive definitions of identity, namely the concept of "hyphenated identity," which has been called into question by some writers and critics. Several anthologies have been published following this criterion of juxtaposition, but so far none has been published on "writing by Portuguese Canadians," "Canadian literature of the Portuguese diaspora," or "Canadian writers of Portuguese descent." Volumes such as those could be understood as the expression of a human being's utmost need for "home" and "belonging."

Macfarlane points to a shift in more contemporary studies: "Contemporary debates in the field of Canadian literary study have shifted the focus from an emphasis on 'canonical' texts to include works and voices that have traditionally been excluded or marginalized in the formation of this conception of this national literature" (Macfarlane 357). To this critic, shifting from thematic approaches to Canadian literature to the study of issues shared by Canadian works portrays "the ways in which Canadians write and write themselves" (Macfarlane 357).

It is in this context that we understand the way in which Canada's two Portuguese-language writers, Lourenço Rodrigues and Laura Bulger,

are included in Batts's entry in the *Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada* (New 2002). When we look for them under "Portugal," we are sent to "Multicultural voices," an organizational process that confirms the importance of Joel's study to LPBC.⁶ These two references are obviously framed within a specific criterion, as "multicultural voices" includes writers in a language other than English or French who have published their work while living in Canada (Patim 2004).

More recent discussions of the theme of identity in literature have been partly influenced by postcolonial literary theory. This issue is presented thus by Macfarlane: "Perhaps Canadian culture is not clearly post-colonial, but is negotiating a complex position between the post-colonial and the colonial. Whether Canadian literature can be defined as post-colonial is, I think, a separate debate" (Macfarlane 372). As the critic explains, the Canadian literary canon excludes some texts and is thus engaged in "a type of colonial relationship with the texts it excludes." If some anthologies and encyclopedias help to form the canon, several others are a counterpart to it by giving expression to multicultural voices. Eventually an anthology of LPBC will include texts illustrating first-, second- and third-generation experiences of the Portuguese in Canada, of first- and second-generation Portuguese Canadians, and of Portuguese residents in Canada, and writing in Portuguese, French, or English, bringing together "mainstream" literature and "ethnic" or "immigrant" literature.

Ball examines how postmodernism has been deployed to refer to a historical period that is largely contemporary, to an artistic style identified as parodic, self-conscious, and fragmentary, and to a world view of the dominant cultural mode of global capitalism of the end of the twentieth century (Ball 895). Postmodern literature shapes cultural anxieties, fragmented structures, divided and undetermined selves. These selves are confronted with realities that co-exist in a space and time, in a global sphere, at a speed never experienced before, and almost within a juxtaposition of time and place. Canada somehow contains the particular conditions

⁶ As New explains in the Preface, the encyclopedia interprets the term 'literature in Canada' but doesn't define 'Canadian author,' as it includes Canadian-born writers, temporary Canadian residents, immigrants, and expatriates.

needed to produce the postmodern text: a multicultural population, a decentralized geography, and a cultural ambivalence toward the English and the Americans. The Canadian expression of the postmodern draws on the rejection of binary oppositions, and a postmodern approach to the literary works of Portuguese immigrants and second-generation Portuguese-Canadians to Literature in Canada would thus be particularly suitable.

3. Prose representations of Portuguese experiences in LPBC

It is our purpose to look at the contribution of Portuguese immigrants and second-generation Portuguese-Canadians to literature in Canada, focusing on narrative texts. Portuguese experiences in Canada, represented in those narratives, fall into three main categories. The first category concerns prose representations of immigrant experience that explore the feeling of being neither here nor there, best expressed as the “Paradox of Nowhere.” The second draws on representations of postsettlement experiences, which unlike first-generation Portuguese experiences, reflect the day-to-day life and relationships of Portuguese immigrants in Canada. Representations of third-generation Portuguese experiences in Canada, as illustrated by the narrative of second-generation Portuguese-Canadian writer Erika de Vasconcelos, stand for the third category.

3.1. The immigrant experience: the “Paradox of Nowhere”

My name is John Smith. Don't call me sir. Sir is in your country not here.

(L. Rodrigues, *Os Bastardos das Pátrias* 1976:120)

Joel studies two titles illustrating first-generation experience: the 1993 short story “Dollar Fever: The Diary of a Portuguese Pioneer,” by C. D. Minni, a writer of Italian background; and a 1976 novel entitled *Os Bastardos das Pátrias*, by L. Rodrigues. He points out that although these texts were written more than two decades after the first official arrival of Portuguese immigrants in Canada in 1953, they are set at that time (Joel 225). “Dollar Fever” takes place in 1954-5, while *Os Bastardos* spans 1956 to 1974; their fictional spaces are those of the journey from Portugal to the host country, Canada.

Both illustrate the arrival and settling of first-generation Portuguese immigrants and share the “same idea of solitude and family loss” (Joel 228). Leaving family and community contributed to feelings of displacement and loneliness, setting the terms of survival, often portrayed in Canadian literature as a theme, along with other themes such as the climate, the dimension and vast distances of the host country, and the alien landscape. But it is the human factor that “conveys the sense of difference or strangeness above all, the lack of human feelings towards immigrants, who were treated like numbered or tagged objects” (Joel 226). Aware of this treatment on arrival the immigrant characters in the fiction express feelings of revolt, shame, and dishonour. If for some newcomers these feelings fed the desire to return home after some time of hard work and savings, others believed after some time in their new country, with its different world views, that they would never readapt to the lives and world views of their homeland. Immigrant characters also express the feeling of being simultaneously strangers in their own country of origin and in their adopted country, an ambiguity captured in the expression “Paradox of Nowhere.” Shaping one’s existence “neither here nor there” but here and now, it literally becomes “nowhere” else but in memory.

3.2. Postsettlement experience: ‘Negation and negotiation of the Old Self’

Queremos que os nossos filhos saibam a nossa história, que é a história deles.

(Laura Bulger, *Vaivém* 1986:103)

To illustrate second-generation Portuguese experiences in Canada Joel draws on Laura Bulger’s book of short stories, *Paradise on Hold* (1987), first published in Portuguese as *Vaivém* (1986), and on the novel *Um Poeta no Paraíso* (1994), by Manuel Carvalho. Bulger’s compilation reflects the day-to-day life of Portuguese immigrants in Canada rather than focusing on ‘the social confrontation or cultural clash’ of the pioneers and their anxiety facing departure and arrival (Joel 229). Changes in relationships within the family either in Canada or back in the homeland; adoption of the new values and culture of the host country; changes in lifestyle; the integration of family members into the new society at different rhythms or to differing degrees; the prospect of returning to Portugal or remaining in

Canada; and related anxieties, hopes, and dilemmas are some of the themes of these stories.

Nevertheless, issues of identity and change, as portrayed by characters in the book, may not be shaped so much by adoption of new values and cultures as by “negation of the old self” (Joel 229). It is in the context of adaptation to a new culture and the path to integration enabled by citizenship that Joel approaches Manuel de Carvalho’s *Um Poeta no Paraíso*. Unlike Bulger’s book of short stories it was published only in Portuguese. Though Carvalho is a first-generation Portuguese Canadian, his novel reflects on second-generation Portuguese experiences in Canada that eventually overcome the “Paradox of Nowhere.” According to Joel, “the sense of a fantastic and magical reality” pervades the narrative and establishes it as mainstream literature, widening the appeal of a book on the day-to-day life of Portuguese immigrants in Montreal (Joel 232).

The sense of the fantastic and magical is conveyed by the character Luís Vaz de Camões, the outstanding and well-known sixteenth-century Portuguese poet. In the story he survives a shipwreck and emerges from the sea in twentieth-century Montreal. At the point of arrival he becomes as three characters: Luís, Vaz, and Camões. The idea of survival is associated with the fragmentation of the self, and thus with the different forms of negotiation between the old self and the new country and its cultural identity. In Joel’s opinion this novel clears the path for a move by LPBC toward the mainstream, which is later confirmed by Erika De Vasconcelos. The author of *My Darling Dead Ones* (1998) and *Between the Stillness and the Grove* (2002) in fact plays a leading role among second-generation Portuguese-Canadian novel writers.

3.3. Third-generation experiences: ‘Poetry and the Stream of the Sea’

In this way Magdalena has catalogued all her possessions. One has to know the history of things, she says, otherwise they have no meaning. She passes this down to them, this love of objects [...] Bits of *her* history. Laura and Fiona will carry them back to their young country with pride, with reverence almost, knowing how important they are.

(E. De Vasconcelos, *My Darling Dead Ones* 1998:21)

That word, *diaspora*, it's a beautiful-sounding word. A word, for us, so heavy with implications. I would have been part of it, that whole other country scattered across the globe, had my mother not gone to Odzun.

(E. De Vasconcelos, *Between the Stillness and the Grove* 2001:231)

Like the theme of survival, issues of identity are portrayed in Canadian literature frequently and in multiple forms. In texts illustrating first-generation Portuguese experiences in Canada, the sense of identity may rely on memory and the sense of loss, along with a desire to retain a vanishing heritage. In texts that describe the experience of third-generation Portuguese in Canada identity may rely on a longing for their heritage once integration has been eased by birth and citizenship and adaptation of cultural identity is assumed. As Joel explains, the issue "is not one of integration in the host country's culture, but on reintegration in the ancestral country and culture" (232-3). Likewise, survival is not the struggle to survive in a new society or environment, as in literature about the first generation, or a negotiation of self as new values and cultures are adopted, but an acknowledgment of the past and the family roots.

The presence of the Portuguese and of Portugal finds multiple expressions in De Vasconcelos' first narrative fiction, which is in fact metafiction, or biografictione (Patim 2004). Studying that presence helps us to understand the conflicts in this novel as in some way disconnected from the act of migration *per se*.⁷ Three languages (English, French, and Portuguese), and three locations (Montreal, Toronto, and Beira), are involved in the quest of the main character, Fiona, for self-discovery and indeed for self itself. Fiona anchors the narrative, and the story skips back and forth in time (present and past) and space (Portugal and Canada). Born in Canada she is one of the two daughters of immigrant parents, Leninha and Joaquim, and thus represents the second generation of Portuguese Canadians. The novel weaves the story of three generations of women and their family relationships. Intergenerational relationships are the source of the conflicts in the novel, whereas the acknowledgment of the

⁷ Memories, personal experiences, and stories conveyed to De Vasconcelos by ancestors are already fiction of fiction, and are in turn put into fiction by the writer.

past and of family roots holds the key to understanding her own identity and to survival (Patim 2004).

While the conflicts in *My Darling Dead Ones* may be disconnected from the act of migration, in *Between the Stillness and the Grove* migration is clearly the key for self-knowledge and survival. It is presented as an alternative to silence and suffering on the path to self-knowledge and growth. Portugal features in this novel as a place of self-imposed exile and self-rediscovery. The main character, Dzovig, escapes from communist Armenia to Portugal when her lover Thomas dies. At the same time she is escaping a silent ‘war’ between father and daughter. While coming to terms with her past she develops new relationships and reconfigures her priorities and boundaries. De Vasconcelos uses the multiple voices and identities of the Portuguese writer and critic Fernando Pessoa — best known as a poet under the heteronyms Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, and Álvaro de Campos but also as a prose writer under the heteronym Bernardo Soares — to orient Dzovig in Portugal. Of the various alternatives Dzovig likes the name Pessoa best because it means “literally, person. Anyone, or everyone” (De Vasconcelos, *Between* 6). When Dzovig reads his books, the poet gets into her mind and they talk to each other. “You read my mind,” Pessoa tells her (De Vasconcelos, *Between* 326). The fragmentation of Pessoa’s self helps De Vasconcelos to express the fragmentation of the character Dzovig.

As in De Vasconcelos’ first novel, time and space are structured in three parts: in this case, the past is set in Armenia, the present is set in Portugal, and the future is projected onto Canada, where the character decides she will go to. While it could be said that in *My Darling Dead Ones* De Vasconcelos explores her sense of place and her self by rooting her characters in both Canada (the “here”) and Portugal (the “there”), in *Between Stillness and the Grove* the writer acknowledges her sense of time and her self by uprooting her characters from their homeland (the past) and re-rooting them both in Portugal (the present) and Canada (the future).

Conclusion

The period of publication of the narratives quoted in the epigraphs of each section of this paper span 1976 to 2001: these narratives stand as references in the path of LPBC, as approached here, marking, chronologically, the

1970s with L. Rodrigues, the 1980s with Laura Bulger, the 1990s with Erika de Vasconcelos. However, a notable omission from previous studies is Paulo da Costa, editor and translator, author of the short story book *The Scent of a Lie* (2003) and the book of poems *notas de rodapé* (2005), among others, as well as Irene Marques, author of the short stories in *Habitando na Metáfora do Tempo – Crónicas Desejadas* (2009) and the book *Wearing Glasses of Water – Poems* (2007). Both authors are currently living in Canada, write in both Portuguese and English languages, and publish in both Portugal and Canada. What is more, the language issue no longer seems to ascribe a marginal status to these two examples of LPBC, nor stand as a segregation factor which could grant these works a marginal status, as suggested by Joel concerning Literature of Portuguese Background.⁸

Rodrigues' novel, representing the immigrant experience, best expressed as the "Paradox of Nowhere," is written in Portuguese and published in Portugal, whereas Bulger's book of short stories shapes the contribution of a Portuguese writer, now living in Portugal, writing and publishing in both English and Portuguese, representing the postsettlement period experiences of Portuguese in Canada. In this case, the language factor finds a parallel with the writers Irene Marques and Paulo da Costa. Concerning the contribution of the two novels by Erika De Vasconcelos, a second-generation Portuguese-Canadian writer shaping third-generation Portuguese experiences in Canada, it can be joined by Anthony De Sa's novel *Barnacle Love* (2008), not only for the language factor but also for the genre of the literary works. The content, form and language related factors, which had ascribed LPBC a marginal status in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, grant to most recent literary expressions and contributions to LPBC a newness for further studies.

Those literary works, approached under three main categories in the representation of Portuguese experiences in LPBC, as well as more recent works of Canadian writers of Portuguese descent (De Sa) or works

⁸ Paulo da Costa's book of short stories, for example, received the 2003 Commonwealth First Book Prize for the Canada-Caribbean Region and the 2002 W. O Mitchell City of Calgary Book Prize.

of Portuguese immigrants (Marques and da Costa), contribute to the celebration of Canada, of multiculturalism in the field of literature, and to the growing cultural diversity of the country. Portuguese and Canadians of Portuguese descent have contributed to the multiplicity of voices that make up Canada's multiple geographies and identities, as portrayed in Canadian Literature and expressed through numerous authors of numerous backgrounds.

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ABSTRACT

Portuguese and Canadians of Portuguese descent have contributed to the multiplicity of voices that make up Canada's multiple geographies and identities and to cultural diversity in the field of literature. This paper looks at the contribution of Portuguese immigrants and second-generation Portuguese-Canadians to literature in Canada. Portuguese experiences in Canada, represented in narratives written or published in this country, fall into three main categories. First, I look at prose representations of immigrant experience that explore the feeling of being neither here nor there. Second, I draw on representations of postsettlement, or second-generation, experience. Unlike first-generation Portuguese experiences, these reflect the day-to-day life and relationships of Portuguese immigrants in Canada. Third, I explore third-generation Portuguese experiences in Canada, as illustrated by the narrative of the Canadian writer of Portuguese descent Erika De Vasconcelos. An analysis of LPBC (Literature of Portuguese Background in Canada) within the broader context of literature written and published in Canada is briefly developed.

KEYWORDS

Canada, Literature, Portugal, LPBC, Erika De Vasconcelos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Canadá, Literatura, Portugal, LCPC, Erika De Vasconcelos.

RESUMO

Os Portugueses e os Canadianos de descendência Portuguesa contribuíram para a multiplicidade de vozes, que constituem as múltiplas geografias e identidades no Canadá, e para a diversidade cultural na área da Literatura. Este artigo debruça-se sobre o contributo dos imigrantes Portugueses e dos Portugueses-Canadianos para a Literatura no Canadá. As experiências dos Portugueses no Canadá, representadas em narrativas escritas ou publicadas neste país, dividem-se em três categorias

principais. Em primeiro lugar, observamos representações em prosa de experiências imigrantes que exploram o sentimento de estar nem aqui, nem ali. Em segundo lugar, estudamos as representações de experiências de pós fixação, ou de segunda-geração. Por último, analisamos as experiências de Portugueses de terceira-geração, como ilustrado na narrativa da escritora Canadiana de descendência Portuguesa, Erika De Vasconcelos. Uma breve análise da LCPC (Literatura de Contexto Português no Canadá) dentro do contexto mais amplo da Literatura escrita e publicada no Canadá é desenvolvida.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Canadá, Literatura, Portugal, LCPC, Erika De Vasconcelos.

Transgenerational Phantoms
in Canadian Diasporic Literature:
Recent Fiction by Dionne Brand,
David Chariandy,
and Madeleine Thien

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Transgenerational Phantoms in Canadian Diasporic Literature: Recent Fiction by Dionne Brand, David Chariandy, and Madeleine Thien

It has often been pointed out in recent studies on haunting and the nation, that the definition of any nation is dependant both on exclusion and on the effacing from official history of its violence on the excluded. Ernest Renan's famous quote shows that

Forgetting is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies constitutes a danger for the principle of nationality. Indeed, historical enquiry brings to light deeds of violence which took place at the origin of all political formations. Unity is always effected by means of brutality. (Renan 11)

Such exclusions will constitute the ghost, the haunting presence or transgenerational phantom that signals the influence of the repressed in the present. Marlene Goldman and Joanne Saul sustain that “[i]n a country like Canada with a history of arrivals and departures, the trope of haunting may be a particularly useful way to think about the relationship between history and memory, about displacement, about ancestors, and about inheritance” (Goldman and Saul 649). Besides being haunted by “the spectral presences of North America’s Indigenous peoples and the Québécois [who] repeatedly unsettle the imaginary, unified vision of an Anglo-Canadian nation-state”, the Canadian nation is also “haunted and fractured at the transnational level” by diasporic experiences (Goldman and Saul 648). The emergence of racialized cultural writers and critics in the last decades has done much to retrieve the “hidden” to the public sphere and haunting has become in Canada a relevant trope in contemporary cultural practices. Goldman and Soul have proposed that

Perhaps part of the explanation for the ‘return’ of the trope of haunting in contemporary literature and criticism is the unprecedented movement and dislocation of people across the globe associated with the development of global or transnational capitalism. ‘Home’ as a constant has become less of a given, and more and more people are ‘unhomed’ — often to exist in a kind of liminal space traditionally associated with the ghost. [...] This may explain why various theories of postcolonialism and diaspora that take as their starting point the movements of people, the dispossession of people, and the clash of disparate cultures make use of the image of the ghost to capture the in-betweenness of the displaced. (Goldman and Soul 648-9)

David Chariandy’s debut novel, *Soucouyant* (2007), translates Chariandy’s deep theoretical and critical knowledge of this trope into a concise and lyric narrative about Adele, a Trinidadian Black woman migrant in Canada who suffers from early-onset dementia and her young mixed-race (Black and South Asian) Canadian son. In my reading of Chariandy’s novel, I will be considering, even if very briefly, two novels preceding his text that offer other interesting examples of diasporic haunting and transgenerational phantoms: Dionne Brand’s *What We All Long For* and Madeleine Thien’s *Certainty*. Chariandy has published a review and a longer essay on Brand’s novel and her influence is remarkable in his work.

Chariandy’s novel is subtitled “a novel of forgetting”. It opens with a first scene that subtly locates the characters in a precise time (“the same wildlife calendar with the moose of September 1987, now two years out of date”) and space (“a *good* part of Scarborough”, emphasis in the original). This first scene introduces already the tension between memory and forgetting, both “active” and “forced”, that will provide the basic thematic and structural axis to the novel. The year is relevant, since 1988, the “absent” year in-between the date in the calendar and the actual date, saw the passing of the Multiculturalism Act in Canada. History, memory and forgetting will at times clash and at other times cooperate in *Soucouyant* to retrieve Adele’s hidden past haunting her son the unnamed narrator in what can be considered as a literary case of the “transgenerational phantom” described by Abraham and Torok:

with the theory of the ‘transgenerational phantom’, Abraham and Torok build on their investigation on the effects of secrets. The phantom expands Freudian concepts of identity formation and growth, since it suggests that unresolved and silenced issues that disrupt one person’s psychic life may be unconsciously transmitted through the generations.[...] It is this lacuna that is transferred through the generations that forms the transgenerational phantom. The phantom is therefore not a consequence of the subject’s unsuccessful mourning, but the result of a silence in a previous generation. (Stocks 79)

The narrator of *Soucouyant* presents clear symptoms of such a haunting and although his gloomy and “eternally sad” (Chariandy, *Soucouyant* 119) character is perfectly understandable having into account both the depressive context of his beloved mother’s dementia and the racism he confronts in his surroundings, the narrator is conscious from an earlier age that there is something disturbing that has been involuntarily transmitted to him within the family, something he has grown up with: “At a crucial and early point in my life, something seeped into me. (Is this how to explain it?) Some mood or manner was transmitted, though my parents tried their utmost to prevent this from happening” (Chariandy, *Soucouyant* 101).

It is important to have into account, when one considers the transgenerational phantom, that there must be a partial knowledge, a hint, the suspicion that something is missing and it is the knowledge of the gap which enacts the haunting. Along the narrative, Adele’s peculiar behaviour signals at first sight her dementia: an obsession with running water, her wandering, recurrent references to her encounter with the soucouyant. These are in fact partial glimpses of her childhood in occupied Trinidad at the time of the Second World War that the narrator cannot decipher then but that clearly haunt him and make him mumble the word “soucouyant”, or something close to it, in his dreams (Chariandy, *Soucouyant* 33).

Similarly, according to Pilar Cuder, “Tuyen in *What We All Long For* and Gail in *Certainty* grow up under the shadow cast by their parents’ diasporic trauma” (Cuder 2009). Tuyen’s family escaped Vietnam and made the successful immigrant story in Toronto, but on the way they lost their son Quy, who was separated from them and became a refugee in the camps

in Malaysia. Their anxiety to find the lost son and the anguish of culpability of the migrant family are transmitted to their Canadian-born children; Tuyen's restlessness, that drives her artistic work of remembering, shows also the symptoms of the transgenerational phantom. In *Certainty*, Gail Lim is sure her father is hiding a terrible secret that terrifies and depresses him. His traumatic childhood experiences of the Japanese occupation of South East Asia during the Second World War make him a sad brother-spirit to Adele in Chariandy's novel. It is Gail's research for her own work producing documentaries for the radio that will disclose her father's past, but open dialogue between generations is made impossible by Gail's untimely death.

According to Clarie Stocks,

The symptoms displayed by subjects who are haunted by a transgenerational phantom may be understood as the coming into hiding of something which the subject had no previous conscious knowledge of. The symptoms partially reveal the concealment practised by earlier generations, without exposing the content of that concealment. In this sense, the symptoms of the phantom may be said to bring into hiding excluded history, to hint at the existence of a traumatic past that, for whatever reason, has been silenced or incompletely erased. (Stocks 85)

Stocks envisions the potential of such a theory when applied in the context of diasporic identities, since the transgenerational phantom "is one way of the effects of extreme experiences that moves beyond the merely individual to take account of a broader social context" (Stocks 80). Although Abraham and Torok restricted their study to the context of the family, other theorists like E. Ann Kaplan, Amy Novak, Gabriele Schwab or Laurie Vickroy have expanded the scope of this theory to analyse trauma in wider communities such as the post-slavery African American, indigenous peoples and other post-colonial societies, thus interlocking personal trauma and history. Nicholas Rand suggests that

Abraham and Torok's work enables us to understand how the falsification, ignorance or disregard of the past — whether institutionalized by a totalitarian state (as in former East Germany) or practised by parents and grandparents — is the

breeding ground of the phantomatic return of shameful secrets on the level of the individuals, families, the community, and possibly even entire nations. (qtd. in Stocks 82)

I sustain that in these three novels, the haunting by a traumatic past takes place at the level of the individual, of the family, of the nation, but also at the level of the trans-national, within the diasporic communities of migrants to Canada. I will focus here on Chariandy's text to clarify this argument.

At an individual level, Adele experiences a traumatic encounter with neocolonialism in her childhood that the narrator will only reveal in full at the very end of the novel, though its effects have been gradually and subtly interspersed all along the narrative. Adele's dementia — a condition that constitutes a "forced forgetfulness" (Galloway 2) — takes her back to those crucial times in Trinidad when the trauma was gestated. At an early point in the novel, Adele herself tells the story of the events though, being decontextualized and "out of place" in the dining room of their home in Toronto, we take it as another raving of her demented mind: "'Chaguaramas,' she explained. 'She loss she skin at the military base in Chaguaramas. She wore a dress of fire before it go ruin her. I wore a hat of orange light, a sheet of pain, yes, on my head and neck'" (Chariandy, *Soucouyant* 24). Although we know superficially of the events that produced the trauma, we only get partial fragments and the narrator himself emphasizes the involuntary character of such disclosure of the repressed: "Mother told me other things too, especially later, when she couldn't help herself. When the scenes and secrets were spilling out of her involuntarily" (Chariandy, *Soucouyant* 136). In the last chapter of the novel the narrator assumes his role as the "custodian of cultural memory" (Dobson and Chariandy 812) and provides us with the full narrative: Adele and her mother were forcefully displaced from their village for 'security reasons' at the time of the American occupation of Trinidad during the Second World War. Left without any source of income because "they weren't eligible for any compensation since they appeared unattached to any adult man" (Chariandy, *Soucouyant* 181), Adele's mother resorted to prostitution for the American soldiers as the only way out to avoid hunger, and even this strategy does not work because after a while the soldiers will not hire a bruised and damaged body that visibly reminds them of the abuse they committed: "She can't be

bought in this condition, not with ruin so naked upon her” (Chariandy, *Soucouyant* 185). Hunger, extreme poverty and social ostracism are sufficient causes of trauma in themselves for a seven year old, but in this terrible context, and at a point of extreme confusion, Adele ignites her mother, covered in tar, oil and solvents by an American soldier, turning her into a sort of soucouyant, a ball of fire.

Adele’s trauma is personal, in that it involves a difficult relationship with her mother and in that in a way she tries to ‘kill the mother’ symbolically and literally in order not to repeat her life. But hers is also a historical trauma, stirred by political circumstances, by the colonial and neocolonial subjugation of Black and South Asian Trinidadians, the descendants and inheritors of those “ghosts” carried in the Spanish ships across “endless floors of bones” (Chariandy, *Soucouyant* 182) and of the indentured labourers from Asia. Although Adele’s history is given more space in the novel, attention is also paid to Roger’s background and the forgotten histories of the South Asian diaspora in Trinidad: “The migration happened a long time ago, and it didn’t involve circumstances that anyone had thought important to remember and pass on. Origins of caste and wealth that had no business being remembered. Hushed stories of desperate flights, of cutlasses and sweat. Bodies broken in the canefields” (Chariandy, *Soucouyant* 79).

Lily Cho has defined diasporic subjectivity in relation to memory and the repressed or hidden past:

Diasporic communities are formed through the processes of memory, which bind vertically through generations and horizontally across individuals. Diasporic subjectivities emerge not simply from the fact of geographical displacement, but also from the ways in which forgotten or suppressed pasts continue to shape the present. Paul Gilroy’s notion of “living memory” powerfully calls attention to the ways in which diasporic pasts live on in secret or forgotten gestures, habits and desires (*Black Atlantic*). And so we carry an anger that is not our own. We have cravings for tastes we cannot name. (Cho 106)

It is at this level that the trope of haunting and the theory of the transgenerational phantom clearly reach a communal character. As exposed above, the phantom refers to a hidden secret, a repressed history, and therefore it

is intimately linked to wilful forgetting or “active forgetting” in Nietzschean terms. Both Adele and Roger, her husband, determine to carry out in Canada such an active forgetting of their lives and histories in the Caribbean since “They are here now, and they have almost no interest in their respective pasts. Without actually discussing the matter, they agree never to wax nostalgically” (Chariandy, *Soucouyant* 73). However, the colonial history of the Caribbean is impinged on the skin of both Adele and Roger, who “smell” their respective history of oppression on the other’s skin:

They didn’t know each other, but there was history between them all the same. There were mildewed explanations for why they shouldn’t ever get along. An African and a South Asian, both born in the Caribbean and the descendants of slaves and indentured workers, they had each been raised to believe that only the other had ruined the great fortune that they should have enjoyed in the New World. They had been raised to detect, from a nervous distance, the smell that accompanied the other. Something oily that saturated their skins, something sweet-rotten and dreaded that arose from past labours and traumas and couldn’t ever seem to be washed away. (Chariandy, *Soucouyant* 70)

Like his parents, the narrator presents at the beginning a Nietzschean desire to forget, and leaves the home to roam around the city for two years: “The city was for me a place of forgetting. I found my anonymity in a series of rent-by-the-week rooms, in under-the-counter jobs [...]. I met others who were fleeing their pasts, the discontents of nations and cultures, tribes and families” (Chariandy, *Soucouyant* 30). Adele seems to have exorcized to a certain extent her traumatic relationship towards her mother through her narrative of the encounter with the Trinidadian folk figure of the soucouyant, “a way of telling without really telling” (Chariandy, *Soucouyant* 66): the dress of fire, the skin gloving on and off, are two recurrent images in reference both to her mother and to the soucouyant. But hers is also a communal trauma, “the heaviness of a history that couldn’t leave” (Chariandy, *Soucouyant* 115) and therefore the figure of the soucouyant keeps haunting her son the narrator, whose hesitant and reluctant unravelling of his mother’s narrative of trauma is symbolized via the dubitative inscriptions of the word “Soucouyant” in the headings of

each chapter, which vary its spelling from an initial reversed S and tentative deleted 'so' and 'su', to a final though incomplete "soucouyan", suggesting that, although this is the ending chapter, there is no round final conclusion or fixing down of the soucouyant and, by implication, of her haunting, in the remote, "foreign" diasporic space. Moreover, purposeful rational forgetting proves weaker than the persistent strength of memory: no conscious effort may delete from the body what it has experienced, bruises and scars are imprints of memory on the body and, according to Adele, "You can't do nothing for bones. They like history" (Chariandy, *Soucouyant* 8). In his emphasis on the body, Chariandy departs from Nietzsche and is closer to Toni Morrison's view of emotional memory, based on "what the nerves and the skin remember" (Morrison 119) or to Dionne Brand's use of the Black body as a reminder of historical and contemporary oppressions:

Black experience in any modern city or town in the Americas is a haunting. One enters a room and history follows; one enters a room and history precedes. History is already seated in the chair in the empty room when one arrives. Where one stands in a society seems always related to this historical experience. [...]

The Black body is the place of captivity. The Black body is situated as a sign of particular cultural and political meanings in the Diaspora. [... These bodies] remain fixed in the ether of history. They leap onto the backs of the *contemporary* — they cleave not only to the collective and acquired memories of their descendants but also to the collective and acquired memories of the other. (Brand, *Map*, 25, 35; emphasis added)

"Contemporary" is a key word I wish to insist on. The history of racism in Canada stretches in the novel from the reference to the Asiatic Exclusion League (p. 31), founded in Canada in 1907 as a sister to the American one, to the late 80s and their discriminatory exploitation of undocumented (illegalized) workers who are not even given the benefits of proper health care. The scene of a labour accident with the Hispanic workers inserts into the narrative not only the re-memory of the colonial past in Trinidad, the neocolonial occupation of the island by the Americans, or the racism of pre-Multiculturalism Canada suffered by Roger and Adele, but the very contemporary effects of globalization on labour conditions and the

exploitation of racialized migrant workers, presenting therefore a multi-layered and interrelated structure of (post)colonial oppressions. As Goldman and Saul have pointed out, “haunting can be an empowering literary and artistic trope that can evoke trauma, loss, rupture, recovery, healing, and wisdom. And it is also, at its core, political. It provokes (and insists upon) questions about ownership, entitlement, dispossession, and voice” (Goldman and Saul 654). Chariandy’s far reaching use of the trope in *Soucouyant* constitutes a perfect example of such a political provocation in his consistent proposal of an ethics of dissent from “wilful forgetting”.

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ABSTRACT

David Chariandy's first novel, *Soucouyant* (2007), is misleadingly subtitled "a novel of forgetting". In contradiction to this statement, the novel deals with the effort to re-member and record the devastating effects of colonial legacies and neocolonial practices on the psyches of a Trinidadian migrant couple and their mixed-race sons. Set in multicultural suburban Scarborough (Toronto) in 1989 — the year immediately following the passing of the Multiculturalism Act in Canada—, Chariandy's text craftily weaves intersecting threads of race, gender, class and age that paradoxically separate but also link the characters in what he has elsewhere called a "diasporic haunting". This is a term that refers to the often unconscious anxieties of second-generation racialized youths about the hidden secrets in their parents' past in 'the old country', a past they openly reject but that inevitably has a strong impact on their lives. This reading of Chariandy's novel considers, even if briefly, two novels preceding his text that offer other interesting examples of such diasporic haunting: Dionne Brand's *What We All Long For* (2005) and Madelaine Thien's *Certainty* (2007).

KEY WORDS

Diasporic haunting, transgenerational phantom, trauma, multiculturalism, immigration, fiction.

RESUMEN

La novela de David Chariandy *Soucouyant* (2007) lleva por subtítulo "novela sobre el olvido". Sin embargo su temática contradice esta afirmación, ya que se ocupa del recuerdo y el registro histórico de los devastadores efectos de las prácticas coloniales y neocoloniales en la psique de un matrimonio inmigrante, proveniente de Trinidad, y sus hijos mestizos. La novela se sitúa en el área multicultural de Scarborough (Toronto), en el año 1989, justo unos meses después de en entrar en efecto la Ley del Multiculturalismo en Canadá. El texto de Chariandy entrelaza de manera magistral los hilos de la raza, clase, género y edad que paradójicamente

separan a la vez que unen a los personajes en lo que el autor ha descrito como “el fantasma de la diáspora”. Este es un término que hace referencia a la ansiedad, a menudo inconsciente, que presenta la segunda generación de inmigrantes respecto de los secretos ocultos en el pasado de sus progenitoras/es en el país de origen, un pasado que rechazan abiertamente pero que produce un impacto inevitable en sus vidas. Este estudio de la novela de Chariandy tiene en cuenta, aunque de manera muy breve, dos novelas que la precedieron y que ofrecen ejemplos interesantes de este fantasma diaspórico: *What We All Long For* (2005) de Dionne Brand y *Certainty* (2007) de Madelaine Thien.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Fantasma diaspórico, fantasma transgeneracional, trauma, multiculturalismo, inmigrantes, ficción.

Restless Border Crossings in Aritha van Herk's Writings

Hilde Staels

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Restless Border Crossings in Aritha van Herk's Writings

Introducing Aritha van Herk

Aritha van Herk, one of Canada's leading novelists today, was born in the province of Alberta to Calvinist Dutch immigrants, poverty-stricken farmers who left the Netherlands for Canada after the Second World War. Canadian soldiers liberated the Dutch and liberators' tales of Canada as a country fit for farming inspired Aritha's parents to leave their mother country in 1949. They settled in the western prairies where Aritha was born in 1954. She grew up on a family farm, speaking Dutch at home and learning English at school. She describes herself as "a Dutch-Canadian child with a foot in both countries and a tongue cleft by two simultaneous and sometimes conflicting narratives" ('Inventing a Family Tree' 48). In both her novels, short stories and literary criticism, she is preoccupied with her Dutch origin and while exploring her Canadian identity, she recurrently writes about linguistic restlessness as central to immigrant experience.

Thus far, van Herk has published five novels in a time-span of twenty years, from *Judith* (1978) to *Restlessness* (1998). She started publishing in the 1970s, in the era commonly called 'the age of postmodernism'. This was a crucial period in Canadian literary history, for it was the time when creative writing came of age in Canada. Earlier novelists largely wrote regional novels for which they relied on a classic realist form. Just as her contemporaries, van Herk breaks away from the conventions of classic realism and she has increasingly experimented with the novelistic form, thereby crossing the boundaries of various genre conventions.

Van Herk has been a Professor of English-Canadian literature and creative writing at the University of Calgary in Alberta since 1983. Her literary criticism illuminates her own innovative writings and those of other

major Canadian novelists, Robert Kroetsch being one of them. Van Herk is greatly indebted to Kroetsch, a poet, novelist and literary critic who is Canada's experimental writer *par excellence*. Both writers are attracted by the notion of crossing the edge, the frontier, in a geographical and psychological sense, and by the transgression of genre boundaries in the novel. In her own writings, van Herk establishes a critical dialogue with Kroetsch's novels in that she, as a self-pronounced feminist writer, challenges his male perspective on the Canadian West (the Prairies) and Woman. She says in an interview: "In my writing, I am having an ongoing dialogue with not just what Robert Kroetsch has written, but with what the work he has written represents" (Morse 38). She counters the dominant patriarchal notion of women's roles in society as "mothers/saints/whores, muses all" (*A Frozen Tongue* 143). One can find this sexist image of Woman in male western fiction in general and, by mapping the Canadian West from a female perspective, van Herk argues with and against these male narratives. Her female protagonists dare to explore unfamiliar landscapes— in a geographical and psychological sense— and they travel to discover new ways of being. Their quest involves a questioning of gendered identity that again results in a disruptive and innovative way of writing.

This essay will explore formal and thematic aspects of van Herk's novels and focus specifically on the transgression of boundaries in terms of language, gender and genre. It will close off with some reflections on the particular way in which van Herk conceives of the relationship between the writer, the fictional text, and the reader.

Homelessness in language

Van Herk's relationship to her mother tongue is central to her own search for identity and that of her female protagonists. In one of her essays, she defines Dutch as the "original language of blood and bone relegated to silence, forgettingness (sic), obscurity" and adds: "I try perpetually to re-capture that language, to give it tongue. It is both irrevocably lost and eternally present" (*A Frozen Tongue* 19-20). Her mother tongue keeps existing within her as the 'other' language and makes her aware of her displacement. She strikingly lards her fiction and non-fiction with Dutch words to re-connect with her roots from which she has become estranged.

Van Herk is preoccupied with linguistic restlessness, or homelessness in language, as experienced by immigrants. Her treatment of this subject in her literary and critical writings clearly converges with Julia Kristeva's theoretical reflections on the foreigner in *Strangers to Ourselves*. Van Herk is familiar with this study of the foreigner in which its author, a Bulgarian born psycho-analyst, linguist and literary critic living in France, speaks about the immigrant as a perpetual solitary wanderer who has lost his/her mother, the country of origin, and who is a "melancholy lover of a vanished space" ('Toccata and Fugue for the Foreigner' 9). In van Herk's latest novel *Restlessness*, melancholia results from the female protagonist's loss of the Dutch language, her mother tongue, and from her sense of not belonging anywhere. She speaks about herself as "the homeless one" (81) and of homesickness and perpetual wandering as a typical condition of many Canadian immigrants. Yet van Herk does not limit herself to exploring restlessness in language as experienced by the immigrant only. In her fictional writings in general, restlessness in language additionally and primarily involves her female characters' desire to escape from the fixity of verbal representations that belong to the system of language. This also proves to be a recurring issue in her essays.

Julia Kristeva similarly argues in *Strangers to Ourselves* that it is not only immigrants who are foreigners to their mother tongue. We are all strangers to ourselves, because our entry into the symbolic order involves the acquisition of ordered, structured language and the separation from the mother's body. This separation from the pre-Oedipal mother entails the repression of primitive drives (the death- and life drive) and of moods or affects (such as fear, love, sadness, joy) as experienced in the sensory relationship with the maternal body. Kristeva calls this pre-verbal language that is central to the infant's symbiotic relationship with the mother "the semiotic". According to Kristeva, (post)modernist experimental literary texts contain traces of the semiotic articulation of this lost unity with the primal mother. They are present in literary texts as traces of the repressed inner stranger.

When we approach van Herk's novels with the help of Kristeva's ideas about the relationship between the foreigner and language, we notice that her female protagonists indeed struggle with the linguistic representation of women in the sex-gender system that estranges them from the

language of the (m)other within themselves. Their process of self-discovery involves a rediscovery of the other within the self, that is, a muted discourse that lies buried within the unconscious. The following discussion of van Herk's novels will look among others at bodily drives and affects that erupt from the unconscious of her female protagonists. This other language within the self crosses the border of socio-symbolic discourse and disturbs the boundaries of gender and genre conventions in van Herk's experimental fiction.

Gender border crossing

A restless desire to revise women's lives as featured in traditional plots fuels van Herk's creative writing. In an interview, she speaks about herself as "a profoundly political feminist" (McCance 14) whose primary aim as a writer is to challenge people's common expectations about women. In one of her essays, she says: "I want to explode writing as prescription, as a code for the proper behaviour of good little girls" (*In Visible Ink* 131). Her novels indeed deal with women's desire to transgress normative social and cultural constraints. She parodically inscribes and contests traditional narratives that contain conventional gender roles or conventional representations of Woman.¹ She depicts her female characters as free agents who subvert stereotypical images of womanhood, that is, their representations in male-dominated discourse, and who invent a new female identity for themselves. She increasingly portrays them in her fiction as subjects who are continuously in transition, travelling restlessly in an attempt to escape from all linguistic confinements.

Judith (1978) is a novel of development set in central Alberta in which Judith, the young female protagonist, emancipates herself from the demands of her father and lover. Her decision to become a pig farmer, like her father, is a means to escape from her job in the city where she used

¹ I rely on Linda Hutcheon's influential definition of postmodern parody as repetition with critical (ironic) difference or distance in *A Theory of Parody*. According to Hutcheon, postmodern parodic intertextuality is paradoxical, because it both incorporates past conventions of writing and lays bare their limitations. It underlines the inbuilt historical character of modes of writing in terms of form, style and subject matter.

to be a secretary involved in a sexual battle of dominance and submission with her employer. She initially struggles within and against stereotypical images of womanhood, yet she gradually develops into becoming self-assertive and independent. An important catalyst in this process is Mina, an unconventional farmer's wife who transgresses the stereotypical image of true motherhood. The function of catalyst or helper is also assigned to the female pigs that become anthropomorphic creatures embodying Judith's femaleness beyond the limits of the sex-gender system. Through her bond with the pigs, she rediscovers "her own smell ... the smell of her own purity ... her alive and breathing skin". She derives pleasure from "their common female scents" (157). Communicating with the sows awakens in Judith the genderless language (the drives and affects) of her body, for she sings, dances and laughs in the pigs' barn as her senses become fully alive. One may also interpret her laughter as a burlesque or carnivalesque laughter that upsets authority and transgresses established notions of gender. To the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, the carnivalesque in the novel is a festive ritual during which bodily propriety and the norms of dominant society are temporarily transgressed. Judith's sense of togetherness with the sows is indeed such a transitional experience whereby the other within the self erupts. We learn from Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, the authors of *The Politics & Poetics of Transgression*, that pigs have been commonly defined as "creatures of the threshold" (47) or hybrid and therefore 'monstrous' animals. Judith's ritualistic connectedness with the pigs is beyond the pale of decency yet it is a necessary stage in her process of renewal, that is, her liberation from her former socially acquired gender identity. Thus in her first novel, van Herk shows how gender identity — the cultural constitution of femininity — is open to transformation and rewriting.

In the novels published after *Judith*, van Herk increasingly uses images of exploring and mapping unknown space in dealing with her characters' search for identity and gender border crossing. She says in one of her essays that mapping space is "a dominant stylistic and thematic metaphor in Canadian literature" (*A Frozen Tongue* 25). Yet she distinguishes her own mapping of Canadian space, particularly the West and the wild nature of the North, from the male tradition. Whereas the North had been commonly regarded as "a male territory ... a frontier to be exploited

and explored” (Beeler 86) she conceives of the North, the ultimate frontier, as an ideal open space that invites to be inscribed differently, from a woman’s perspective. In mapping the North differently, she is inspired by Robert Kroetsch who says about the Arctic: “To write is, in some metaphoric sense, to go North... The North was a silence that desired as much to be spoken as I desired to speak. It was the very geography of my desire. It was the landscape of my unspeakable narrative intention” (*A Likely Story* 14 & 16).

In van Herk’s second novel *The Tent Peg* (1981), the territory of the North becomes a metaphor for the unconscious and its symbolic significance is very similar to the untamed Canadian wilderness in Margaret Atwood’s novel *Surfacing* (1972). Another similarity with *Surfacing* is that the female protagonist J.L. undertakes a journey to the Yukon Territory as a means to escape from the sex-gender system of the civilized world into what she initially hopes will be a realm of silence. J.L. is the only woman among a group of male geologists who are in search of uranium. She merely provided the men with her initials so as to avoid gender identification. The geologists’ exploitation and colonization of the Yukon Territory is treated alongside the conventional power game and battle for territory between the men and J.L., who is the cook. She disguised herself as a boy in order not to be violated by the explorers, yet as soon as she has been found out, she becomes the victim of the battle between the sexes. She thinks: “... one wants to murder me and one wants to fuck me and one wants to take pictures of me, and what are the others going to want? I thought it would be different out here” (104). Yet the men who initially try to define J.L. by relying on the language of binary oppositions that typifies the sex-gender system, ultimately fail at pinpointing her. As she does not behave like a conventional woman, they mainly perceive her as an uncanny stranger.

J. L.’s uncanny strangeness is, for instance, manifest through her physical communication with nature’s elements. She establishes a connection with the arctic territory in using a wordless language of pure sound and physical gestures while dancing. It gives her inner strength and in gaining this strength, J.L. becomes the character who teaches the geologist explorers to relate differently to her and to the land. When they are alone with her, the male scientists lose control over their socially acquired gendered identity and they enter a transitional space. She helps them get in touch with their

repressed inner stranger, by guiding them towards the unexplored, silenced 'underground' realm that symbolizes the unconscious. The scientist Mackenzie, who is the leader of the crew, intuitively J.L.'s imaginative power and wisdom and her function as a catalyst, for he thinks: "... she carries inside her a knowledge that is endless, frightening, some way of catalyzing sorrow to joy" (138). Mackenzie's wife left him ten years before and he never dared to ask her why she departed with their children. He is at a loss until he dares to confess his story to J.L., who interprets the relationship with his wife in terms of a battle for territory that he lost because his wife refused to be controlled and possessed. Mackenzie's geographical journey and scientific exploration into arctic space thereby unexpectedly shifts towards the exploration of his own inner space that results in self-knowledge and transformation.

J.L.'s function in the story seems to be that of an archetypal trickster figure that helps the men to re-connect with embodied experiences, that is, with the alien space of unconscious fears and desires and the repressed language of affects such as sorrow, loss and joy. Re-connecting with this language coincides with remembering the sensory relationship with the space of the lost (m)other within the self. Thus J.L. invites Cap, one of the explorers, to take a shower together with her and when she embraces him, he starts crying like a baby. Afterwards, he thinks: "I can't look at her. After all that, walking into her shower and then just holding her and crying, not even remembering sex, not even getting a hard-on. Bawling like some baby" (186). Similarly, Mackenzie can no longer perceive J.L. in a stereotypical way after his rite of initiation: "Only now I know she's a woman and the telling is in the touch" (206) and Franklin, who is also named after a famous explorer, says he has discovered J.L.'s "pure" smell (217) which is the smell of the arctic tundra that he has learned to venerate. Being their mentor, J.L. has taught the men to perceive/read her and the North differently, that is, to explore without the urge to violate, possess or define either. Her final thoughts: "They can rest now, we can all rest" (219) may refer to a temporary release from gender stereotypes and antagonistic sexual politics.

In the following novels, restless travelling remains a means for the female protagonists to free themselves from the constraints of cultural conventions. A character's crossing of geographical boundaries becomes

increasingly linked with the transgression of social and moral codes of behaviour. The title of van Herk's third novel *No Fixed Address* (1986) refers to the refusal of its working-class female protagonist to be fixed in the language of communication, to her escape from the entrapment of domesticity, and to her lack of a definite destination in life. Like Judith, the pig farmer, Arachne Manteia defies the conventional constraints imposed on women. At the age of twenty-three, she desires to be in control of her own life and refuses the role of loving daughter, wife or mother. After having had a job as a bus driver, she becomes a travelling saleswoman. Like Judith and J.L. in the previous novels, she defies the good manners and proper speech that are expected of a lady. Arachne is always on the road, driving her Mercedes, and drifting around the Canadian Prairies as a ladies' underwear sales representative who refuses to wear uncomfortable ladies' underwear as a statement against constraints imposed on women's bodies. On the surface, she rebels against stereotypical images of true womanhood while struggling deep down with a sense of not belonging anywhere. This woman is a homeless wanderer, a foreigner in her own country, whose position in dominant society is ex-centric, in terms of gender and class. The third-person narrator conveys Arachne's view on her difference as follows: "There was nothing she could do about her difference, nothing to do but exploit it, call attention to the fact that she was crossing every boundary. It was a way of declaring herself, of drawing a line. She knew where she stood. Outside" (116).

From her position on the margin of society, Arachne behaves in a lawless, burlesque manner, fearlessly transgressing gender conventions and good manners. She seeks sexual pleasure without commitment and merely satisfies her eroticism, thereby parodically enacting the stereotypical behaviour of the travelling salesman. Arachne continues spinning her own unique web (plot) until the end of the story, when she drives towards the frontier of the Arctic. Here, "She is steeling herself to enter the blank, the dislocated world of the North. Afraid, she is afraid. After this there is nothing" (247). She enters an imaginative spatial dimension that baffles the reader, for she mysteriously disappears into unmapped Canadian territory, the No Man's Land of the North Pole, and escapes from textual space. The fact that a researcher in the frame text, who may very well be the incarnation of the common reader, does not succeed in finding her may

connote that Arachne as a product of the author's imagination ultimately disappears, because she radically refuses fixed interpretations and traditional forms of representation based on binary oppositions.²

In *Places Far From Ellesmere* (1990), van Herk further fictionalizes her own and her characters' refusal of fixed interpretations and traditional gender roles. Ellesmere, "that most northerly of extreme Arctic islands" (77), is in her view "a totally alien place even to most Canadians" (McCance 7) and an uncharted space of resistance for her female characters. In this generically hybrid text, she rewrites the life of Leo Tolstoy's tragic heroine Anna Karenina from a feminist perspective. Van Herk attacks Tolstoy for depending on "Prescribed choices: mothers, saints or whores" (81). He judged Anna Karenina for transgressing the conventional role of wife and mother and he punished the passionate, adulterous wife by having her commit suicide at the end of his novel. Van Herk wants this victim of a male writing and reading of women to be set free from the nineteenth-century plot and to be offered "another life, a different fiction" (77) in a twentieth-century text. She re-invents Tolstoy's heroine in Ellesmere, an unexplored new territory for women, where Anna Karenina can enact her own vitality, her imagination, and rebellion against the conventional roles assigned to her, without being defined. Still, says van Herk at the end of *Places Far From Ellesmere*, there is always the possibility for readers, whom she compares with lovers, to kill this woman when they feel the urge to evaluate and judge her.

In her latest novel *Restlessness* (1998), van Herk continues exploring the semantic equation of defining women with killing them. At the beginning of the story, the protagonist Dorcas is shown to have hired Derek Atman, a professional assassin whom she hopes will dare to murder her in a hotel room in Calgary. Her being dead would make an end to the unbearable restlessness of her desire. Yet Atman wishes to postpone the assassination and first gain insight into Dorcas' reason for melancholically desiring total stillness in death. Like a psychoanalyst, he urges her on to tell

² See also Marlene Goldman's in-depth analysis of *No Fixed Address* and *Places Far From Ellesmere* that is based on Deleuze's and Guattari's notions of deterritorialization and nomadology.

her life story and, seduced by his questions, Dorcas recollects her past. Her wish to have her life ended is fuelled by a desire to escape into an unmapped territory where she would be released from the masculine representation of Woman. She tells Atman stories about her job as a professional courier and global traveller to cities around the world where she became involved in love relationships with men who tried to master her linguistically. As she compares these lovers to “killers,” the role of Atman as a hired assassin gradually becomes a rather ambiguous one.

In *Restlessness*, van Herk relies on genre conventions of the psycho-analytic talking cure and travel guidebook. Yet, as mentioned earlier, it is a feature of her narrative technique to inscribe genre boundaries in order to transgress them.

Genre border crossing

Like her characters, van Herk restlessly struggles with the limitations of language, with the conventions of society and with the constraints of fictional conventions. In one of her essays, she states that “Language acts both as jailor and liberator; its very usage restricts, yet nothing is acknowledged to exist without it. As such, language has been the servant of realism and the enemy of desire, for we seem to have the greatest difficulty giving utterance to those things that are not tangible. It is also the slave of tradition ... It is time to de-sire the language” of authority, convention and realism (*A Frozen Tongue* 81). The novelist cannot but rely on conventions of writing, yet like other contemporary novelists van Herk inscribes fictional and genre conventions in order to transform them. She comments on her parodic practice in the following terms: “Houdini’s struggle is the artist’s struggle to escape that coffin of convention, named by form and policed by genre. The fictioneer is forced to chain herself again and again in order to break those chains, to subvert coffin and convention” (*In Visible Ink* 37). In her fiction, she therefore paradoxically weaves and unravels the genre conventions of classic realism, such as a linear plot structure and narrative closure. She inscribes conventions of various literary genres in order to create a hybridization of genres.

The novel *Judith* contains a revision of the Greek myth about Circe, the goddess who magically transforms Odysseus’ male crew into pigs. Even

though the protagonist in *Judith* is likened to a savage witch who emasculates male piglets, the sows are the ones that perform the role of Circe, the mythical witch, because they possess the magical power to spiritually transform Judith. The pigs are described as “all-knowing” (12) anthropomorphic characters who provide the protagonist with the inner strength she needs to cast aside her helpless, submissive stance in her relationship to men. Besides revising the Circe myth, van Herk also parodically rewrites the Old Testament story about a powerful legendary woman named Judith. It was this daring Jewish woman who, in beheading the enemy general Holofernes, caused the Jewish victory over the Assyrian forces. In van Herk’s novel, Judith is also shown to be a victorious woman in that she ultimately manages to deliver herself from the emotional invasions of her employer.

In *The Tent Peg*, van Herk rewrites the Biblical narrative about Jael, another powerful Israelite heroine. Jael hosts a general of a Canaanite army and the enemy of the Israelites into her tent. While he is asleep, she brutally murders him by hammering a tent peg through his skull and into the ground. Her violent yet heroic action brings about forty years of peace to Israel. In van Herk’s novel, J.L. drives a figurative tent peg into the minds of the male explorers while providing them with self-knowledge (*A Frozen Tongue* 281). She invites them into her cooking tent and embraces them lovingly, thereby teaching them to express tenderness and affection without feeling the urge to invade her.

No Fixed Address. An Amorous Journey offers a female version of the picaresque novel, a traditionally male literary genre. In an essay which she wrote on *No Fixed Address*, van Herk says that her writing is haunted by the picaresque genre. This may be due to the fact that the postmodern novel and the picaresque genre share quite some common features. They give preference to depicting protagonists who live on the margin of society, they deal with restlessness and continuous movement in the form of a travel narrative, and expose bourgeois society as covering up chaos. Van Herk admits that reading Robert Kroetsch’s postmodern picaresque novel, *The Studhorse Man* (1969) was a germinal experience for her. She says she “fell in love with” its protagonist Hazard LePage, the lustful picaro and itinerant rogue who travels across the Canadian Prairies (*A Frozen Tongue* 284). In *No Fixed Address*, Arachne Manteia’s ‘low’ origin resembles that of

the traditional picaro, and like the latter she is a solitary and unwanted child who tries to survive in a world that does not understand or tolerate her difference. Arachne is a picara who excessively indulges her freedom, especially her sexual liberty.

Besides being a parody of the male picaresque genre, the novel also parodies the conventions of the male prairie novel as defined by Robert Kroetsch in 'The Fear of Women in Prairie Fiction':

The basic grammatical pair in the story-line (the energy-line) of prairie fiction is house: horse. To be on a horse is to move: motion into distance. To be in a house is to be fixed: a centring unto stasis. Horse is masculine. House is feminine. Horse: house. Masculine: feminine. On: in. Motion: stasis. A woman ain't supposed to move. Pleasure: duty. (76)

Van Herk ironically inverts this story-line, for Arachne's steady lover Thomas Telfer is the one who patiently waits for Arachne to return to their house in Vancouver, whereas Arachne is always on the road and is "consistently unfaithful" (47). In her essay on *No Fixed Address*, van Herk says that Arachne is a character who "takes sex, death, and travel into her own hands, who becomes her own magician, the instrument of not death, not repentance, but disappearance" (*A Frozen Tongue* 289). As said earlier, the novel ends ambiguously with Arachne's mysterious disappearance into the Arctic. She may have reached an unmapped/unwritten Northern territory where she is free to continue her story and radically re-invent her female identity or she may have chosen suicide, which would be the end of her story. She may or may not be dead. She may even be in-between, in the realm of fantasy. This possibility is suggested by a preceding magic realist scene in which Arachne makes love to the ghost of a soldier who drowned during the Second World War. Whatever ending she has chosen for herself, it defies the traditional ending of the picaresque novel, for Arachne does not show any repentance. She remains an elusive character until the very end.

In *Places Far From Ellesmere*, van Herk uses a contamination of genres that she defines as "a geografictione" or "a fiction of geography/a geography of fiction." In this generically hybrid text, the author combines literary criticism, an interpretation of Tolstoy's ideological view of women and a feminist re-reading of *Anna Karenina*, with her fictional auto-

biography about growing up in the town of Edberg in the Canadian Prairies, attending university in the city of Edmonton, and living in Calgary with her geologist husband. She adds an account of their geographical exploration to Ellesmere island, which is a polar desert.³

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the novel *Restlessness* mixes the genre conventions of the travel guidebook with those of the talking cure. On the one hand, the protagonist's travel narratives follow the linear structure and 'realism' of the travel guidebook and contain lots of factual details about cities and hotels that Dorcas visited. On the other hand, the 'realism' of the travel guidebook is disrupted by traces of affects and drives that erupt from Dorcas' unconscious in the course of her "confession". The narrative text is largely non-linear, a-chronological and fragmented, with Dorcas' thoughts scattered on the pages of the novel. This restless narrative structure coincides with Dorcas' search for identity that she speaks of as "a long and zigzagged search" (81). The latter resembles the form of Freud's 'The Dora Case', the prototypical talking cure, in which the traumatized patient is unable to give an ordered account of her life. At the very end of her novel, van Herk also breaks with the conventions of realism by suggesting that the other characters in the narrative may be no more than figments of the protagonist's imagination, before she is finally ready to go to bed in her hotel room.

Van Herk's novels have become increasingly experimental and *Restlessness* most certainly puts high demands on the reader, frustrating its conventional expectations. Her essays throw a light on the relationship between the writer, the fictional text and the reader.

The relationship between writer, fictional text and reader

Van Herk speaks about her creative writing in terms of a desire to explore the unknown. She says in an essay: "It is desire that thrusts me into the unexplored and feeds my dissatisfaction with the defined world, desire that makes me create" (*A Frozen Tongue* 79). In wishing to explore the unknown, she assigns a central role to the imagination as free play: "I want to trouble the reader — to upset, annoy, confuse; to make the reader react to the unexpected, the unpredictable, the amoral..." (*In Visible Ink* 131). It is a way for her to seduce the reader. She says: "We write, I think, desiring

the ideal reader, the perfect reader who will complete and fulfil our desire” (*A Frozen Tongue* 87). She conceives of the perfect reader as the perfect lover and of bad readers as clumsy lovers who do not show respect for the complexity (the various layers of meaning) of the text, for they merely consume its surface meaning. Of course, van Herk’s novels are open to multiple interpretations, yet bad readers are the ones who nevertheless desire to fix the meaning of the text.

In *Restlessness*, Dorcas is shown to restlessly desire a perfect lover/reader who does not kill her, that is, who does not impose fixed interpretations on her. As in *No Fixed Address*, van Herk deliberately refuses to satisfy the reader’s desire to reach the end and know the final outcome of the story, for the protagonist who hired an assassin may or may not be murdered by Derrick Atman. The ending of Dorcas’s life and of the story remains unresolved.

Van Herk conceives of the reader — she herself is an ardent reader — as someone who struggles with the text as much as the writer. She sees both as engaged in an erotic activity, the way she claims always having had an erotic relationship with Robert Kroetsch’s writings (Morse 38). She is tempted and seduced by Kroetsch’s experimental novels, because they subvert her expectations and this is another reason why he is her literary model. In an interview, she says: “unsettling readers is exactly what I want to do in order to seduce them” (Clayton 168). She wants to unsettle the readers’ expectations by refusing to give in to the common readers’ desire for definitive meaning, final knowledge about the characters or narrative closure. Satisfying the readers’ desire would result in the extinction of desire, which would imply stasis. Van Herk wants to keep desire alive in herself as a writer, in her characters and in the readers of her novels.

It is no coincidence that van Herk’s collection of literary criticism entitled *A Frozen Tongue* contains a picture of a painting made by Jane Evans, an artist friend, which shows the author as a laughing trickster, wearing a mask. The reader of van Herk’s novels should indeed be aware of the fact that she enjoys performing the role of cunning trickster artist, the one assigned to Hermes, the shape shifting and mythical god of the threshold in Greek mythology. In his study of the trickster figure in literary history, Lewis Hyde emphasizes the role of the trickster as boundary tester. He states: “Trickster is the mythic embodiment of ambiguity and

ambivalence, doubleness and duplicity, contradiction and paradox" (7). As the patron of thieves, he lies and steals "to disturb the established categories of truth and property and, by so doing, open the road to possible new worlds" (13). This essay has tried to show that, in the context of her postmodern fiction, van Herk is a trickster artist who resists the reader's desire for classification by paradoxically inscribing and subverting rigidified gender and genre limits. She desires to seduce the readers of her novels by continuously experimenting with the conventions of the novel.

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ABSTRACT

In her fiction and literary criticism, Aritha van Herk is concerned with the limitations of language as experienced by immigrants, women and contemporary novelists. She depicts the position of the immigrant as that of a melancholic outsider who feels perennially homeless in a foreign language. As a feminist, she is concerned with women's desire to escape from normative social and cultural constraints. Her female protagonists are homeless wanderers who travel restlessly to escape from gender stereotypes and antagonistic sexual politics. They ultimately enter a geographically and psychologically unmapped space with a view to inventing a new female identity for themselves. The author's questioning and revision of gender identity runs parallel with her restless attempt to challenge the conventions of the novel. In her experimental fiction, van Herk paradoxically inscribes and subverts genre boundaries of 'high' and 'low' literature. Performing the role of the artist as trickster-storyteller, she playfully crosses the borders of gender and genre. She thereby unsettles the common reader's desire for definitive meaning, final knowledge about the characters and narrative closure.

KEYWORDS

The foreigner, homelessness in language, restless desire, gender border crossing, transgressive aesthetics.

RESUMO

En su ficción y su crítica literaria, Aritha van Herk se preocupa por las limitaciones del lenguaje tal como las experimentan los inmigrantes, las mujeres y los novelistas contemporáneos. Describe la posición del inmigrante como la de un forastero melancólico que se siente perennemente apátrida en una lengua extranjera. Como feminista, se preocupa por el deseo de las mujeres de escapar de las restricciones normativas sociales y culturales. Sus protagonistas femeninas son vagabundas apátridas que viajan sin sosiego a fin de escapar de los estereotipos de género y de las políticas sexuales antagonistas. Finalmente, entran en un espacio geográfico y

psicológico sin cartografiar con vistas a inventar una nueva identidad femenina para sí mismas. La manera de la autora de cuestionar y revisar la identidad de género se sincroniza con su continua e inquieta tentativa de desafiar las convenciones de la novela. En su ficción experimental, van Herk inscribe y subvierte paradójicamente los límites genéricos de la literatura 'alta' y 'baja'. Desempeñando el papel del artista como embaucadora-cuentista, cruza a modo de juego las fronteras de género (*gender*) y género literario. Así trastorna el deseo del lector común de encontrar el significado definitivo, el conocimiento final sobre los caracteres y la clausura narrativa.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

el forastero; expatriación lingüística; deseo inquieto; cruces de frontera de género; estética transgresiva

“let us find our serious heads”:
Placing the Manifesto in Canadian
Literature

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“let us find our serious heads”: Placing the Manifesto in Canadian Literature

The year 2009 marks the centenary of the publication of “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism” on the front page of *Le Figaro*. As Martin Puchner argues in *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (2005): “Futurism taught everyone how the manifesto worked” (73). The manifesto was indispensable to avant-garde movements in the twentieth century, from dada and surrealism in the 1910s and 1920s to Canada’s own neoism in the 1980s. These manifestos were bright, bold, and brash, like the vorticist “blast” sent out on the eve of the First World War by Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound. But the literary-artistic manifesto did not originate with futurism, and its use has not been limited to the avant-garde. This paper examines the changing role the manifesto played in Canadian literature from the early-nineteenth century to the Second World War; from its origins as a tool for progress in the struggle for national identity to its more self-consciously literary use as a means of modernist provocation. Louis Dudek, writing in the 1950s, described the modernist “retreat into intimate... publication” — he quotes Ezra Pound’s quip, “To hell with *Harper’s*” — but this happened in Canada in a significant way only after the watershed of World War Two (Dudek 205).

That, in fact, is where our story ends — when Canadian writers attained the level of confidence and sophistication necessary to break away from the general readership and the fundamental questions of national identity to concentrate on more strictly literary matters. I will address what is still the pre-avant-garde era in Canada; from Romantic engagements in the early-nineteenth century to nascent modernist interventions in relatively mainstream publications of the twenties and thirties — neither a fully-fledged, high-modernist programme nor all-out avant-garde, but simply seeking, in the words of the *Canadian Mercury* in 1928, “the

emancipation of Canadian literature from the state of amiable mediocrity and insipidity in which it now languishes” (“Editorial” 246). I will not, therefore, be showing slides of *Blast*-style manifestos from the Canadian avant-garde, which came much later, but will instead address pre- and post-confederation manifestos concerned with feeding and forging what Thomas D’Arcy McGee called “The Mental Outfit of the New Dominion.” This paper will track the formation of attempts not merely to describe, or speak to, but ultimately to *bring into being* an indigenous literature in Anglophone Canada. The vehicle, in this case, is the manifesto: a declaration of principles, but also a call to *action*.

The manifestos discussed here rarely call themselves manifestos: they hold day jobs as editorials, prefaces, speeches, letters, essays, and poems. They speak of cultural identity and nation-building, the relative merits of nativism versus cosmopolitanism, and the value of European literary models. Almost unanimously they speak of the current state of Canadian literature — where it is said to exist at all — and how the national literature might be encouraged to grow and flourish (Plant metaphors abound.). What unites them — what unites all manifestos — is their sense of crisis; usually accompanied by a statement of principles and a polemical “us/them,” “blast/bless” structure. Manifestos often served to mask shortcomings in terms of actual product. Futurism, imagism, and vorticism all issued manifestos using the collective “we,” when in fact they were usually written by an “I” (Marinetti, for example, or Pound). In the early Canadian manifestos, the absence is the absence of a vital, viable literature. As Sara Jeannette Duncan wrote in a piece called “Saunterings” (1886): “hope and faith ... constitute the sum of our literary endeavour” (113).

A word about the title, “let us find our serious heads:” the line is from Leonard Cohen’s 1961 poem “The Only Tourist in Havana Turns His Thoughts Homeward,” which borrows the revolutionary manifesto form, in keeping with the time and place of writing (the Cuban Revolution), and uses it to comment ironically and humorously on issues of Canadian identity: “let us make the French talk English;” “let us make the CBC talk English;” “let us terrorize Alaska;” “let us have two Governor Generals at the same time,” and so on (104). Sometimes, as Canadians, it is hard to “find our serious heads” — to take ourselves and our culture seriously — and for that reason, at times, the manifesto seems out of place in Canadian

literature — too loud, too showy, too arrogant, too undemocratic. “Who do you think you are?” a voice asks. Canada sits more comfortably, perhaps, in postmodernism than modernism — now here is something we’re good at! — with its pluralism and constant re-invention, and having no central myth of identity or “national essence” (like American individualism) except for the readiness to resist such essentialism, to be hybrid, provisional, local. Dwarfed by geography, how could Canadian identity be anything else? Nevertheless, manifestos did and do exist in Canadian literature and art, and we will look at a few of the literary ones now.

We begin, somewhat arbitrarily but not quite randomly, in 1824 with the manifesto-like preface to *St. Ursula’s Convent; or, The Nun of Canada*. Julia Catharine Beckwith Hart’s gothic romance, a lost classic until it was reissued in 1978, is generally considered to be the “first Canadian novel;” that is, the first novel written by a Canadian and published in Canada. The author’s preface is, as one might expect at this early point in Canada’s cultural history, modest in tone, self-effacing, almost cowed. She describes her book as a “homebred production,” “destitute of the elegance and refinement which adorn the land of our forefathers.” Nevertheless, she begs for patronage, on patriotic grounds: “Can the patriotic Canadian,” she asks, “refuse a kind reception to his own kindred?” (Hart 15-16). During the same year, in an editorial for *The Canadian Magazine and Literary Repository*, Canada is personified as a female infant bearing “the stamp of uncultivated wildness on her forehead,” and it is hoped only that “her” literature might be “useful and entertaining” — a mantra repeated throughout the nineteenth century. The editor, David Chisholme, was a Scot who had emigrated to Canada the previous year, which perhaps explains his gloss on Canada as “the country *which we inhabit*” rather than simply “our country” (17).

In the revolutionary year 1848, when Thomas D’Arcy McGee was plotting rebellion in Ireland, and Marx and Engels were setting a new standard with *The Communist Manifesto*, *The Literary Garland* in Canada published “Our Literature, Present and Prospective,” a strikingly conservative call for a national literature. The essay-manifesto declares that culture is a measure of a country’s prosperity, and recommends, once again, a literature of “entertainment and instruction.” Placed in contrast to these worthy goals is the “polluting licentiousness” of nineteenth-century Dutch-

French erotic novelist Paul De Kock (a figure well known to readers of James Joyce's *Ulysses*.) The new Canadian literature must take as its models solid, morally sound authors if it is to start off on the right foot (39-40). Guiding readers' reading habits was a key service offered by magazines like the *Garland* — here, for example, they recommend Walter Scott as a useful tonic against the ills of De Kock.

We proceed now to the central case of Thomas D'Arcy McGee: the Irish rebel poet turned Canadian moderate politician and "founding father." Here at last we find the short, sharp rhetoric that anticipates the fiery manifestos of the modernist period. McGee's manifestos of the late-1850s are a product of the cross-pollination of revolutionary politics and poetry, and were directly influenced by the previous decade's upheavals. Marx and Engels can be heard in the sweeping statements of "A Canadian Literature" (1857), which declares: "All Canada is interested in the creation of a literature." This goal is framed as a revolutionary struggle against an antiquated status quo: that "the literature of the mother country" should serve well enough for its colonies. The tone is one of optimism, and McGee's vision still resonates: "although we may not be able to form a literature purely Canadian in its identity," he writes, "yet we can gather from every land, and mould our gleanings into a form, racy of the new soil to which it is adapted" (42). Though he borrowed from his experience as a revolutionary poet in the Young Ireland movement (with Oscar Wilde's mother, "Speranza"), McGee could already see in Canada an opportunity to avoid the faction-fighting of the Old Country. He calls not for a narrow nativism, but for "the acknowledgement of all elements, foreign and provincial; the dispelling of all separate "clannishness," and the recognition of all nationalities in one idea and in one name"; a strikingly tolerant vision, even in the settler-colony context (43).

While he eschewed a narrow nationalism in favour of what we might now call multiculturalism, McGee was by no means dismissive of the power of a broader nationalism. The following year in the same magazine (his own *New Era*), McGee published another famous manifesto: "Protection for Canadian Literature." His call for a home-grown literary industry is appealing for the importance it places on literature — not something you often hear from politicians. (McGee was elected into the House in 1858.) He declares that "Every country, every nationality, every

people, must create and foster a National Literature, if it is their wish to preserve a distinct individuality from other nations." He grounds his concept of a national character not in race but in landscape and social conditions. A national literature, he argues, would speak to the identity born out of this unique set of conditions. As with the other *New Era* editorials, there is nothing moderate in McGee's language — this is a true manifesto: "Canada does not possess a periodical worthy of support — nor a literary newspaper," he declares (43). But he defends Canada's potential, and attacks the imagined adversary who would say that Canada is not ready to sustain a fully-fledged literature: "This is a false idea, imported from beyond the seas," he writes, "and groundless in all its premises. It is to be found in the mouths of cockneys who speak disdainfully of the 'Colonies.'" McGee closes by contrasting the "unhealthy foreign substitute" of imported literature with a robust and healthy national literature, based in the landscape: "It must assume the gorgeous colouring and the gloomy grandeur of the forest. . . . Its lyrics must possess the ringing cadence of the waterfall, and its epics must be as solemn and beautiful as our great rivers" (44). Here again are lessons learned in Young Ireland: nationalism and nature, the raw strength and health of the nation contrasted with the decadent, overcivilized colonizing power.

In the year of confederation, 1867, McGee gave a famous speech describing his vision of the new nation, and the role that culture would play. The speech, "The Mental Outfit of the New Dominion," was delivered only a year before his assassination. Here he argued that the identity of the new nation should be based neither in "an exaggerated opinion of ourselves and a barbarian deprecation of foreigners," nor in "a merely apish civilization"; it cannot be achieved only by material means, but must begin in the intellect — the "mental outfit" — of its people (75). He raises a question often raised in these manifestos: why, if Canadians are so literate and well read, do we not produce better writers and critics? He challenges the passivity of the colonial subject. "We are . . . a reading people; and if a reading, why not also a reflective people? Do we master what we read? Or does our reading master us?" (77). Since the reading material originates largely from the mother country, this subversive line of questioning unsettles the perception of power and mastery that many settlers might have had.

The most striking and curious thing about “The Mental Outfit of the New Dominion,” however, is the ending. It is a shockingly transparent testament to the fluidity of national identity and allegiance. McGee, the former rebel of 1848 and poet-nationalist of Young Ireland, quotes Samuel Ferguson, a Protestant Irish barrister and poet of the older generation (who later served as a model for Yeats). The poem by Ferguson is a tribute to the Irish hero and principal organizer of Young Ireland, Thomas Davis — Ferguson acted as a lawyer for at least one Young Irelander accused of “sedition” — and to his (and McGee’s) generation. Quite astonishingly, McGee, having asked the reader’s pardon, substitutes “Canada” for “Erin” in the last line:

Oh brave young men, our hope, our pride, our promise,
On you our hearts are set, —
In manliness, in kindness, in justice,
To make Canada a nation yet! (89)

The original poem continues: “In union or in severance free and strong,” which McGee, who was soon to be assassinated for betraying his revolutionary ideals by the Fenian Patrick Whelan, might also have understood in a Canadian context. In the case of McGee, the manifestos provide a crucial link: between his radical republican past, seen in residual form in the polarizing language of his *New Era* editorials, and his more moderate vision of cultural independence for Canada and Ireland, which would be achieved through the development of a national identity fostered through the arts, without the necessity of a violent political rupture with Britain. In this sense, the manifestos also encapsulate McGee’s transformation from a self-proclaimed conspirator for Ireland — after the 1848 rebellion he signed one piece “Thomas D’Arcy McGee, A Traitor to the British Government” — to a victim of an Irish republican conspiracy.

We will skip ahead now to a very brief look at the 1920s and 1930s. The well known Canadian poet and critic Louis Dudek claimed, in his 1958 essay, “The Role of Little Magazines in Canada,” that only after 1940 did modernism and the little magazine flourish in Canada. “The Canadian part of this revolt,” he writes, somewhat ruefully, “came, like most Canadian artistic contributions, late” (Dudek 206). Naming some of the main literary periodicals of the twenties and thirties, Dudek argues:

The Canadian Mercury (1928-1929), *The Canadian Forum* (1920) and *The Canadian Bookman* (1919-1939), by and large have followed the [mainstream] pattern: they are not little magazines. (207)

Everything used in this essay, that is to say, is still part of the mainstream, according to Dudek. Nevertheless, these magazines did publish occasional "blasts" that conform to the characteristics of the manifesto.

The first explicit manifesto for Canadian literature that I know of is Lionel Stevenson's straightforwardly titled "Manifesto for a National Literature," published in the *Bookman* in 1924 when it was the official organ of the Canadian Writers' Association. Aside from the acknowledgement that "all institutions are insecure" — he was speaking for one of them — "and established traditions are cracking," this is pretty tame stuff by manifesto standards. There is the suggestion that something like the Irish literary revival might work in Canada (Yeats had just won the Nobel Prize for Literature), but the sense of urgency is missing from this "manifesto," and a distinct literature still seems a long way off. To his credit, Stevenson argues that a national literature in Canada "is more likely to be reached through a sincere effort to perceive the country's inward virtue ... than through oratory and aggression," which he sees as being anathema to the Canadian, as distinct from the American, national character (208).

A better example is an editorial from the first issue of the *Canadian Mercury* in December 1928. It begins by conjuring a tide of "reactionary opposition" to the journal that threatened its very birth. The editors, undaunted, were "determined to preserve its policies" and to demand "a higher ... standard of literary criticism in Canada" (246). The language of eugenics is used to interesting effect as Canadian literature is personified as a "lusty but ... inarticulate brat": "he has not reaped the benefits [of] an extensive immigration policy [as he would have in America]. He has retained the stifling qualities of Nordic consciousness and is likely, by present symptoms, to become [an] idiot." Rather than try to help this unfortunate being, the editors wish to start fresh, and taking a page from *Blast* ("Blast presents an art of Individuals"), or indeed the more contemporary *transition*, they declare: "The *Canadian Mercury* is individual We have no preconceived idea of Canadian literature ... our faith rests in

the spirit which is at last beginning to brood upon our literary chaos.” Echoing the Futurist manifesto mentioned at the start of this paper, they declare: “The editors are all well under thirty and intend to remain so” (247).

What Louis Dudek resented in these mainstream literary publications was the aping (to use a term beloved of Wyndham Lewis) of writers like Pound, Eliot, Yeats, and later Auden, at the expense of a “native” tradition. The worry over finding an original and distinctively Canadian voice is of course characteristic of the majority of these manifestos. Stephen Leacock’s “The National Literature Problem in Canada,” which was also published in the first issue of the *Mercury*, is one notable exception. Leacock, a staunch defender of the British Empire, is unabashedly sceptical of attempts to locate a distinct Canadian voice. “We don’t have to be different,” he complains (Leacock 8). He questions whether so thoroughly multicultural a nation as Canada could ever find a unique literary voice, and he doubts the wisdom of such a project. Instead, Leacock envisions a global culture, a republic of letters.

“It seems to me,” he concludes, “that the attempt to mark off Canada as a little area all its own, listening to no one but itself, is as silly as it is ineffective. If a Canadian author writes a good book, I’ll read it: if not I’ll read one written in Kansas or Copenhagen. The conception of the republic of letters is a nobler idea than the wilful attempt at national exclusiveness”. (Leacock 9)

Dudek identifies the first true “little magazine” as *Contemporary Verse* (1941-1952), published in Vancouver, although even here he finds a telling weakness: no manifestos. Unlike the American and British modernist little magazines he mentions — *Blast*, *Poetry*, *transition* — “*Contemporary Verse* was not a fighting magazine with a policy; it was concerned only with publishing ‘good poetry’—which, in itself, can embody an affirmation — but it did not in addition work out any program of ideas.” (209)

Dudek’s survey becomes, as he reaches his present moment in the 1950s, a late-modernist manifesto in itself: little magazines, like the literary movements they represent, must immerse themselves “in the destructive element of reality,” he writes; they must provide a “vociferous reaction”

to the mainstream media and its audiences. Their success, he declares, "will be measured by the survey of Canadian Literature in 2000, not by the readers they had within their time" (212). And so, I suppose, it has come to pass: the tables of contents of the magazines he lists, like *Contemporary Verse*, *Preview*, *Direction*, *First Statement*, and the *Northern Review*, bear the names of Canada's most celebrated twentieth-century poets: F. R. Scott, Dorothy Livesay, Irving Layton, Leonard Cohen, P. K. Page, Earle Birney, Phyllis Webb, Al Purdy. Even more than the prophetic tone at the end, however, Dudek's piece may be called a manifesto because — in the tradition of that great promoter, Ezra Pound — he seeks to enact what he seems only to describe: his "history" and his list of "great authors" are brought into being, in part, by this very text — it is history in the making. We close, then, before the true heyday of the manifesto and the little magazine in Canada. But from a historical perspective, so does Dudek (writing in 1958): the "boom" would occur a decade later, in the late-1960s; the first wave of avant-garde activity, pre- and just post-WWI, passed by most of North America. It was only in the late-sixties and seventies that the so-called "second wave" avant-garde, as distinct from the high, late modernism of the fifties, which is really the stuff of Dudek's essay, took hold. But that project will have to wait until some point in the near future.

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ABSTRACT

The year 2009 marked the centenary of the publication of 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism' on the front page of *Le Figaro*. As Martin Puchner argues in *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (2005): 'Futurism taught everyone how the manifesto worked'. The manifesto was indispensable to modernist and avant-garde movements in the twentieth century, from dada and surrealism to Canada's own neoism. But the literary-artistic manifesto did not originate with futurism, and its use has not been limited to the avant-garde. In Canada, for example, manifestos have served both to mark turning points and to generate ruptures in the longstanding debate on the value and viability of a national literature.

In this paper I will examine the changing role the manifesto played in Canadian literature from the mid-nineteenth century to the Second World War. Between these dates we can trace the genre's early development in the struggle for national identity to its more precisely literary use as a tool of modernist provocation. The study will draw upon important literary magazines of the period, from Thomas D'Arcy McGee's *New Era* (1857-58) to "little magazines" like Alan Crawley's *Contemporary Verse* (1940-52). The manifestos appear not only as "manifestos," but also as editorials, prospectuses, prefaces, speeches, letters, essays, and poems. What unites them is a tone of urgency, a promise of salvation, and the struggle to break a path out of the current crisis.

KEYWORDS

Canadian literature, little magazines, McGee, Thomas D'Arcy, manifestos, modernism (literature).

RESUMO

O ano de 2009 marcou o centenário da publicação "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism" na primeira página do *Le Figaro*. Tal como Martin Puchner defendeu em *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes* (2005):

“O Futurismo veio ensinar a todos como o manifesto funcionava.” O manifesto fora indispensável aos movimentos modernistas e avant-garde durante o século XXI, desde o dada ao surrealismo, passando pelo próprio neoísmo do Canadá. Mas o manifesto artístico-literário não nasceu com o futurismo, e o seu uso não tem sido limitado pelo avant-garde. No Canadá, por exemplo, os manifestos têm servido tanto para marcar pontos de viragem como para criar rupturas no já antigo debate acerca do valor e viabilidade de uma literatura nacional.

Neste texto irei examinar o papel mutável do manifesto no contexto da literatura canadiana, desde meados do século XIX até à Segunda Guerra Mundial. Durante este período é possível delinear o início do desenvolvimento deste género literário na sua luta por uma identidade nacional, até ao seu uso literário mais preciso como forma de provocação modernista. Este estudo irá chamar a atenção para importantes revistas literárias deste período, desde *New Era* (1875-58) de Thomas D’Arcy até às “pequenas revistas” como a de Alan Crawley *Contemporary Verse* (1940-52).

Os manifestos não aparecem apenas enquanto “manifestos,” mas também como editoriais, prospectos, prefácios, discursos, ensaios e poemas. Aquilo que os une é um tom de urgência, uma promessa de salvação e a luta para encontrar uma saída das crises actuais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Literatura Canadiana, pequenas revistas, McGee e Thomas D’Arcy, manifestos, modernismo (literatura).

Fresh Paint: Brueghel Revisited by Anne Simpson

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Fresh Paint: Brueghel Revisited by Anne Simpson

A crown of sonnets is a rare thing to find nowadays. No wonder: its composition involves joining seven sonnets and binding them in such a way as to make a whole poem out of seven minor texts. It begs the question: do the sonnets retain a modicum of independence or are they subsumed within the larger work?

Looking at Anne Simpson's "Seven Paintings by Brueghel", a poem from her 2003 book *Loop*, may provide us with a valid answer. By definition, a painting is supposed to stand out by itself, encompassing all it means to convey in a single, powerful image. We are to "read" actions and events by looking at motionless entities. Causes and consequences, motivations and sequences: it is up to the viewer to provide the necessary unity, thus complementing the painter's task.

Simpson seeks to paint Brueghel anew, or so it seems. Drawing inspiration from the Flemish master, she combines a vivid imagery in her poem(s) by juxtaposing glimpses of events, much like the old master does. Reading this text (and the texts inside this text) will help us to see the extent to which the poetess owes her technique to Brueghel's own.

"The Triumph of Death"

These watches. Ticking, still. Each hour is cold:
the rims surround quick voices. Shut in rooms.
Gone. *Tick*. The towers. *Tock*. Of fire. A fold
in air. We're smoke, drifting. A painted doom
where cities burn and ships go down. Death's
dark sky — a grainy docudrama. Time
swings bones on circus wheels. Listen: wind's breath,
a shriek. *Theatrum Mundi*. In their prime,
the living. Leapt. That buckling of knees.

Then gunshots: plastic bags on fences. Snapping.
Or loose. *Thank you — shop — at.* The lovers see
nothing. He plays a lute. She sings. Clapping —
machines sift through debris for the remains.
A sales receipt, a shoe. The silvery rain.

(Starmino 2005:58)



“The Triumph of Death”, c. 1562, oil on panel, 117cm x 162 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

One of the main difficulties when looking at a painting by Bruegel is searching for the centre of the picture. In this example, many events happen simultaneously, and the viewer must find a way to knit them together. Simpson does precisely that: not only has she paid close attention to some striking details in the painting (the lute player, the wheels), she also adds some contemporary elements (“Death’s /dark sky — a grainy docudrama.”)

“Landscape with the Parable of the Sower”

A sales receipt, a shoe. The silvery rain
has many hands. A stream — Fresh Kills — elides

with river. Thick and slow. A landfill plain:
 a ghost in biohazard gear. Gulls ride
 the thermals, circling high as barges come,
 a linking chain. Blue metropolis, far-
 off glints of light. The cranes all lift and hum,
 making hills of metal, bone. Crushed cars.
 So garbage rises: this stench is monument.
 Yet Brueghel's farmer takes the seeds, flings wide
 his arm. A miracle: small event. We meant
 to go, but every boat was laden. Tides
 pulled home, pulled here, then left us for the birds.
 We take the shape of soil, abandon words.

(Starmino 2005:58)



“Landscape of the Parable of the Sower”, 1557, oil on panel, 70 cm x 102 cm, Timken Art Gallery, San Diego.

“Landscape of the Parable of the Sower” is a very fine example of how Brueghel often chooses to turn his subject into an apparent detail in the painting, leaving much more room for the scenery. Perhaps this has provided Simpson with the perfect pretext to fuse her contemporary percep-

tions of reality with the Flemish masterpiece. In fact, “Brueghel’s farmer” appears unexpectedly in this poem. The description of the lifting of the debris is mixed with the “birds” identifiable in Brueghel’s “Landscape”.

“The Tower of Babel I”

We take the shape of soil, abandon words.
 The world will change without us. Did we glean
 a little shine? Perhaps. These wheeling birds
 drift down to earth. Crying. The air, unseen,
 seeks entry without keys. All locked, shut down.
 A spackled light gets through. We merely craved
 a taste. *Hello, my name is _____*. A crown,
 a king. One makes the other into slave.



“The Tower of Babel”, c. 1563, oil on panel, 114 cm x 155 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.

Behind is Babel's core. Red as a heart
 opened for bypass. Laid bare. Wind, idling.
 It's quiet. Still. The horses, loaded carts,
 are stuck. The ships, the docks. Thin bridles
 of cloud. All stopped. Each thing unclocked, undone.
 A man who kneels to plead his case. Warm sun.

(Starmino 2005:58)

Once more, some features of the original painting ("Babel's core. Red as a heart/opened for bypass", "A man who kneels to plead his case.") are discernible in Simpson's text. The light colours of this painting are all the more striking when compared to its "twin" painting.

"The Tower of Babel II"

That man who knelt to plead his case, that sun:
 they're gone. In time, air hardens, growing dark.
 The wars go on; beyond the TV, guns
 talk to themselves. One, two. They whisper, bark.
 Erotica. And Babel: height's desire
 is weary of itself, but there's no end
 to greed. A cruise, a condo. Guests for hire.
 On the rug: a shirt, a shoe. Whatever bends
 one body to another. We've forgotten.
 Those painted clouds are knives. Slipped in walls
 between the ribs. This plot device: rotten —
 the thing exploded from within. Small
 papers, white flakes. Last wish. Someone's cellphone.
 ("Are you still there? *Are you?*") A voice falls. Stone.

(Starmino 2005:59)



“The “Little” Tower of Babel”, c. 1563, oil on panel, 60 cm x 74.5 cm, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands.

Brueghel has considerably darkened the scene, conveying the grimness of the deserted Tower as opposed to the living crowd that previously surrounded it. Simpson has followed the painter in this respect: “That man who knelt to plead his case, that sun: /they’re gone. In time, air hardens, growing dark.” It is interesting to see how the perspective has changed. The Tower seems to have rotated, with its reddish core turned away from us. It is probably an effect of further building before mankind was scattered. “And Babel: height’s desire /is weary of itself, but there’s no end/to greed. (...) This plot device: rotten — /the thing exploded from within.”

“The Slaughter of the Innocents”

“Are you still there? *Are you?*” A voice falls. Stone,
 unbearable stone. It grinds. It tastes of grief.
 Don’t watch. Go blind. Oh Lord, those moans
 will haunt us. This one. That one there. Brief
 lives. Snow. And here, between the black trees, blood.
 A leaping dog. A bird. Everywhere we turn
 there’s whiteness in the air. And memory, a flood
 of killings no kindness can assuage. Urns
 half-full of ashes: nothing that we knew
 of those we loved. So young. Such shining hair,
 those gleams recalled. A silence follows through
 the rooms of when and how. Now, up the stairs
 a rescuer is climbing. But he’s too late.
 And look what happened. This. Short straw of fate.

(Starmino 2005:60)

Simpson represents violence using vocabulary which is more graphical in its nature than Brueghel’s own painting. The painting is visually subtle, almost subdued.



“The Massacre of the Innocents”, 1565-7, oil on panel, 109 cm x 158 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace, London, United Kingdom.

In Bruegel’s painting “The Massacre of the Innocents”, the vast array of small groups that catch our attention clearly dominates the picture, as opposed to several other works where the main action is subsumed within a larger scenario. It is interesting to note that a man is apparently pleading to a horseman on the left, in a similar position to the pleading man in “The Tower of Babel”. It remains to be seen whether this coincidence is accidental or not.

“Hunters in the Snow”

Who knows what happened? A short straw of fate,
 all that. Years ago. But now we’ve changed;
 those terrors tucked back in the heart. “Just great,
 that weekend special: everything arranged.”
 We return; the house looks strange. Each thing
 deceives. The counters, cutlery. Believe
 the chairs; they guard the table in a ring.

The hunters come. They're trudging, slow. Reprieve
 makes curving flight, a song in evening's sky:
 pale green at dusk. Some children skate; they laugh.
 And history has no place. Easy to lie
 on queen-sized beds, *dream a little dream*. Half-
 heard, the phantoms speak: No you weren't there —
 We turn; we sleep. But once there was a prayer.

(Starmino 2005:60)



“The Hunters in the Snow”, 1565, 117 x 162 cm, oil on wood. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.

“Life as usual” is questioned as a concept in this poem. The desire for peace and a return to normalcy are apparently disturbed by lingering memories (the “phantoms”). The slow trudging home of the hunters may be due to something other than weariness after the hunt, in such a context.

“Christ and the Adulteress”

We turn; we sleep. But once there was a prayer,
 a way to finger mystery. It floats,
 one plastic bag, freed from the fence, that snare
 with loops of wire. We translate into motes,
 a glimmer in a shaft of sun. One glide,
 we're gone. A painted scene: against this plea
 is set a stone. An end. Each thing is tried.
 A man makes notes in sand. The wind goes free.
 One gust: his words are ghosts. The dust, absolved,
 has vanished too. First kiss, last glance. *Tick. Tock.*
 All goes to ground. We kneel down and dissolve.
 Turn in. Turn out of time. Where nothing's clocked.
 A touch: so light. Love's breath. Things we can't hold:
 these watches. Ticking. Still. Each hour is cold.

(Starmino 2005:61)

One of the limitations of painting as a medium is its necessary treatment of one precise instant. Simpson envisions what might happen after her re-writing of Christ writing in the sand. “The dust, absolved” may move on, redeemed. Curiously enough, redemption seems to imply physical and/or spiritual destruction — “We kneel down and dissolve.” Taking the presence of the Redeemer at face value, one may view this as the necessary death before Resurrection.

If we take into account the inspiration for this poem — the brutal disappearance of the Twin Towers in 2001 — we discover how this remarkable crown of sonnets is also a powerful meditation on how fragile life is. It is also a reminder of the close links one can establish between such different arts as literature and painting, and between these and the life outdoors.



“Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery”, 1565, oil on canvas, 24 cm x 34 cm, Courtauld Institute Galleries, London, United Kingdom.

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ABSTRACT

Anne Simpson's "Seven Paintings by Brueghel" is a crown of sonnets, a specific way of exploring the possibilities of the sonnet as a fixed form. Rather than dwelling on the noble history of this technical exploit, though, we are to observe the relation between Simpson's text and the paintings by Brueghel she draws ideas from. We intend to examine in detail how Simpson paints her own images over Brueghel's, while never losing sight of the Flemish painter's stark imagery. Also important for our paper will be trying to find a common thread uniting the paintings, as well as the treatment given to Brueghel's work by other authors.

KEYWORDS

Simpson, Brueghel, Poetry, Sonnet, Painting.

RESUMO

"Seven Paintings by Brueghel", de Anne Simpson, é uma coroa de sonetos, um modo específico de explorar as possibilidades do soneto enquanto forma fixa. No entanto, em vez de nos determos na nobre história desta proeza técnica, iremos observar a relação entre o texto de Simpson e os quadros de Brueghel nos quais se inspira. Pretendemos examinar em detalhe a forma como Simpson pinta as suas próprias imagens sobre as de Brueghel, sem que ao mesmo tempo se perca de vista a forte imagética do pintor flamengo. Também será importante para esta comunicação tentar encontrar um traço unificador comum aos quadros, bem como o tratamento dado por outros autores à obra de Brueghel.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Simpson, Brueghel, Poesia, Soneto, Pintura.

Long-distance *Landing*:
Emma Donoghue and her Experience
of Otherness in Canada

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Long-distance *Landing*: Emma Donoghue and her Experience of Otherness in Canada

Emma Donoghue's novel *Landing* draws much on the semiotics of alterity and foreignness — tenet concepts of modern theories of identification and psychoanalysis. It too assents on the idea that identification is a dynamic, open-ended process based on the operations of selfhood and otherness, and not merely mimetic sameness and selfhood. Even though we mistakenly search for sameness in relations between the other and ourselves, we constantly stumble upon one evident and unavoidable fact — otherness and strangeness are the underlying themes of our identity. As such, we are inevitably bound to conclude that sameness, unity and transparency may have as well been the greatest fallacies of all times.

In the theory, during the process of naming and thus comprehending the other outside we approximate ourselves towards the idea of the other inside ourselves. Our lives are an ongoing process of translation of otherness found not on the thresholds of our being but deep within the abyss of our selfhood. What is more, it is our obligation to try to embrace the other and recognize himself or herself within oneself.

While Deleuze and Guattari wrote extensively on the idea of becoming and not simply being as in becoming-a-child, becoming-a-woman, or becoming-an-animal in their *A Thousand Plateaus*, they said that becoming does not signify literal taking on the attributes of either woman or animal. Instead, this means releasing the particles that constitute the new self through the enunciation of a transforming subject. As such identification may be a violent process in which one sheds one's skin in favour to imprint the other's name on oneself:

The girl and the child do not become; it is becoming itself that is a child or a girl. The child does not become an adult anymore than the girl becomes a woman; the girl is becoming-

woman of each sex, just as the child is becoming-young of every age. (...) Knowing how to love does not mean remaining a man or a woman; it means extracting from one's sex the particles, the speeds and slownesses, the flows, the *n* sexes that constitute the girl of *that* sexuality. (Deleuze, Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus* 306)

Similar to that, in her fiction, Emma Donoghue has focused on the idea of becoming the other in order to be oneself. In becoming the other, we acknowledge actively the existence of the audience that inevitably is there, playing a part of the receiver of our life narrative — we acknowledge the necessity to become the other. According to modern feminist scholarship as represented here by Judith Butler this audience is both the very *I* inside and the other outside since through becoming one both constructs and destabilizes the subject. As Julia Kristeva writes we are the stranger living inside ourselves who multiplies the masks until the point of becoming unrecognizable to oneself.

The above idea becomes painfully true in Donoghue's novel and her depiction of otherness both inhabiting her characters and the spaces they belong to. In her novel *Landing* there is a great amount of otherness both in Ireland, a country of spiteful children, anonymous citizens and racists. In Canada, the other too underlies the shaky connections of the apparently close-knit communities, as well as in a broader sense, is present in Canadian silent intolerance towards the minorities. Both Ireland and Canada remain communities in making, or rather, re-making having to answer to the latest challenges of Celtic tiger, and globalization, in case of Canada. Theoretically, both Ireland and Canada become scenarios desiccated through a double-edged problem of otherness that reveals itself in an inability to accommodate the spurious self and in inaptitude to welcome the awakening of the new foreigner that may appear unmanageable and unreasonable. Still, dealing with the other is a reciprocal process, where both insiders and outsiders need to agree on their mutual collaboration in bargaining an identity, this being also true on a more intimate, love plane as shown in Donoghue's *Landing*.

The idea of Deleuzian becoming has its echoes the idea of iterability and performance as thoroughly worked by Judith Butler in her *Bodies that Matter* or *Gender Trouble*. Donoghue, too, like Butler, is against

essentialism and sedimentation of identity taking a stand in favour of the theoretical positionality. Positionality, again, is to Donoghue, a double-edged sword. This she understands to be a result of unrestrained fluctuation discursively possible for the subject in question, as well as the subject's so-called audience of the performative, whose vision also remains relative and blurred. This, then, multiplies the clichéd idea that we fear most what we do not know and what do not understand. As a result, positionality is a state possible for both the *I* and the other enhanced if not restrained by an inert longing for certain discursive normativity that is inescapable for different sexualities and genders.

Donoghue's *Landing*, therefore, is not simply a meeting of two binaries, two destined halves, and nations but an encounter of a myriad of possible positions within discourse that the subjects have available — the very myriad of constructive molecular particles that Deleuze mentions in *The Thousand Plateaus*.

It is true that the title *Landing* is a direct reference to the founding event of the plot — the jet travel during which the characters meet in most awkward circumstances, where the flight attendant named Sile helps Canadian passenger Jude get over a sudden death of a fellow yet anonymous voyager from the seat next by. However, *Landing* is also a metaphor for a identificational struggle between the two subjects that the characters represent as in the everyday use of the word 'landing' that stands for acquiring, getting after struggling, catching, or simple capturing. Both of the subjects end up trying and struggling to colonize each other in a game of mutual self-discovery.

Notwithstanding the psychoanalytical theory, postcolonial and colonial are also two important terms in the analysis of the novel. Moreover, they both seem to underlie Canadian history and context, though they may not be the easiest ones to dissect. As a result, we may argue that in *Landing* Donoghue gives the reader a partial answer to both simple and 'not-so-simple' question that was posed in the year two thousand during a conference at Manitoba responding to a progressively alarming reality of deeply unsettled Canadian literature. The question that the conference addressed was as follows: "Is Canada Postcolonial?"

All in all, to be able to find an answer to the above inquiry further attention needs to be given to a myriad of other topics. One should ponder

the problem of marginality and alterity and see whether the theories associated with marginality apply in Canada. Following the above, the complex reality of Canadian readiness to deal with the issues such as power distribution, change, resistance and historical revisionism should be addressed, as well.

Bearing the complex nature of the aforementioned inquiries, no two contributors to the conference in Manitoba agreed on what postcolonial and Canada meant for the vast literary oeuvre it has homed and produced. However, the participants did agree on mapping out overtly important key concepts to Canadian literature and culture and these being: displacement, hybridity, collaboration, memory, ambivalence and syncretism. Of central issue was how Canada engages with American and British imperialism and neo-imperialism, and above all how it manages to differentiate between the multicultural policy and practice. Certainly, the themes Donoghue chose to deal with in *Landing* were very much synchronized with the Canadian postcolonial context, and of those let me elaborate on just few.

First, one should analyze the problem of public and private 'memory'. In *Landing* public memory is linked to Canadian Jude's job in a local museum and the general popularity of all that is traditional and totally unique, yet at odds with Canadian native communities raising a question of the boundary, if artificial, of what is native and what is foreign. Private memory is intertwined with the issue of unexpected losing of memory and consequently identity as in the theme of Jude's mother who suddenly develops an irreversible brain illness and is destined to forget all of her past, all of her discursive self threaded over a long life of counterbalancing difficulties and odds. Again, private memory refers to Sile's recollections of her long dead mother, whose memories and mementos she revisits while preparing for moving on to live in Canada. It then must be said that memory in Donoghue is inevitably connected to the maternal, the original, the founding but reveals itself delicate and complex as we generally tend to remember what and how we choose to remember.

Second, one should ponder the concept of displacement — being a stranger to the community in general that Donoghue portrays in Sile's Asian origins at odds with the apparently modern multicultural Ireland. Furthermore, *Landing* raises the issue of being a stranger to the local community because of sexual orientation that does not attest to the idea of

normative sexuality. However it, too, highlights the fallacy of normativism of queer communities in portraying the characters as strangers to the gay community for having a too strong straight pattern of behaviour, as well as a record of straight relationships and even a straight marriage as in the case of Jude. This obviously tackles the problem of what it means to be queer through an attempt to deconstruct gender formation and to disassociate it from sole sexual performatives, putting an emphasis on other ways of being and becoming that do not fit the +/- phallic category.

Third, one should see into the concepts of hybridity, ambivalence, and syncretism. In hybridity, Donoghue sees a key issue for a better understanding of interraciality, between-genderness, and furthermore both Canadian and Irish national identities. Ambivalence, she understands as simultaneous desire and necessity to embrace and abject the other. Syncretism is tackled as a means of being true to oneself and an attempt at reconciliation or union of different and opposing principles, practices, or parties in philosophy, religion, and national identity.

Again, from a psychoanalytical point of view, much of the narrative of *Landing* makes a direct reference to the founding themes of our identity, such as abjection, motherhood, dialogism, strangeness and otherness. As a result, as much as selfhood is understood as interpersonal, the novel is intertextual. Donoghue is prompt not to spare us even a direct reference to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in one of characters' conversations on originality and proximity. "The way he kept going behind the screen, and taking painfully long to come back out in the mask of His mother" (Donoghue, *Landing* 161) Marcus comments about the Danish performer. "Could it have been a reference to Hamlet" (Donoghue, *Landing* 161) he quickly adds. Following this theoretical thread, it may be said that our entire search for the other has been originated in the semiotic relationship to the mother, towards whom we are in oscillating movement of abjection and approximation throughout our lives. As modern as the lives of Jude and Sile may appear, they run narrowly close to the narratives constructed by and about their mothers. In fact, these are the constructed narratives that Jude and Sile have misguidingly left in the process of entering the Symbolic. Apparently freed from the mothers' discourses Jude and Sile re-live and re-encounter the maternal present in a set of clichéd stories, joint misconceptions and imaginary tales of the other, as well as their budding relationship of care

and responsibility for one another. In the end, it is virtually impossible to take the mask of the mother off who delves deep within the unconscious of Kristevan archaic mother and Deleuzian becoming-little girl again.

The idea of otherness brings in the issues of proximity and distance, the latter being more painful though more humane and sustainable, the former causing the subject virtual pain of having to embrace and welcome the other. In *Landing* Sile's friend Marcus, who now lives four-hour drive away from Dublin, in a cottage village exchanged for the chaos of the big city, but also a close distance to his present partner, criticizes Sile vehemently for having to cover huge distances to get with her partner Jude. "Canadians drive that for a picnic" (Donoghue, *Landing* 162) Sile responds to the accusation, when another of Sile's friends, Jael, answers in — "Anyone beyond arm's reach in the wee dark hours is too far away." (Donoghue, *Landing* 163) And yet Donoghue makes us aware of what negative impact the strains of proximity and distance disseminate on Jael's life. For Jael is very much bashful of her former relationship-ridden university life with many lovers, and yet she is the only character that settles quickly with a husband and a daughter, whom in the end of the book she abandons engaging yet in another of her life's love affairs.

All characters in *Landing* struggle with the idea of otherness from the beginning to the final resolution of the plot; all are as if woken from a fantasy of having had successfully dealt with this problem long time ago and having taken the course of their lives in their hands. To that Donoghue poses a question of why and how the idea of love and otherness enters the adult life with such force — "Blame the zeitgeist" says Marcus — "the new technologies let us get ourselves into tangles: they make this arrangements just possible without making them liveable" (Donoghue, *Landing* 163). As a result Donoghue asks: are we still able to live with one another?

Can we still live with one another if even such simple actions as talking — here talking on the phone — are problematic, even when the language itself is common for both of the speakers. During the course of the narrative of *Landing* Jude visits Sile in Ireland and is made painfully aware of how her discourse does not fit the discourse of the strangers, even though the words they use are the same and clearly expressed in the same *parole*. As a consequence, friends cannot agree on such simple matters as foreignness, murder, bilingualism and the idea of beauty, yet simple as they

are, these concepts are the founding concepts of any national identity, any discursive, cultural or political hegemony.

In *Landing*, on the national level, Canada and Ireland seem to have nothing in common — “oh, I know, says Sile, we’re a filthy nation” (Donoghue, *Landing* 169) of slums and “they can set fire to your car” (169) while one is away. In return Canada is described not as idyllic and innocent, though it does give away this idea at first glance. After a closer analysis Canada is “backward” (Donoghue, *Landing* 204) and embarrassingly retarded — “grow where you planted” (Donoghue, *Landing* 203) says one of the slogans on the way to Jude’s village where we can further see another message engraved on a dilapidated barn: “marriage — 1 man + 1 woman” (Donoghue, *Landing* 202). In the end, “Immigrants from all over the world are banging at the door to come settle in western Ontario” (Donoghue, *Landing* 206), but they are not welcome — explains bitterly Jude’s former husband.

In close-knit communities people’s narratives are constructed against the narratives of the other so that Donoghue makes us see how abjectable, constraining and burdensome this may be to a visiting stranger. On the other hand, these narratives, too, invade the personal space of a local dweller making him or her struggle to constantly redraw the boundaries and delineate the contours of a desiccating subjectivity.

In the end, according to Donoghue, globalization pushes people away instead of approximating them towards common goals based on the workings of dialogical existence. Proximity and simple being-together too often does destroy people’s delicate sense of personal integrity. For who is the foreigner, if not, simply, the other self — the other *I* — that we carry within us? As Kristeva writes in her *Strangers to Ourselves*,

Foreigner: a choked up rage deep down in my throat, a black angel clouding transparency, opaque, unfathomable spur. The image of hatred and of the other, a foreigner is neither a romantic victim of our clannish indolence nor the intruder responsible for all the ills of the polis. Neither the apocalypse on the move nor the instant adversary to be eliminated for the sake of appeasing the group. Strangely, the foreigner lives within us. (Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* 1)

And while Deleuze and Guattari elaborate in the *Anti-Oedipus* on the multiplicity of selfhood “From the connections of bodies or from experience, human mind forms ideas” (Colebrook 82), new simulations, conflicts and its consciousness Donoghue simultaneously agrees on human interdependence writing that “A place is nothing on its own it was only people that carved it into memory.” (Donoghue, *Landing* 318)

It may be said that Donoghue’s *Landing* follows the modern psychoanalytical scholarship of transcendental understanding of the self. Moreover, it agrees with the idea that the completeness of multiple and intersectional identity lies in its incompleteness — the body in becoming. Hence, identity in *Landing* is an issue of public and private relationships. It is best understood as *oneself-as-an-other* in a given place and at a given time where Heideggerian *within-time-ness* and *within-place-ness* come as handy tools in situating the discursive practices of a subject. As Kristeva is prompt to add, “The other is my proper unconscious” (Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* 183).

In *Clash of Civilizations*, Samuel Huntington writes: “For people seeking identity (...) enemies are essential” (Huntington 20) and the word ‘enemies’ may be synonymous with the foreigner that lives both inside and on the margins of our spurious self. According to Kristeva “we know that we are foreigners to ourselves, and it is with the help of that sole support that we can attempt to live with others.” (Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* 170)

By recognizing [the stranger] within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns ‘we’ into a problem perhaps makes it impossible. The foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unamenable to bonds and communities. (Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* 1)

In 1972 in his article “National Identity and the Canadian Novel” Frank Birbalsingh wrote that “National identity is an important literary theme especially among colonial or neo-colonial peoples who have not evolved an organic sense of community or cultural homogeneity” (Moss 1) and who have been struggling for a post-independence national identity. Asking postcolonial questions can be valid as long as one does not impose one and

unique understanding of Postcolonialism. Designating a country's literature as postcolonial situates it between binary oppositions of imperial and anti-imperial, personal and impersonal, private and public. And it is precisely about these binary oppositions that Canada is so ambiguous and should remain wary.

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ABSTRACT

Emma Donoghue has been on the literary scene since 1993 when she published her first novel *Stir–Fry*, a coming of age novel and, at the same time, a crude and unwelcome quest towards discovering one's identity. An author of five more novels, other pieces of fiction, as well as a PhD in English from Cambridge University, comes back with her much biographical novel *Landing* published in 2007.

Landing is one in a line of Emma Donoghue's novels that renders the reader every possible *cliché* about strangeness and otherness ferociously authentic. In her *Landing* Emma Donoghue captures what can be called a clash of identities in the un-reality of timelessness — here erratic travel in the *jet lagged* era — where an apparent homelessness and strangeness are irrevocably written into both national and personal histories. Since the stories of attracting opposites have been exhausted in literature, Donoghue manages to make her story absorbing by taking the ambiguous nature of selfhood into the stereotyped context of Canadian and Irish histories and well beyond into the pots of personal narrative of youth, adulthood, ethnicity and gender.

In the paper, we will have an opportunity to look at the (de)construction of personal and foreign narratives, histories of selfhood and otherness within hostile environments of public and private Canada and Ireland.

KEYWORDS

Donoghue; Ireland; Canada; Foreignness; Selfhood; Identities.

RESUMO

Emma Donoghue tem estado presente no mundo literário desde 1993; o ano em que publicou o seu primeiro romance *Stir-Fry*, considerado *Bildungsroman* fruto de angústias da autora resultantes da difícil descoberta de identidade. Donoghue é autora de mais cinco romances, outras obras literárias, como também um doutoramento pela Universidade de Cambridge sobre os conceitos de amizade entre homens e mulheres na literatura do século XVIII.

O *Landing* publicado em 2007 continua na linha de escrita bibliográfica demarcando-se como um livro não somente *queer* mas também dividindo-se entre questões da tradição e a novidade, o presente e o passado, o nacional — irlandês e o estrangeiro — canadiano. *Landing* tenciona provar a impermeabilidade e solidez das divisões binárias previamente enumeradas e muitas vezes sendo elas consideradas *clichés* agora transpostas para os mundos irlandês e canadiano. Emma Donoghue consegue capturar o constante atrito entre varias identidades e histórias pessoais num tempo ambíguo e metaforicamente visto como a sensação de *jet-lag* vivida pelas duas personagens principais do romance.

A presente intervenção serve de ponto de partida para uma discussão sobre a (de)construção de narrativas pessoais e estrangeiras, como também histórias de alteridade e *selfhood* vividas em mundos hostis do Canadá e Irlanda.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Donoghue, Irlanda, Canadá, estrangeiro, alteridade, *selfhood*, identidades.

ESSAYS
ESTUDOS

Entre o Terreiro do Paço e Londres:
O Jogo de Espelhos Anglo-Português em
The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret
(1714), de Susanna Centlivre

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Entre o Terreiro do Paço e Londres: O Jogo de Espelhos Anglo-Português em *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret* (1714), de Susanna Centlivre

Ridendo castigat mores

Na sequência do nosso artigo “A Lisboa Católica, a Mulher Lusa e a Dimensão Anglo-Portuguesa de *Marplot in Lisbon* (1710) e *A Woman Well Managed* (1715), de Susanna Centlivre” (Puga 2011), analisamos no presente estudo essas mesmas temáticas, entre outras específicas à comédia *The Wonder* (1714), da autoria de uma das dramaturgas inglesas de maior sucesso em termos de peças encenadas e que, de acordo com alguns autores,¹ apenas é ultrapassada por William Shakespeare.

Como verificámos no referido estudo, Portugal e personagens lusas são presenças recorrentes no teatro inglês do século XVIII, bastando relembrar algumas das comédias publicadas no volume quarto da colectânea *The Modern British Drama* (1811). No primeiro acto de *The Constant Couple* (1699), de George Farquhar (c. 1677-1707), Alderman-Smuggler refere o seu barco *Swan*, que acabara de chegar de São Sebastião carregado de “Portugal wines” (I, 27), enquanto numa outra comédia desse autor *The Recruiting Officer* (1706), Portugal, Flandres e Espanha como destinos de viajantes ingleses (II, 111). Em *The Good-Natured Man* (1768), de Oliver Goldsmith (c. 1730-1774), redigida pouco depois do terramoto de Lisboa, a catástrofe natural é apresentada como um perigo que pode atingir qualquer um (I, 516), tal como em *The Brothers* (1769), de Richard Cumberland (1732-1811), numa fala que apresenta o *background* de Violetta: “Of English Parents born in Lisbon — her family and fortune buried in the earthquake” (I, 566), informação que é repetida na página 575, enquanto Portugal é retratado como local de residência de famílias inglesas (II, 569)

¹ Sobre o (in)sucesso e a recepção da Obra de Centlivre, veja-se Bratton (7-24).

e Violetta é referida como “fair Portuguese” (II, 583). Uma outra comédia sentimental do mesmo autor *The West Indian* (1771) menciona ainda Lisboa como destino comum de embarcações inglesas (I, 588).

As três peças de Centlivre de que nos ocupamos neste e no já referido estudo fazem parte do *corpus* de textos setecentistas em que o mundo lusófono, enquanto espaço da acção e tema literário, marca uma presença simbólica e frequente. As comédias *Marplot in Lisbon* (1710), *The Wonder* (1714) e *A Wife Well Managed* (1715) podem ser aproximadas quer em termos de intertextualidade temática, enredo e estratégias literárias, quer no que diz respeito à sua dimensão anglo-portuguesa, nomeadamente aos espaços, aos estereótipos associados à nacionalidade, às personagens e à utilização de termos portugueses, interessando-nos presentemente apenas o texto de 1714, cujo título remete para o segredo da localização de Isabella fielmente guardado por Violante.

The Wonder é dedicada ao duque de Cambridge, futuro príncipe de Gales e rei Jorge II (1727), gesto através do qual Centlivre afirma o seu apoio à dinastia de Hanover. Como temas principais da peça surgem gradualmente o conflito de interesses e o confronto entre diferentes culturas, géneros e gerações, também característicos das chamadas *Spanish comedies* (O’Brien 13). A troca de identidades e o disfarce típicos da comédia (85-86, 100-102, 107) são uma constante na Obra de Centlivre, e o enredo do texto dramático, não sendo de todo original, constitui uma rede de intrigas paralelas, destacando-se em *The Wonder* a dimensão anglo-portuguesa, ou seja, o facto de a acção ter lugar na capital do mais velho aliado de Inglaterra, cuja sociedade é caracterizada como católica, conservadora e patriarcal. Aliás a Igreja, a Coroa e o poder patriarcal operam de mãos dadas em Portugal, como se pode verificar através da presença constante das figuras do alguazil e do padre nos lares de nobres patriarcas.

O universo lexical do texto é enriquecido com termos franceses (50, 89) e, tal como em *Marplot* e *A Wife Well Managed*, portugueses,²

² “Moydores” (52, 62, 64), “Senjora”, “Donna” (64, 76)/“Duanna” (70), “Don” (77), “Alguzile” (alguazil, oficial inferior de justiça, 75-77), “Misericordia” (77), “Papa” (94), “senior” (112, 114-115), e apelidos como Gusmão (48-49, 54-55, 70), Mendonça (86) e Pimentel (104, 112).

assumindo-se a peça como poliglota. Os nomes das personagens estrangeiras e as formas de tratamento transportam desde logo o público leitor para a Península Ibérica, nomeadamente: Don Lopez de Pementell, Don Felix, Don Pedro de Mendosa, Lissardo, Sancho, Donna Violante, Elvira, Donna Isabella, Inis, Flora, Vasquez e o “Alguzile”, agente da lei corrupto e orgulhoso que representa o poder do rei português e de quem Felix foge até ser considerado inocente. Os apelidos das personagens, apresentados sobretudo em momentos de tensão, veiculam a grandeza e o estatuto nobre das mesmas, tal como as jóias e os meios de transporte que utilizam para se deslocar, como a carruagem (108, 112) e a cadeirinha (112), relacionando-se esses elementos e objectos ‘culturais’ ainda com outros hábitos portugueses, nomeadamente: a sesta (61), a religião (91-92, 97), a guitarra e a música portuguesas (117).

Relativamente ao imaginário católico do texto, poderemos enumerar os seguintes elementos: a missa vespertina (54), o mosteiro (63), o catecismo (90), os padres (90, 97), a fé (97), o altar (96) e vários santos, nomeadamente Santo António. Tal como acontece na peça de que nos ocupamos (70, 76, 93, 96, 103, 114), também em *Marplot* (173, 129, 138, 145, 148, 161, 174, 182) as personagens católicas/portuguesas juram por e interpelam Santo António, “Guardian Saint of Lisbon” (173), e, como já afirmámos (Puga, no prelo), essa mesma veneração dos habitantes de Lisboa pelo santo que aí nascera seria realista para a audiência inglesa.³ O facto de as personagens católicas pedirem ajuda e agradecerem ao santo padroeiro da capital portuguesa contrasta com as práticas das personagens protestantes, desenhando-se desde cedo um dos binómios existente em ambas as peças de Centlivre: o Português católico (“Papist”, *Marplot*: 148) e o Britânico protestante (“Heretic Dog”, *Marplot*: 136, 148, 135, 151-152), conflito e tensão presentes em *The Wonder*, por exemplo, no insulto que Don Lopez dirige ao coronel escocês: “A Heretick! The Devil” (115). Essa temática é também reforçada e ilustrada quer através de temas como a oração e as práticas religiosas de cada país, quer dos campos semânticos e

³ Para um exemplo de interpelações ao santo em fontes portuguesas do século XVIII (1773), veja-se Noronha (4).

do imaginário católico que concorrem para a caracterização da cor local e do espaço estrangeiro da acção.

O enredo cómico principal de *The Wonder* revela a relação amorosa de Violante e Don Felix, e um segundo enredo a de Isabella e de Colonel Britton, enquanto o terceiro apresenta o universo quotidiano e amoroso das empregadas Flora e Inis (esta última personagem homónima da empregada em *A Wife Well Managed*), que se envolvem ambas com Lissardo. No final, e contra a vontade dos pais das jovens, Isabella casa com o coronel, Felix e Violante reconciliam-se e as duas empregadas rejeitam Lissardo, juntando-se Inis a Gibby, cujo sotaque escocês concorre para o cómico de linguagem e cuja antipatia para com (a inimiga) Espanha (102) se poderá justificar pelo facto de este ter viajado pela Península Ibérica ao longo de três anos com o seu amo no âmbito da Guerra da Sucessão de Espanha (1701-1714). Já o coronel chama “Spaniard” a Felix durante o confronto verbal final com o objectivo de o ofender (103), tornando-se óbvios a importância e o valor dos conceitos de nacionalidade e de sentimento de pertença, até porque, na fala seguinte, Gibby garante que está em Portugal “for the Honor a *Scotland*” (103), e mais tarde Felix confessa que adora o seu país (110). Num diálogo entre empregados, Lissardo pergunta a Gibby se não se apercebe que está em Portugal, onde os hábitos e costumes são diferentes dos da Grã-Bretanha (113), enfatizando, mais uma vez, a diferença cultural e a questão da nacionalidade na peça, como acontece no final em que o coronel confronta Don Lopez e afirma ser “an honest *North Britton*” (115), e não apenas escocês. Já Lissardo ofende os “Brittons”, que não são mais que “Word and a Blow”, e Don Lopez chama “Heretick” (115) à personagem escocesa. O conflito religioso entre católicos e protestantes remete para as temáticas da nacionalidade e da comunidade religiosa e Centlivre rentabiliza assim preconceitos e estereótipos anticatólicos e anti-estrangeiros (Freeman 73), como podemos verificar através do ‘sangue quente’ do português Felix e da opressão patriarcal associada aos preceitos da religião católica, pois como recorda O’ Brien (15):

The Wonder’s Portuguese setting serves to soften some of the force of Centlivre’s critique of patriarchy, making these problems seem to be more characteristic of Catholic countries in warm climates than it is of Protestant Britain, muting any complaint the Play would make about patriarchy by

deflecting attention away from its local application. But the image of Catholic Portugal that the play offers also works to consolidate a British national character that is marked by its comparative openness and energy. (15-16)

Estamos perante uma estratégia de defesa e fortalecimento da identidade nacional britânica que se observa, de forma mais intensa, desde 1707, sendo esse objectivo conseguido também através do recurso a personagens escocesas como Colonel Britton, cujo nome remete forçosa e directamente para a identidade britânica, e Gibby, que é obrigado pelo patrão a envergar um traje escocês “for the Honour of Scotland” (50). Esta temática, bem como a da liberdade, pode ser relacionada com os ideais políticos Whig e ‘feministas’ da dramaturga, pois o corregedor, enquanto braço da lei do Estado português, controla inclusive a vida familiar em Lisboa, ao contrário da situação mais positiva que se observa na Grã-Bretanha, onde (supostamente) reina a liberdade, que é um dos conceitos-baluartes da ideologia Whig, como recorda O’Brien ao caracterizar *The Wonder* como a obra de Centlivre em que os seus ideais Whig⁴ mais se fazem sentir, sendo também clara na Obra da autora a defesa da igualdade do(s) género(s). Torna-se, portanto, simbólico o facto de ser um escocês a libertar Isabella do jugo opressor do seu pai português após ter lutado pelos interesses britânicos na Península Ibérica.

O ritmo da acção do texto dramático é lento, pois o objectivo dos jovens não é apenas executar um plano previamente definido, mas sobretudo contrariar o dos pais tiranos, de quem as filhas inicialmente pensam depender. A acção desenrola-se em Lisboa, universo geográfico-cultural no qual o nobre Don Lopez, pai de Felix e Isabella, e o comerciante Frederick são colocados. Don Lopez teme que Antonio, ferido por Felix num duelo, morra, vendo-se o seu filho forçado a fugir para Inglaterra, e pede a Frederick conselhos quer sobre o país que este já visitara, quer sobre os ingleses. Tal

⁴ O’Brien (17-18) enumera alguns dos objectivos Whig defendidos pela dinastia de Hanover: o direito de propriedade e a unificação dos grupos étnicos/‘nacionais’, religiosos e políticos fraccionados no início do século XVIII para que a Grã-Bretanha se torne uma nação sólida e unificada e possa fazer frente à França através do apoio à dinastia Stuart exilada e do fortalecimento militar e económico do país.

como em *Marplot in Lisbon*, as relações comerciais anglo-portuguesas marcam presença em *The Wonder*, e o comerciante responde: “My Lord, the English are by Nature, what the Ancient Romans were by Discipline, courageous, bold, hardy, and in love with Liberty. Liberty is the Idol of the *English*, under whose Banner all the Nation Lists, give but the Word for Liberty, and straight more armed Legions wou’d appear, than *France*, and *Philip*⁵ keep in constant Pay” (48). Através dessa fala, Centlivre (hetero)caracteriza os seus contemporâneos por intermédio da focalização da personagem lusa mais viajada da peça, e a referência a Filipe V de Espanha, cuja ascensão ao trono dá lugar à Guerra de Sucessão, remete para esse episódio histórico referido por Colonel Britton, que nele participara (50) e que visita Lisboa a caminho de casa. Face à opressão de que Felix é alvo e a esta descrição dos ingleses e da Grã-Bretanha por Frederick logo no início da peça, fica desde cedo estabelecido o binómio Portugal opressor/Grã-Bretanha libertadora. Os britânicos são comparados aos romanos devido à sua coragem e ao amor pela liberdade, confessando Don Lopez que admira os ideais ingleses, pois qualquer ser humano prima pela liberdade. Tal afirmação contradiz a atitude do pai tirano e materialista ao desejar casar a filha à força com Don Guzman até que é derrotado pela jovem. De acordo com Don Lopez, Isabella, quando casar com Don Guzman, será “the happiest Wife in Lisbon”, mas a própria rentabiliza um sugestivo exercício em torno do grau dos adjectivos utilizados e considera que será “the most unhappy Woman in the World” (54), e tudo faz para evitar o casamento, concorrendo para o desenlace feliz da peça.

O poder cego e a opressão paternal são também criticados por Frederick, que repreende o amigo por submeter a sua filha a tal casamento, e Don Lopez responde, em tom cómico, que os desejos dos filhos devem ser controlados pelos pais, aludindo à recente Guerra de Sucessão de Espanha e à temática erótica que subjaz ao enredo principal de *Marplot in Lisbon* e *A Wife Well Managed*:

Parents would have a fine time on’t, if they consulted their
Children’s Inclinations! I’ll venture you a wager, that in all the
Garrison Towns in *Spain* and *Portugal*, during the late War,

⁵ Filipe V de Espanha.

there were not three Women, who have not had an Inclination to every Officer in the whole Army; does it therefore follow, that their Fathers ought to pimp for them? (49)

O jogo de hetero-caracterização continua ao longo da peça, e Frederick pergunta a Colonel Britton se conhece bem Portugal, ao que este responde recorrendo a um dos argumentos dos Protestantes durante a Reforma quinhentista da Igreja, a venda (católica) de indulgências, que, decerto, o público inglês recordaria: “your priests are wicked Rogues. They immure Beauty for their own proper Use, and show it only to the Laity to create Desires, and inflame Accompts, that they may purchase Pardons at a dearer Rate” (51). Frederick contra-ataca e adensa o teor cómico do texto ao referir a vida sexual dos ingleses e a grande liberdade de que gozam as mulheres destes, sendo a conduta dos britânicos caracterizada indirectamente: “I own Wenching is something more difficult here than in *England*, where Women’s Liberties are subservient to their Inclinations, and Husbands seem of no Effect but to take Care of the Children which their Wives provide” (51). O português acusa os ingleses de desempenharem tarefas tipicamente femininas enquanto as suas mulheres governam a casa como bem entendem. A luta verbal e o jogo de espelhos intensificam-se quando o militar escocês riposta: “And does Restraint get the better of Inclination with your Women here? No, I’ll be sworn not even in fourscore. Don’t I know the Constitution of the *Spanish* ladies?” (51), confessando mais tarde que a Igreja escocesa mantém-nos tão famintos que eles comem como canibais no estrangeiro, desenvolvendo mais uma metáfora comparativa em torno da voracidade sexual masculina e do tema da libertinagem sexual. O Colonel ecoa uma erótica metáfora culinária também utilizada em *Marplot in Lisbon* ao afirmar que é perigoso procurar ‘comida’ no país de inimigos, e que, como deseja regressar à Grã-Bretanha com vida, comprará o seu prazer, ou seja, recorrerá à prostituição, apesar do perigo das doenças venéreas, pois algumas mulheres portuguesas trocam os seus “Moydores”⁶

⁶ Moeda de ouro portuguesa comum na Inglaterra na primeira metade do século XVIII. Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727), *master of the mint* desde 1699, refere o “moydore” numa carta que dirige, em Março de 1712, ao *high treasurer* da Grã-Bretanha: “The Moydores of Portugal, one with another, as they are brought hither by the Merchant”

pela ‘liberdade’ inglesa. Em *Marplot* também o nobre português Don Ferreira avisa a mulher para não ceder à sua atracção pelos oficiais ingleses: “No regaling your palate with Foreign dishes, they are very dangerous” (*Marplot* 137). Podemos assim concluir que as peças de cariz anglo-português de Centlivre dialogam intertextualmente não apenas no que diz respeito aos temas típicos da chamada comédia espanhola, mas também às estratégias literárias, como é o caso das metáforas e da caracterização cômica do católico português e da natureza humana. No entanto, se em *The Wonder* os dois pais portugueses são caracterizados como materialistas também o militar britânico defende, no início da peça, que o dinheiro é o deus do casamento que adorna a beleza feminina.

O tom jocoso das comparações que constituem este jogo de espelhos anglo-português é substituído pelo tom mais sério, embora também cômico, do diálogo entre Isabella e Inis, no qual a patroa se autodescreve como uma escrava da vontade masculina:

What pleasant Lives Women lead in *England*, where Duty wears no Fetter but Inclination: The Custom of our Country inslaves us from our very Cradles, first to our Parents, next to our Husbands; and when Heaven is so kind to rid us of both these, our Brothers still usurp Authority, and expect a Blind Obedience from us, so that Maids, Wives, or Widows, we are but little better than Slaves to the Tyrant man, therefore to avoid their Power, I resolve to cast my self into a Monastery. (53)

Isabella começa por afirmar que a liberdade inglesa se transforma em ‘libertinagem’, enquanto o mosteiro, em Portugal, é uma forma de fugir à opressão masculina. Neste último excerto é assim apresentado um dos principais temas do texto através da focalização feminina, o da voz da mulher silenciada pela sociedade patriarcal lusa, exercício que se aproxima

(Shaw 160). A moeda é também mencionada em obras de ficção em que mercadores e navegadores portugueses marcam presença, nomeadamente: *Gulliver's Travels*, de Jonathan Swift (106), *Robinson Crusoe* (195), *The Life, Adventures, and Piracies of the Famous Captain Singleton* (20, 166) e ainda *The Complete English Tradesman* (211), de Daniel Defoe (*vide* Puga 51, n. 15).

da revisão dos valores morais e sociais típica da chamada comédia sentimental, que reage contra os excessos da *comedy of manners* (Barbudo 14-15).

Tal como *Marplot*, *The Wonder* parece evidenciar a maior liberdade da mulher inglesa e, de facto, são vários os historiadores que, ao longo dos tempos, defendem que o Protestantismo introduz na Inglaterra uma visão mais positiva do casamento por comparação à tradição católica da Idade Média (Maclean 19-20, Keeble 115-117), teoria refutada por Stone (1977) ao defender uma certa continuidade com o passado, podendo ser essa última a ideia ironicamente subjacente aos enredos cómicos de *Centlivre*. Já no século XVII a tradição popular inglesa descrevera a Inglaterra como um ‘paraíso para mulheres’, uma vez que se fosse construída uma ponte entre a ilha e o continente, as mulheres continentais correriam para o Norte, afirmando o pastor Zachary Crofton (1626-1672) que as mulheres inglesas não são tão submissas como as francesas (Capp 6-7). No entanto, o amor das jovens lusas que acabam por se libertar e as atitudes românticas de Felix e de Colonel Britton no final da peça são universais e remetem para a natureza humana e não para estereótipos nacionalistas, como *Centlivre* parece concluir. Perante a opressão masculina do ‘casamento arranjado’, Inis aconselha a patroa a fugir rumo às águas e às terras livres de Inglaterra, preferindo Isabella permanecer no seu país e arranjar um plano para se ver livre de Don Guzman, em busca de ‘*A Room of One’s Own*’ fora da casa do seu pai, que a vê apenas como fonte de lucro. O momento decisivo em que a protagonista se revolta é acompanhado pelo seu movimento ascendente, como informa a didascália (“*Rising*”, 55), gesto que veicula simbolicamente a tensão, a força de vontade e o poder da personagem e confere um maior dramatismo ao acto. Essa determinação é também demonstrada por Violante quando informa Felix de que “Love generally gets the better of Religion in us Women” (92), tornando-se clara a diferença na forma de agir das personagens masculinas e femininas.

O segundo acto apresenta-nos o ambiente doméstico de outro lar de Lisboa, o de Don Pedro, que engana a filha ao convencê-la a ingressar numa instituição religiosa para que possa ficar com a herança que ela iria receber do avô. Nesse lar desenvolve-se um outro sub-enredo, o dos empregados Lissardo, Flora e Inis, pautado pelos apartes, ‘piropos’ e *innuendos* sexuais típicos da comédia. São também essas personagens de uma classe social inferior que caracterizam indirectamente os seus

superiores, “os Grandees of Portugal” (60), ao troçar deles, pois colocam os anéis de diamantes dos patrões nos dedos e imitam os seus gestos e tiques. Tal como Teague, o moço de recados irlandês em *A Wife Well Managed*, também a portuguesa Flora demonstra o seu materialismo ao mover-se a troco de dinheiro.

A caracterização de britânicos e portugueses continua ao longo do texto, e Flora confessa a Isabella que os ingleses são graciosos a fazer ofertas, perguntando esta última a Violante se, tendo nascido em Lisboa, não conhece os costumes da sua terra, pois ao fugir de casa mancharia a honra da família e o seu irmão jamais lhe perdoaria e a tentaria assassinar (65); daí que jovem se refugie na casa de Violante para ganhar tempo, segredo que é guardado a todo o custo pelas jovens cúmplices e que dá nome à peça. Os sentimentos de posse e de honra exacerbados são então característicos da sociedade patriarcal lusa, bem como estereótipos associados à crueldade, à paixão e aos ciúmes desmesurados de Felix e Don Lopez. Já Colonel Britton, ao apaixonar-se por Isabella, compara as mulheres portuguesas às inglesas, estabelecendo a focalização masculina mais um jogo de espelhos no que diz respeito ao género e à comparação entre Portugal e a Grã-Bretanha:

Oh! How I love these pretty, kind, coming Females, that won't give a Man the trouble of wracking His Invention to deceive them. — Oh *Portugal!* Thou dear Garden of Pleasure-Where Love drops down His mellow Fruit, and every Bough bends to our Hands, and seems to cry come, Pull and eat, how deliciously a Man lives here without fear of the Stool of Repentance? (70)

Portugal é assim apresentado como o Éden, onde não existem pecado e arrependimentos, mas apenas prazer. Por outro lado, Felix sente-se desafiado com a liberdade que a irmã deseja ao fugir, exclamando: “Oh Scandal to our Blood” (76). A afronta de Isabella traz ao palco a autoridade corrupta do alguazil, “Representative of Majesty, [...] the very Quintessence of Authority” (77), cujas ordens são comparadas ao sopro de um canhão, mas cuja moral se pauta sobretudo pelo lucro imediato. O poder real está assim associado ao poder patriarcal, esferas que se fortalecem mutuamente.

Tal como as personagens Elvira e Don Guzman, que são apenas referidas e nunca entram em cena, também a periferia da cidade é um

espaço mencionado mas ausente, nomeadamente a “Farm-House” em que Felix se esconde e o local dos negócios de Don Lopez. A caracterização de Lisboa no texto é um processo gradual ao longo do qual se acumulam referências vagas a edifícios e a espaços interiores e exteriores como: “Post-House” (63), “Corner House with the green Rails” (53), “monastery” (63, 92), “Tavern” (78, 100), “Garden” (88, 91, 92, 100), “garden-wall”, “street” e “convent” (95). Se Felix considera Lisboa uma cidade onde qualquer estrangeiro se pode perder em segurança (100), Gibby, o cómico escocês, considera a capital uma “wicked Town”, onde imperam a desonestidade e a fornicção: “But I’ m seer there’s na sike honest People here, or there wou’d na be so muckle Sculdudrie” (83). O empregado também caracteriza as mulheres escocesas e portuguesas através do recurso à comparação por dissemelhança ao afirmar que os escoceses devem estar loucos ao deixar em casa belas mulheres honestas para perseguir um bando de bruxas lusas, que, tal como Isabella no Terreiro do Paço coberta com um véu, têm medo de mostrar a cara e forçam os homens a ser seus proxenetes, um negócio em ascensão: “Weel of aw Men in the Warld, I think our Scots Men the greatest Feuls, to leave their weel favour’d honest Women at Heam, to rin walloping after a pack of Gyr Carlings here, that same to show thir Faces, and peer Men, like me, are forc’d to be their Pimps. [...] An yet in troth it is a threving Trade [...]” (85). O registo jocoso, rústico e crítico do escocês afasta-se do das falas do seu patrão, que continua a caracterizar Portugal de forma positiva e a recorrer ao campo semântico da fertilidade edénica: “This is a very fruitful Soil, I have not been here quite four and twenty Hours, and I have three Intrigues upon my Hands already, but I hate the Chase, without partaking the Game [...]. I fancy the Women have a Project on foot to transplant the Union to *Portugal*” (89-90). O militar recorre ainda a um sugestivo *pun* para se referir simultaneamente ao casamento (feliz) enquanto união harmoniosa e ao então recente Act of Union (1707). No entanto, na fala seguinte o coronel, tendo encontrado a sua futura mulher em Lisboa, não deixa de criticar a curiosidade e o interrogatório de Violante e associa estas atitudes ao contexto católico através do termo “Cathechism” (90).

Ao longo da peça é referido o local público dos encontros secretos entre Isabella e Colonel Britton, que é também o espaço da felicidade de ambos materializada na união final do casal: o “Terreiro de Passa” (71, 81-

87, 91, 102, 104, 107-114), que alberga o Paço Real da Ribeira entre o século XVI e 1755, e é conhecido actualmente também como Praça do Comércio. A primeira cena de *Marplot* tem igualmente lugar no Terreiro do Paço, grafado sempre como “Terriera de Passa”, e é nesse centro financeiro da baixa de Lisboa que, quase no final da acção de *The Wonder*, a maioria das personagens se encontra e onde se dá o desenlace dos misteriosos enredos da peça, assumindo-se esse espaço masculino como centro de negócios, como Don Pedro sugere através do seguinte trocadilho: “What Business has my Daughter there?” (112). No final, os pais de Isabella e Violante seguem-nas em procissão familiar para o Terreiro do Paço, onde Don Pedro exige a presença do braço da lei patriarcal, ou seja, do alguazil, mas após os casamentos das filhas nesse local público Don Pedro e Don Lopez não possuem já qualquer poder sobre as jovens. Até certo ponto, o Terreiro do Paço está para Lisboa como o Royal Exchange para Londres, ambos locais de comércio, de encontros sociais, de negócios e de troca de informação, e espaços urbanos por excelência, sendo curioso que esse espaço londrino marque presença numa peça que dialoga intertextualmente com *The Wonder*, a comédia *Englishmen for My Money; Or A Woman Will Have Her Will* (c. 1598), de William Haughton, por nos já anteriormente estudada (Puga, “The Strangers” 261, 267-268).

A harmonia e a felicidade final de *The Wonder* são veiculadas pela *soundscape* urbana, ou seja pela agradável música que percorre Lisboa, e pela “country-dance” que antecede o cair do pano e durante a qual se ouve o som da guitarra portuguesa, enquanto Felix canta, em verso decassílabo, as virtudes de Violante e a igualdade dos géneros: “Man *has no Advantage but the Name*” (117), mensagem que continua no epílogo da comédia redigido pelo escritor Whig Ambrose Philips (1675-1749):

*But were Women all of my Opinion,
We'd soon shake off this false usurp'd Dominion;
We'd make the Tyrants own, that we cou'd prove,
As fit for other Business as for Love.*

[...]

What homage wou'd be paid to Petticoat!

[...]

Women are not so weak, whate'er Men prate [...]. (118)

Aderindo à ‘campanha’ feminista desenvolvida por autoras como Lady Mary Cudleigh (1656-1710), a Obra de Centlivre demonstra, durante os reinados de Ana (1702-1714) e de Jorge I (1714-1727), que as mulheres são capazes de guardar segredos e manter amizades leais tão bem quanto os homens, e que exibem várias outras virtudes para além das da castidade e do amor (Staves 158-159), podendo nós assim concluir que, tal como se verifica em *Englishmen for My Money*, o pai português, caracterizado como tirano, materialista e católico, é o único culpado pela infelicidade inicial da filha oprimida que se liberta habilmente do jugo patriarcal. No caso das peças da dramaturga, o facto de a acção ter lugar em Portugal enfatiza ironicamente, como já afirmámos, a suposta liberdade feminina inglesa e, logo, também a crítica social à realidade britânica, que é assim desfamiliarizada através da técnica do *déplacement*.

A acção de *The Wonder* assenta no conflito entre os interesses e os poderes de pais opressores (passado) e no final feliz dos dois jovens pares amorosos (presente-futuro), temáticas que são representadas pictoricamente na gravura do frontispício da primeira edição da peça, na qual (provavelmente) Felix, envergando vestes modernas, dirige Violante para longe do controlo do seu pai, vestido de forma antiquada e algo escura (ilustração reproduzida em Centlivre, *The Wonder* 36). A temática do poder informal da mulher portuguesa, cujo poder reside na manipulação do (seu) silêncio, encontra-se também presente no título e no enredo principal da comédia de que nos ocupamos, pois a figura feminina exerce o seu poder doméstico e na comunidade de forma silenciosa como conselheira, filha, herdeira, namorada e jovem amante, influenciando o seu futuro a partir dos bastidores até que adquire, à força, a liberdade que lhe dá uma voz (mais) audível. Esse poder informal é exercido de forma diferente de cultura para cultura, gozando, de acordo com as personagens, a mulher inglesa de uma liberdade maior que a portuguesa, tal como acontece em *Marplot in Lisbon*. Violante e Isabella sentem-se oprimidas pelo desmesurado código de honra masculino, e esse contexto português força a mulher lusa a planear estratégias para conseguir concretizar os seus planos.

O tema da ‘propriedade’ (terra e dinheiro) encontra-se também presente em *The Wonder*, a peça mais feminista de Centlivre (Rubik 106), através do materialismo paterno e do tema da herança de Violante, que o seu progenitor tenta usurpar ao servir-se da religião católica, até que o

enganador se transforma no enganado. O distanciamento físico e crítico por parte da autora e do público britânico face aos portugueses católicos e o jogo de espelhos que o binómio Portugal-Grã-Bretanha permite, contribuem, assim, para uma das características da obra de Centlivre estudadas por Finberg (xix, xxii), o recurso à literatura para comentar a condição feminina na sociedade augustana, acabando a maioria das personagens femininas da dramaturgia por agir por conta própria, como acontece com Isabinda em *The Busybody* quando o seu pai, habituado aos costumes espanhóis, a deseja retirar de Inglaterra para que esta não possa fazer uso das liberdades que o seu país confere às mulheres, planeando casá-la com um mercador espanhol e católico, enquanto a jovem prefere casar com um protestante. O jogo entre o claro e o escuro e entre o interior doméstico e o mundo exterior dos jardins, das ruas e das praças enfatiza também a divisão entre as personagens que sabem e as que ignoram, as que enganam e as que são enganadas, as que se podem mover livremente pelo labirinto/mapa da urbe e as que optam por se movimentar em segredo rumo à liberdade, pois, como informa o subtítulo da peça: *A Woman Keeps a Secret*.

Como já afirmámos, os enredos intrincados de *The Wonder* fazem eco da comédia espanhola de intriga/capa e espada (Loftis 70-75) e apresentam as diversas esferas dos papéis sociais associados ao género feminino e masculino, estes últimos representados como pólos relativamente opostos (Copeland 126), sobretudo no que diz respeito à luta entre os jovens enamorados e os pais/mentores tiranos. As protagonistas acabam por agir de forma activa e enganam os progenitores com a ajuda de amigos e pretendentes por entre (sub)enredos paralelos, duelos e jogos de identidade e disfarce, que, no período histórico em questão, consistem apenas na mulher que se veste de homem e não no inverso (O'Brien 184). *The Wonder*, *A Wife Well Managed* e *Marplot in Lisbon* podem, assim, ser analisadas à luz das palavras de Backscheider (83), Frushell (17), López (141) e Freeman (73-75) relativamente à experiência doméstica e profissional das escritoras inglesas dos séculos XVII-XVIII, sobretudo no que diz respeito às políticas de casamento, à aceitação social e às relações familiares, assumindo-se essas obras literárias femininas como formas de renegociar ficcional e comicamente a condição feminina na sociedade patriarcal ao carnavalizar (Bakhtin 19) os papéis sociais masculinos e femininos. Outra leitura da obra de que nos ocupamos é apresentada por Katharine M.

Rogers (100) ao afirmar que a dramaturga tem sucesso no mundo do teatro porque escreve como um homem. Já de acordo com López (141), a obra de Centlivre serve como modelo de referência para as obras de transição entre a tradição literária da Restauração e a “nova comédia” do século XVIII, que recupera tópicos renascentistas e do período da Restauração, como o casamento(-prisão) à força, e adota-os ao contexto social coevo, utilizando a escritora o espaço português em *Marplot*, *A Wife Well Managed* e *The Wonder* para criticar, através do riso e da capacidade que este tem de (re)educar (Buckley 15, 155, 191), a realidade britânica de forma distanciada com base no universo português.

A atitude patriarcal e opressora de Don Lopez em *Marplot* ecoa a da personagem homónima em *The Wonder*, enquanto as restantes personagens parecem indicar ao público (leitor) que o desejo, tema preponderante nas peças de Centlivre, é a força que as move, seja o desejo amoroso ou carnal, o de ser ouvido, o de enriquecer ou controlar, ou ainda o de liberdade.⁷ Se, como Turner (45) afirma, temáticas como o adultério e as intrigas amorosas e sexuais ficcionalizadas por uma mulher escandalizam algumas mentes mais conservadoras na Grã-Bretanha setecentista, talvez a localização da acção no Portugal distante e as personagens católicas esbatam essa reacção, enquanto Lock (96) conclui que a capital portuguesa é o palco da acção das três peças por duas razões:

Lisbon is first a more plausible locale for the comedy of intrigue. Tempers are hotter, honor more sacred, jealousy more rife than in London. Fathers and brothers exercise despotic control [...]. Disguise and secret assignation are accepted as everyday occurrences. [...] Centlivre also used the Lisbon setting to develop a contrast between English and Portuguese society and institutions. The personal and political liberty enjoyed by the English is set against the servile conditions of unenlightened despotism.

⁷ Num estudo sobre o enredo das peças de Centlivre, O'Brien (2001) relaciona a estrutura e o desenvolvimento do enredo com os temas quer da sorte e da busca do conhecimento, quer do desejo que a personagem tem de controlar o seu futuro.

Como já afirmámos (Puga, 2011), as filhas de pais portugueses são as últimas a rir, e quem ri por último ri melhor, como o público das peças de que nos ocupamos bem sabe, pois é efectivamente sempre ele a dar e a ouvir a última gargalhada. O facto de em *The Wonder* a acção dos três enredos ter lugar em Portugal, fora da Grã-Bretanha que idolatra a liberdade, permite a Centlivre, por um lado, criticar indirectamente e elogiar de forma directa os seus conterrâneos, e, por outro, satirizar aparentemente a opressão patriarcal na Península Ibérica católica perante a (suposta) liberdade individual britânica. Torna-se então claro que as mulheres lusas, como Isabella e Violante, conseguem manter segredos em nome da honra e em prol do género oprimido e assumem-se como líderes da intriga com um estatuto semelhante ao das personagens masculinas (Williamson 200, 203), recordando à mulher britânica, que ri e se revê também na condição feminina portuguesa, que não é (ainda) tão livre quanto (se) pensa.

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RESUMO

Na peça *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret*, publicada em 1714, Susanna Centlivre (c. 1667-1723) utiliza o espaço simbólico do Portugal católico e personagens lusas para colocar em palco um elaborado e cómico jogo de espelhos em torno do papel e do poder (in)formal da mulher nas sociedades britânica e portuguesa. O presente estudo analisa os estereótipos associados às nacionalidades portuguesa e britânica, o processo de hetero-caracterização, os conflitos de gerações e religioso, bem como a representação do género feminino de ambos os países, distanciamento geográfico-cultural que funciona como estratégia ao serviço da crítica à sociedade patriarcal europeia e à falta de liberdade que caracteriza a condição feminina.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Susanna Centlivre, *The Wonder*, temáticas portuguesas, Estudos sobre Género.

ABSTRACT

In her play *The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret* (1714), Susanna Centlivre (c. 1667-1723) uses the symbolical Portuguese space and Lusitanian characters to stage an elaborate and comical play of mirrors concerning both the female role and (in)formal power in British and Portuguese societies. This study deals with the British and Portuguese national stereotypes developed by the author, the process of hetero-characterization, the generation gap and religious conflicts, as well as with the representation of gender in both countries. This socio-geographic detachment is used as a strategy to criticize the patriarchal European society and to raise awareness concerning the lack of freedom that characterizes the female condition.

KEY WORDS

Susanna Centlivre, *The Wonder*, Portuguese themes, Gender Studies.

INTERVIEWS
DISCURSOS DIRECTOS

Interview with Jane Urquhart at her cottage at Loughbreeze Beach, Colborne, 14TH of July 2010, 10-13am.

Interviewer: Marijke Boucherie (ULICES - University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies)

Marijke Boucherie *Just checking the record-player.*

Jane Urquhart Okay. We can try a couple of questions and you can check it again if you want to?

MB. *Yes, thank you.*

JU. I once poured a full cup of coffee, cream and honey into my computer. (Laughter)

JU. That was, that was (laughing) the end of the computer!

MB. *Jane Urquhart, you began by writing poetry and when you were working on your first novel, The Whirlpool, I heard you saying in an interview that you were unsure about the genre of what you were doing and therefore referred to the manuscript as “the thing”. Can you elaborate on that?*

JU. Well, as you say I'd always — until that time — been writing in shorter verses, I'd been writing poetry with a great deal of pleasure but I found that I was moving towards narrative and found also that I wanted to write in voices other than my own. And then I began a series of short stories that were, in fact, related to images that my husband was drawing at the time, and I found that very satisfying as well but even the short stories were interlocked. If someone had told me that I was going to write a novel I wouldn't have believed them. I think I would have been frightened by the notion of the novel because it would have seemed like such a great big commitment; and because I had been attracted to these shorter — though interlocking — ways of expressing myself, and also because I was so interested in language and in poetic form and in style, really.

I had been attracted to a kind of prose poetry. So, essentially when I began what turned out to be *The Whirlpool* I thought I was writing poetry; I believed I was writing a prose poem, or a series of interlocking prose poems, not unlike some of the poems that were in the book of poetry that I had just finished at that time, which was called *The Little Flowers of Madame de Montespan*, which in turn went on to be a book entitled *Some Other Garden*. In the beginning what I was doing with *The Whirlpool*, was just taking images and perhaps fragments of experience and writing a few paragraphs about something that might or might not be connected to what I had written about the day before. So it was a very loose and unstructured approach. It began to structure itself as it went along, but even then I was unwilling or unable or, — in fact it never occurred to me to call it “a novel”, and so I didn’t. I referred to it in my mind as “the thing”. In the beginning I just convinced myself that I was writing a series of prose poems relating to a series of poems that I had already written about Niagara Falls and about my husband’s grandmother who had operated the funeral home there, and gradually as it grew — because it was starting to gain a bulk — I couldn’t really call it a series of prose poems anymore...but, because I didn’t know what else to call it, and the notion of a novel had never occurred to me, I just called it “the thing”.

MB. *When you describe the way, “the thing” — your novel — came into being as a kind of prose poem, I feel you’re still doing this. I feel your books live a lot from a voice, a cadence, a rhythm, that one of the structural principles of your book is rhythm ... a rhythm..., a cadence, a melody, and also analogies and echoes between images. Would you agree with that?*

JU. I do agree with that, but I also have to admit that I’m not really conscious that I’m doing this. I think I made reference earlier today to the one conscious echo that I placed in my previous novel (... I now can say “previous” [laugh] because there’s a new one coming out), *A Map of Glass*, and that was the calling of one of the main characters, Jerome, and having the Patinir painting of Saint Jerome with the lion be a central image in the novel. And then Jerome has an orange cat and I was astonished that no one — except for you — mentioned that in any of the writing that was done about the book! And yet, things that were completely unconscious on

my part were noted and commented on. Most of the time I don't ... I only know what I'm attracted to in terms of images, I don't really know what it is that is going to happen with that attraction.

MB. *You know what you are attracted to, when you start a novel. How does everything that you're attracted to come into being? Is it a detail, is it a ...*

JU. In my case it's usually a number of details or images, or even preoccupations that start to make themselves known to me as a possible narrative, I guess. Or, sometimes these preoccupations become exactly that: they become something I can't forget. So if I can't forget about the Mexican labourers I've seen in a field (I'm thinking of my current novel), or the butterfly tree that was at the end of this lane every summer when I was a child ... that ... or various lighthouse stories that may have come to my attention ... if I can't forget them, then I know that those things are insisting on being put in a novel.

MB. *This is wonderful...*

JU. I hope it's wonderful! It's almost like playing, it's a ... it's a great pleasure for me but I'm never sure whether it will work as a novel. It's something that I have to, um ... well, in fact it doesn't really interest me whether or not it's going to work when I begin to write it [laughs]. I'm just interested in what I'm writing about. So, for example, in the novel that I've just finished there is quite a long section about a lighthouse in Florida ... and you might wonder how that could possibly relate to South-western Ontario, which is where the book is set and ... Mexican labourers ... and it's as if I might have created the image in my own imagination, but I *saw* the lighthouse and I could not forget about this lighthouse. And so I knew that, somehow, it was significant to the novel.

MB. *You just said that you're not really interested if it's going to work or not: you have to do it. So writing is something you have to do.*

JU. Yes, it's something that I have to do, I feel ... empty without it. And it's really just a continuation of childhood activities ... I was a child that was solitary most of the time, at least during the winter and fall, the spring

months of the year. But I had very active summers that were not solitary; I was in the country with lots of cousins and lots of interaction. But I would say 70% to 80% of the rest of the time I was alone so I was constantly making things up, inventing imaginary playmates and that sort of thing.

MB. *This connects to something I'm always reminded of when reading your books. I always feel that your books are about inner space, the space of the imagination, where things can flow and exist without being immediately used for a purpose. Would you agree with that?*

JU. Well, yes, I think ... I believe that the books come from that space and in some cases, yes, they are ... I think you're right — I think that the inner lives of the characters are more important to me, more interesting to me than the outer lives of the characters [laugh]. So, the inner life of any main character is very dominant on the page ... and of course they — the characters — exist in *my* inner life, so it becomes a kind of play between me and them.

MB. *The dedication in A Map of Glass says: "To A.M., to the east of me and to A.M., to the west of me" and I wondered if the initials might refer to Alice Munro and Anne Michaels. This is my guess, because of the "inner space" I asked you about; because you and the two other writers seem somehow to preserve the mystery of life although without direct relation to a religious context.*

JU. You ... you're correct, in that those two initials are terribly important to me in terms of relationships that I have with people, and among those people are the writers that you've mentioned. And then of course there's Alistair Macleod, who's even further east. But one of the people I had in mind was a visual artist called Allan Mackay who ... who is tremendously interesting and who also ... right in the middle of the time that I was writing *A Map of Glass*, included me in a project where we spent some time in The Fryfogel Inn, a historic site which, as you know, appears in *A Map of Glass*. This was like a little gift in the middle of the book, to be presented with this project. I ... in fact, don't know Allan all that well, but his works of art are very resonant and profound and he's an interesting thinker. So he was in that collection of people whose initials are A.M. I think it's fascinating in a way how many there are! And so rather than list

them all I just thought “to the east of me and to the west of me” — and that’s a very Canadian thought, I now realize, because we think “east / west”.

MB. *Yes?*

JU. That’s the way we Canadians think here geographically. We really ... I mean, people talk about us as thinking “north”, but we don’t, because our cities are strung like beads across the American border — ALONG the American border — and therefore, whenever we’re going anywhere to visit anybody we’re usually either going east or we’re going west.

MB. *You speak about being surrounded or inspired by other artists and in your books this is very visible. In all your books there are visual artists, there are poets (Browning) and ... I have many questions here, but the first one is: how are other artists important to you as a writer? And secondly: in how far are CANADIAN writers and artists important to you, in your writing? Or is this not a necessary distinction to make?*

JU. Well, I’ll begin with the whole notion of artists. And I’ll start with visual artists. Um ... visual artists have been ... I’ve been married to two of them, that’s the first thing. My first husband was a young and exciting visual artist who died at a very early age, and for the last, who knows how many years, thirty I guess — more than thirty! — I’ve been married to Tony Urquhart, who’s a well known Canadian artist.

I think that visual art is *really* important to me as a writer; partially because visual arts have taught me how to see and creating a visual world on a page is one of the things that I enjoy most of all. This has always been important to me as a reader, as well, the ability to see what happens when we read a book, and what we visualize when we read a book. So, for example, when I taught Creative Writing (which I did a couple of times — I haven’t done it much), I would always ask the students to write a description of some house that is well known in literature, *Wuthering Heights* for example: the inside of one room of *Wuthering Heights*, the central room where things happen. And in each case, every time I did this, each student would write a different description, because the way we visualize what we read is that we pick images from our own memory, on the one hand, and we construct other images that sometimes come out of nowhere, and we

combine them, I think — to make the literary rooms we walk through, and the literary landscapes that we look at. So of all the artists, visual artists are terribly important because they not only render the perceived world, but they invent other visual worlds that don't necessarily exist. And that whole process is fascinating to me. I have no desire to paint beyond the odd watercolour now and then, or to draw, but I like the process, I like the way of thinking that goes hand in hand with visual art ... and the way of seeing and the combination of those two things ... and thinking visually just seems miraculously wonderful to me.

Whether or not these artists are Canadian, is in the case of visual art — interestingly — not as important to me as is the literary art. I'm very interested in, I would say, Western Art. Obviously I'm fascinated by Asian art as well but I don't *know it*, I don't feel as intimate with it as I do with Western Art, and so it doesn't necessarily affect what I do, though I admire enormously art from anywhere. But ... I was, and continue to be, I think, very affected by what has happened in Canadian Literature. And ... Canada is a wonderful place to be, we're very privileged at this moment of time because Canadian Literature is also WORLD Literature! So we have authors such as Alice Munro, who are world class authors, but we also have people like Rohinton Mistry or Dionne Brand who were born and brought up somewhere else, who bring a whole new perspective and yet are absolutely Canadian authors. And so that combination of the national and international happened ... and began to flourish about the time that I began to know that I was going to be a writer for the rest of my life, whether I was to be published or not, [laughs] was ... quite miraculous and wonderful for me.

MB. Yes... there's definitely something wonderful about Canadian Literature: what you just described, this coming together of many worlds. There is space for many different worlds. So, your books are very visual and, as I said before, I would like myself or someone else, to do a study on the OBJECTS in your books. You know, the small visual details, small concrete details, which sometimes connect the different parts of your books ... I want to ask specifically ... because the conversation reminded me of it: of the character ... the painter who paints over what he paints, ...

JU. Oh, Austin Fraser in *The Underpainter*.

MB. *Yes! The Underpainter, yes yes, so sorry! [laughs]*

This is an amazing book; can you talk a little bit about this? The artist painting realistically what he sees, what he remembers, and then painting it over so it can't be seen?

JU. Yes that ... that book was ... very important to me because, apart from everything else, it was written from a masculine point of view. And written in the first person! I began writing it in the second person, from a masculine point of view, but found that I needed to get much closer to the character in order to be able to really see through his eyes, and so I changed it to the first person ... so I had to use the word "I" and "me" and, uh ... I, I believe that it was an investigation in some way, looking back now ..., of the ... the masculine in all of us, really. The patriarchal, the controlling ... um, the ... the part of us that makes the rules... the part of us that obfuscates things. To be fair, one need not necessarily be a man to have that operating with a great deal of enthusiasm in one's psyche. And so it wasn't ... it wasn't really an exploration of men and why they do the things they do, as much as it was an exploration of this masculine principle, this whole ... [sigh] I suppose, in a way, the kind of opposite of ... the way I wanted to live. And not really a judgemental exploration either. I became quite fond of the character as I moved through the process of building his character, but then other people have told me that they were not as fond of him as I was [laughs]. But, while exploring this masculine principle — for want of a better way of saying it — through the eyes of an artist, I realized that when a man leaves the room, or when a man like HIM leaves the room, *he leaves the room*, he's gone. When a woman leaves the room, she usually takes quite a lot of the room with her.

MB. *That's interesting...*

JU. And, therefore, men are driven, to a certain extent, or the masculine principle is about being driven to such an extent that things are discarded and left behind or, I suppose, painted out. So that, while a woman will be reflecting about the experience that has just taken place, a man will be having another experience [laughs] at the time the woman is reflecting.

And, and so, I guess that's why I decided to have him paint out his pictures which were all about memory ... and then, of course, to reconstruct them again, through the process of writing this narrative.

MB. *Memory comes back in all your books, doesn't it?*

JU. Well, yes.

MB. *For instance, in your last book, A Map of Glass [the very last one which is coming out next month, Sanctuary Line, I haven't read of course] there is the whole process of memory of the character Sylvia. At a certain point she says: "I scrape my memory like a glacier". She has memories that are not shared by other characters, and she is thought to invent them and to hallucinate. Tell me about this.*

JU. I think, and this is something else that I have said to students — again during these brief periods of time in which I've been teaching Creative Writing, — there is a rule that is often stated in Creative Writing classes, and that is that one has to write about what one KNOWS. And... I agree with that, but I think you can know something that you invent as intimately as you can know something that exists in the so-called "real world"...

MB. *Interesting...*

JU. And so your inner life can be *as known* to you as any kind of outer life. And in some cases, with some people, their inner life is *much better known* to them than what we would consider to be daily life.

MB. *Speaking of memory, in a Map of Glass, a character says that perhaps to live is an exercise in forgetting. Do you remember that?*

JU. I do

MB. *Yes?*

JU. The character Sylvia said that. And I think she said that because in *A Map of Glass* I was thinking about forgetting as well as memory... because each of the characters, each of the main characters has some kind of "disability" — I hate that word — a condition, as I called it in the book.

And of course her lover forgets, in an extreme way. Now of course lovers can often forget but this lover really forgot, he forgot everything and that seemed to me to be an exaggeration of what can happen anyway with the passage of time in relationships or with almost anything. Things become indistinct if they don't disappear altogether. And Sylvia was the kind of character for whom time did not diminish things. So it would have been an observation she was making about other people's lives, not her own. About how staying alive essentially is an exercise in forgetting which to a great extent is true I think.

MB. *Sylvia is extremely resistant to change.*

JU. That's right but even with that resistance to change and with her insistence on keeping things the same, change, of course, started to take place because, again, one can't control it.

MB. *We are talking about the character Sylvia in a Map of Glass but it seems to me that she returns in different shapes in all your books. You say of this character that she is "emplaced" and I think that this sense of emplacement in the same country, the same landscape, the same house, among the same objects comes back in your novels and in ...*

JU. And in my life...

MB. *And in your life. (Laughter) It seems to be important.*

JU. Well, to me, it has to do with intimacy.

MB. *Yes, yes.*

JU. I believe that in my own life intimacy is tremendously important and it goes beyond the kind of intimacy that people immediately assume connects to human relationships. In fact, when I think of intimacy, I think about the spoon in my hand, I think about the glass I am holding; for instance, this glass, right here, I remember my uncles drinking beer out of these glasses when I was 7 years old; and I also remember that my mother told me that these glasses came from the place where we lived in the North. When she no longer wanted these glasses in our house in Toronto she brought them down to this summer place where you and I are sitting right

now. So the glass itself has a whole narrative associated with it. It's a bit like something else my mother told me. When she was in grade school she was asked to write the life history of the penny.

MB. *Yes?*

JU. It's a bit like that but I think there is more to it, because the penny is not necessarily something with which a particular individual is intimate, not **that** particular penny: But I am very interested in emplacement, as you say; the fact that things can remain the same, the actual objects can remain in place while the lives change. The interior of rooms can remain static while what happens in those rooms is constantly changing.

It's fascinating to me that after I finished writing *A Map of Glass* my mother died and when my mother died I was forced for the first time in my life to think about the maintenance of a house and the fact that without maintenance things *don't* remain the same.

MB. *Yes.*

JU. because the house in which she died and the house which is now my house had not been maintained for a number of years and suddenly, for the first time, I was struck by the notion that a house which seemed to me so permanent and so emplaced was nevertheless a great, big decaying box. And I had never thought about that before. And I had lived for six decades before having to consider that! And for the first time I thought, Gosh! You know, if you leave them alone they will really eventually fall down. So nothing, not even a physical structure is permanently emplaced, and that is what I had to eventually admit.

MB. *It's strange what you say because, at the same time, loss is a great theme and runs through all your books.*

JU. Yes.

I think loss, and the recapturing of events, places, relationships... is a great deal of what drives a number of authors to the page. I believe that in a sense it is a way of recapturing things. (*telephone rings*: JU. just ignore that)

MB. *I was thinking of Proust suddenly and it is not the first time that I think of Proust when I read your books, also because of the kind of breath of style, the kind of way the style moves... there is a feeling of books where loss can, as it were, exist. I am very often reminded when reading your books of Winnicott's expression "holding environment" as if your writing was meant to contain loss... but this is already my interpretation...*

JU. No, I am just thinking about that right now while we are talking.

Certainly it is at least partly a response to loss ... and in that way contains it, names it, in a sense. And when I say "a response to loss" I say that in a personal, known way. The characters always experience loss themselves: I think that narrative often moves toward that eventuality. But the impulse, again, is to try to capture something that has been lost. And so Loss is a motivating factor as well as something that is being examined and expressed.

MB. *Yes. I'm returning to a Map of Glass because it is so near me. It begins with a four page long, let's say, "fugue of loss". The character dies, he gradually forgets everything and he dies. And in the last sentence the dying character says something like this: 'I have lost everything' and then the chapter concludes. ... "And there is nobody to hear his voice, nobody at all." But then the whole book, of course, is about what the dead man forgot.*

JU. So again, the opening is, I suppose, ... a statement of intent, although I had never thought about it that way before (*Laughter*). When I began to write that section it happened very, very quickly. I saw everything that was going on, I ... I ... knew exactly where the character was and I could see the branches around him and I could see the snow and I could see the tumbled fence, I could see everything. What I now understand to a certain extent is that it was also an expression of intent, a description of how things would come very close to him but he would be unable to put out his hand and touch them or grasp them. Memories would start to come and words, words had already disappeared for him at the opening of the book, but he had fragments of words. So fragmentation was very much on my mind at that point and the idea that you could take that fragmented vessel that was his mind at the time and reconstruct everything that had once been there.

MB. *You were saying you saw everything very clearly when you started to write that book. Can you explain a little bit how you compose a book, how you see a part and how the rest then comes along?*

JU. I am trying to remember how *A Map of Glass* began. It began certainly with that passage which was written, in a sense, independent of what was going to follow even though it was central to that which would follow. I mean I really had no notion of who he was, when I wrote that opening, “fugue” as you call it. But the rest of the book would be an effort to try and find out who he was and why he was where he was. It is often what happens to me: I will be presented with something or someone in my mind and it will be kind of unfocused and vague and I am curious about it and I want to know who he is and what has happened to him in the same way that, hopefully, a reader will later want to know. I’m not really the most energetic person so, in a way, I think that what keeps me moving through a book is this desire to understand what it is that is taking shape in my mind, a desire to clarify.

MB. *Yes, that’s perhaps the reason why the reader really follows a process of discovery of unveiling.*

JU. And that’s essentially what I’m out to. I suppose a bit like an exercise in coming to consciousness, because I really am so unconscious: in the beginning, I am not aware of plot or structure or even characterisation when I’m writing, certainly not in the first draft, anyway. I become more aware when I am working on subsequent drafts but when I am in the compositional stage I have to let the book take me over and I have to believe that it will. So far, [touching wood here] I haven’t begun anything that I haven’t finished.

MB. *So you say part of the process is unconscious, things are unconscious and you make them conscious through writing.*

JU. Yes, by going back.

MB. *By going along...*

JU. In the beginning the process itself is quite fragmented in the sense that I might write a couple of pages and then go away and do other things

for 2-3 weeks and then come back to it and do a little more. But as time passes I become more and more committed so that, in a way it's like a relationship, perhaps you meet someone and you like them and you spend a little bit of time with them and then you go away for a long period of time, you come back, you meet them again, you spend a slightly longer period of time with them and then you want to see them again... within a shorter period of time and then eventually in a fully significant relationship you want to see that person often and on a daily basis. So that's really what happens with me and a novel. In the beginning, I am curious, but I have really got to know it yet, so I spend time doing other things but I would say that by the time that I am about a hundred pages in, I want to see that novel every day.

MB. OK. OK.

There were two questions that I asked you in Lisbon and I want to ask them again. One is about intimacy. You just spoke about intimacy in a very broad sense, but in your books, the way you render intimacy between a man and a woman appears to me to be very beautiful, impressive and very rare. How do you do it? How do you manage to capture the way a woman may love a man and at the same time resent the love she feels because of the freedom she loses in wholly surrendering to her love.

JU. Well, physical love to me seems to be one of the great miracles of human existence and yes, I'm also insistent on true intimacy. I think intimate physical love is rare enough or magical enough that in a sense it is almost spiritual.

MB. Yes.

JU. The word casual seems to me to be almost a brutal word in this context, and in fact if you push that word far enough it becomes casualty which I think is an interesting progression of meaning. For an intimate physical life to take place — for someone like me and by extension for my characters, my female characters anyway — it has to be a fully intimate experience and — it has to be an experience that becomes known while at the same time excitingly different under different occasions. This knowing ... essentially, in a really full physical relationship you know another person's body better than you know your own.

MB. *Yes, that's true.*

JU. And I likely wouldn't have been consciously aware of that had I not had someone's body that I knew that well removed from my life in a particularly violent way at a very early age. And so it is really quite clear to me how special and rare that kind of knowledge is and also irreplaceable in many ways, so that in all of the silly rumours that sort of float around the notion of a woman who is a widow being someone who is kind of on prowl looking for any piece of flesh in the store, is ridiculous because, of course, after a loss like that, it would be a known landscape that would be looked for. I think physical love is a very, very meaningful part of our lives and one that, as you say, has not often been fully investigated from a feminine point of view.

MB. *No. Thank you. That was beautiful.*

Another question I MUST ask because it is so visible in everything you write. In almost every book you write there is a character that is special, odd; a character that refuses or cannot cope with the rules of common sense. In The Whirlpool there is this little boy who does not speak; there is Tilman in the Stone Carvers, there is Sylvia and her condition in A Map of Glass... and this attracts me immensely in your books. How do you know about these people, these characters, how do you create them, how do you understand them?

JU. I think of those characters as the animating spirits of my novel. It really doesn't matter which subject may have been taken up by me for the novel or which series of subjects... that little animating spirit will always walk into the narrative even if I don't invite him or her to enter. I think those vital characters may represent the creative life itself... I believe that's what it is, who they are. But, again, I would never think about that consciously when I am working. I'm thinking about that now because you've asked me but, in hindsight, I believe that Tilman, or "the boy" in "The Whirlpool" have something to do with the creative life spirit that enters me — and hopefully the book — in some way.

MB. *When you were in Lisbon I asked you if your books were about creativity and you were quite adamant and you said: "I cannot answer that question", but now, in a sense you did.*

JU. Yes, yes. I guess the reason I thought I could not answer was because the question seemed to me to be about a conscious decision to make my books about creativity, whereas, now, I see those characters, not me, as the enablers. They're the ones who allow the book to happen. In some cases they're main characters, but not always. For example, you mentioned Tilman. At first he seemed to be a very minor character in the *Stone Carvers*. He insisted, however, on more space (laughter) and he becomes a very memorable character. But he wasn't the main character. To a great degree a character like Tilman is also the character who brings the disparate parts of the novel together.

MB. *Just — when you spoke about intimacy — you used the word “spiritual,” and when I’m reading your books I feel that there is a spiritual dimension that is growing. In your last book (Map of Glass) it’s there even in a visible way: there’s a prayer in it, there’s a whole dimension of a kind of transcendence... I don’t know how to say it otherwise. Are you aware of that?*

JU. I've always been attracted to Saints like Jerome... to the various manifestations, shall we say, of my known spiritual world, which would of course be Christianity. I am not a practitioner, I'm not even sure that I'm a believer, but I find the manifestation of that kind of spirituality in art and narrative to be extremely moving because sacred art can only be motivated by something beyond itself; it's not about self aggrandizement, it's not about money, it's certainly not about business. When you think about all the people who worked on Chartres Cathedral, for example, that they didn't even get to sign their names, and, in some cases, they didn't live to see the completion of the work they'd been doing on what would become one of the greatest works of art in the world! So, I — I'm very attracted to the idea of entering a work of art without bringing a lot of ego baggage with one. It's something that I try to do, and probably I fail miserably. But some kind of spirituality in a work of art is lovely not only because that work relates to something beyond itself but also because it allows — it's permissive and inclusive in a way that it might not have been if it were ego driven, or driven by some other factor. So, yes, I love stained glass windows, I love reliquaries, I love religious painting, I love all of that. And I think that great literature does have a spiritual component. When

you finish reading a book that is deeply moving and haunting, you know that that book would have been (or would have had to be) written: it *had* to be written regardless of circumstances surrounding the author.

MB. *Yes, that's what you said in the beginning, that something has to be written.*

JU. Yes, so that the author is almost irrelevant in a way, the book needed to be written and it was there to be written.

MB. *Thank you.*

Before we started the interview you were speaking about how your personal life — taking care of children and being alone in the house... — helped you to become a writer; they are or were the circumstances that perhaps made you a writer. Can you speak a little about this?

JU. When I married my husband — to whom I've been married now to for almost 35 years — he was living alone with two children who were teenaged girls and I was very young myself. He also had two other children who lived with their mother and who visited on weekends. These children had not had a lot of domestic attention — they had had a lot of love, but they hadn't had much of the kind of care that we think about as being part of the daily life of children. And so, there were things that needed to be done. And likely, that was part of the attraction for me, because I was recently widowed and I therefore was kind of cast adrift in a sense, and this gave me some sort of purpose. And also I was young enough that I didn't have to take on some kind of judgmental, parental, older person role with these children. I could look after them, I could do their washing, I could talk to them, I could have fun with them, cook for them, and at the same time not have to carry either the responsibility, really — or, the notion that there should be any discipline involved. So it was a very happy time, in fact, and at the same time I needed — though I may not have known that I needed it — I needed a world of my own, a singular world that, in the face of this collective world, which was kind of unlike any world I'd lived in before, I needed a singular world; and as a result when the house emptied — which it did every day because people went to school — and even after I had Emily (she was there but she claims I made her nap every day for ten hours), suddenly this interior domestic space became all mine

and there was a sense of enormous freedom, which I would not have had, had I been attached to any kind of outside distraction; and I could do anything I wanted, really, as long as I managed to struggle down to the washing machine. And so I spent a lot of time daydreaming, and a lot of time inventing things, listening to old records, old Broadway musical records and things like that; and thinking about my own childhood, and thinking about — I had not many ambitions by the way, none, I had no ambitions, which in itself was a kind of freedom, I now think. And so as a kind of almost recreational activity I began to write every day; and I had written as a teenager as well, and I had written as a young — young, young woman, I'd written a lot of love poetry and things like that, when I was with my first husband in the beginning, but as we were both (and speaking of my first husband), as a couple we were trying to organize our lives and get started in life, gradually that writing faded away. And of course I was writing papers for university and that sort of thing — although I have to say that I didn't take any of that with the kind of seriousness that I should have, likely. What happened when I was with Tony, then, my second husband, was that there was a space of time where I was tied to the domestic chores of the house on the one hand, but my mind was not tied at all, and I think that's when — perhaps a little animated person in me started to flourish. And again, as I say, completely independent of any kind of ambition.

MB. Please continue...

JU. I would never have believed at that time that my books, would ever — my books, I didn't even think about them as books [laughs] — just what I was writing down — I would never have believed that what I was writing down would ever develop into anything that was out there, in the outside world. I just — if someone would have told me that my books were going to be published in other countries, etc. I would have been dumbfounded, I would not have believed it, I would have thought it was nonsense.

MB. And how is it to receive this feedback from your readers? Is it important?

JU. It is important, but it doesn't really change what it is that drives me back to the desk. It's important in the same way that bringing home your report card from school [laughs] is important — I'd say that I'm more

concerned about the reaction of the people around me, and the people I'm close to, and the people who have my best interests at heart, than I am about what this means in terms of the work. Because I can only write what I can write, I can't change it. And I know I can't — so I'm kind of immune in a way to whatever is being said in the outside world, simply because, as I've said, the act is so unconscious that I wouldn't have any idea how to go back inside it and change it, I don't feel that I could do that. And so, obviously I'm pleased by positive reactions, and mildly concerned about negative reactions — neither one of them really affect me to a great degree, not because I'm above praise or condemnation, simply because I wouldn't know how to go in there and move things around to please those who feel the writing should be different, or go back and continue to do whatever it is that I do that pleases those who like the work the way it is.

MB. Before we finish this interview: is there one of your books that you particularly like, or one of your books that you feel that is not sufficiently loved by your readers, or by the critics?

JU. I would say — well those are maybe two different things...

MB. Yes, they are two questions.

JU. Well, first, is there one of my books that I particularly like? ... I love them all. I — I can't think of one that I like more than another, to be quite honest. Of course it is always the most recent one, the one that I'm most familiar with, that I feel closest to. But, oddly, it's also the one I'm usually the least sure of — as if it hasn't quite had time to set.

But, if there's one book that I feel has not received sufficient attention, that book would be *Changing Heaven*.

MB. Yes, I was going to talk to you about Changing Heaven.

JU. I am very fond of that book. I go back to it every now and then. I approach my published works with a lot of trepidation, because I'm terrified of opening to, say, page 112 and thinking "Oh God, I wish I hadn't written that sentence!" But so far that hasn't happened. But with *Changing Heaven*, I find it to be a whimsical sort of book —

MB. *Yes, yes, and the idea is brilliant... I mean, you know, having Emily Brontë as a character.*

JU. It was another one of *those* times, I was completely obsessed by... especially Emily Brontë at that moment, and also, very interested in the history of art. And I knew I had to bring those two things together, somehow, in a novel. I just allowed myself every possible freedom when I was writing that book; and I had a wonderful time writing it. Tony and I spent six months on the Yorkshire Moors as well, which was a great bonus.

MB. *And you seem to know everything about meteorology, I mean, the information about winds and everything in Changing Heaven is impressive —*

JU. Yes that — I was very interested in wind. I was unprepared, shall we say, for the wind up there on the moors in Yorkshire, it was such an insistent force, it was always there, and it was always rattling the windows and drubbing down the chimney and it was never quiet. It was like a physical presence that wound its way around and insinuated itself into your life, and you could not ignore it. So, therefore you had to get interested in it, since it was always demanding your attention. And eventually it became a person; it became a character in the book. I did a lot of reading about wind and about the Beaufort Wind Scale, one of the world's great metaphors — this wind scale... what can be done under varying conditions of wind and weather. Weather is one of the more interesting things on the planet and yet is considered to be also one of the most banal subjects of conversation, which is a mystifying combination.

MB. *But in almost — in all of your books, there are certain things you really go into, you really research — I'm thinking about portrait and arts décoratifs in The Underpainter; so how do you do this research? In each novel, you become a researcher on a particular item.*

JU. Yes, I do. In some novels more than others. Certainly *The Underpainter* was a case in point because I needed to learn about porcelain and china; and I, who had never been interested in that, became *completely* obsessed and ended up demanding sets of porcelain du Sèvres for Christmas, which was impossible to obtain because it's too expensive. But I really wanted a

collection myself, I could feel it in me, I wanted to start collecting; and yet, when the book was over, the desire to collect rare and expensive porcelain disappeared. It's almost as though you're in a particular ecological zone when you're writing a novel, everything around you starts to become pregnant with meaning. I was very interested, went to the Sèvres factory and museum in Paris and I spent a lot of time in the Gardiner Museum in Toronto, — which you should visit if you get a chance, but you probably won't have a chance — the Gardiner Museum, across from the Royal Ontario Museum, has a wonderful, wonderful collection of porcelain. I became extremely interested in those tiny little landscapes that are painted on the porcelain — and then, by extension, I began to think again about the kind of art that is created not for the ego, not to become one of the greatest and most famous artists, but for reasons other than the self. What makes a huge Tintoretto so much more important than a tiny landscape painted on a cup?

MB. *And to finish, can you say something about your novel that is coming out next month? Or do you prefer not to?*

JU. No, I can say something about it. Again, because it hasn't really settled for me yet, it's hard for me to say what it was that drove me to write that particular novel. It is called *Sanctuary Line*, and I think it has something to do with looking back, from this stage, on childhood — and what childhood means to us when we get here, which is a long way away from that. I believe that must have something to do with it, coupled with the fact that I myself have moved back into my childhood landscape. This perhaps would be what an academic or critic may call my — a more “realistic book,” in the sense that it is set in the present — the *now* of the book, the big event of the book is set in the 1980s, and the narrator is narrating — is looking back on that event, so the actual time of the book is right now. I have not done that too often, although it was certainly an element in *A Map of Glass* so I'd been moving in that direction. But I've found this most recent book tremendously — not really upsetting — but moving, in a way, to write — I've rarely been as emotionally affected while I was writing a book: I couldn't read it aloud, for example.

MB. *That's important.*

JU. I think it must be important. It felt — and this is an odd word — it felt cellular, and I don't mean that in terms of telephones, I mean, it felt as if it was coming out of my own self, my own muscles and bones.

MB. *Yes, yes. I understand.*

*Is there a question I didn't ask that you would like me to ask you?
Or a critic, or anyone?*

JU. Gosh... [pause].

MB. *Something you would like to say about who you are, what you are, what your books are...about who you are when you're not writing your books...*

JU. Well, I think I would like to go back to that whole notion of external reactions, and how for me it's important to get to the place, (nobody gets there fully, but I'm working on getting much closer) where I don't trust either the positive or the negative external reactions in that I realize that neither matters. I'm extremely gratified by attention, and certainly by new readers who are, perhaps, not always likely to have read a book like mine before, I find that very gratifying. It's still important to remember, however, that nobody knows for sure whether or not something deeply important has been created. I think time is the only thing that can tell us that and we are not going to be here to receive the news. Only artists have the luxury of knowing that success or lack of success during their lifetime can be quite inconsequential except, of course, in the most practical of ways. I often quote the Canadian poet Joe Rosenblatt who once told me "Time is the great anthologist."

MB. *Yes, that comes back in A Map of Glass. So, what you are saying is that the important thing is the space in your mind and the writing connected to it.*

JU. Yes...I think that the important thing to me is that, not only am I permitted to continue to have access to my own inner life, but that something in my work will encourage other people to both understand how important inner life is, and to feel free to inhabit their own inner life.

*MB. I think this is the perfect conclusion. Thank you very, very much,
Jane Urquhart.*

JU. Thank you, it was great!

REVIEWS
RELEITURAS

Ana Raquel Lourenço Fernandes. *What about the Rogue? Survival and Metamorphosis in Contemporary British Literature and Culture*

Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2011

What about the Rogue? Survival and Metamorphosis in Contemporary British Literature and Culture é um livro sobre uma figura que nos assalta e desconcerta: o *rogue*.¹ É esta a designação recuperada e problematizada pela autora para examinar uma personagem que persiste e sobrevive (eu direi, de forma impertinente) ao longo da história da literatura britânica. Não havendo uma tradução directa do termo em português, esta personagem deve ser entendida como um anti-herói que habita as margens sociais e que pode ser traduzida por um largo espectro de figuras — de delinquentes e rufiões a velhacos e vigaristas. A personagem do *rogue* faz parte de uma linhagem literária com ligações directas à figura do *pícaro* e à literatura picaresca do Século de Ouro espanhol. A necessidade de analisar os ascendentes desta personagem à luz de uma perspectiva comparatista é anunciada, na introdução do volume, pela autora, no momento em que é clarificada e contextualizada a abordagem feita a esta personagem. Apesar do — e precisamente devido ao — seu carácter marginal — o *rogue* é um sobrevivente histórico na literatura britânica. Na figura do *rogue* projectamos ansiedades que não são novas, mas que são ressuscitadas e recuperadas à medida que nos confrontamos com novas realidades socio-económicas e nos deparamos com transformações colectivas.

¹ Em Setembro de 2011, fui convidada a apresentar o livro *What about the Rogue? Survival and Metamorphosis in Contemporary British Literature and Culture* de Ana Raquel Fernandes, na sessão pública de lançamento deste volume, que teve lugar na Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa. Desta apresentação resulta o texto aqui publicado.

Ana Raquel Fernandes nota que, apesar deste processo de sobrevivência e de metamorfose, há hiatos óbvios e significativos no curso da literatura britânica no que toca a presença e a visibilidade desta personagem. Assim, durante o período modernista, especificamente, a autora considera haver um desinteresse geral pela figura *rogue*. O anti-herói modernista é, nesta perspectiva, mais preocupado com o mundo interior porque advém, tendencialmente, de uma classe privilegiada. Ao contrário do anti-herói modernista, o *rogue* é apresentado como uma figura cujas origens são normalmente associadas às classes chamadas “baixas” da sociedade britânica, uma figura que incorpora directamente as consequências de crises sociais e económicas. É uma personagem, cuja marginalidade evidencia as disparidades entre a estrutura social e as aspirações individuais dos seus elementos.

O foco deste estudo é claro e os seus objectivos precisos. A autora dedica particular atenção às mutações desta personagem durante a segunda metade do século XX até aos dias de hoje, tentando compreender o significado e as formas assumidas por essa sobrevivência. No espaço oferecido para a apresentação de um livro, é sempre difícil fazer justiça a um trabalho como este. O livro em questão resulta de um longo e rigoroso período de pesquisa e apresenta uma versão revista da tese de doutoramento da autora. A sua publicação vem em boa hora: num período de grave crise financeira — com sérias repercussões económicas, sociais, e políticas — examinar uma personagem como o *rogue* no contexto britânico (onde os recentes motins ou distúrbios falam de problemas profundos, ainda por resolver) é uma tarefa importante. Este livro convida-nos (ou, pelo menos, convidou-me a mim) a pensar nos equivalentes dessa personagem por toda a literatura Europeia, senão pelo mundo. Isto porque o *rogue* faz tudo aquilo que nos dizem que não é permitido fazer em momentos de crise: põe em causa os nossos auto-retratos, questiona as nossas posições, interroga a sociedade que construímos e que consideramos democrática. Este tipo de interrogação é indispensável. Hoje, mais do que nunca.

What about the Rogue? é dividido em três extensos capítulos, acompanhados de uma introdução e de uma conclusão. Para além de vários apêndices e de uma bibliografia cuidadosamente organizada, a autora inclui ainda, como complemento ao texto principal, uma entrevista com David Lodge sobre a figura do *rogue* e da sua importância na literatura contem-

porânea. O primeiro capítulo examina, assim, as origens e transfigurações do *rogue* durante os séculos XVI e XVII sugerindo ainda, a partir de Northop Frye, a centralidade desta personagem na ficção dos séculos XVIII e XIX e a sua influência no modo irônico que marca o século XX. Este capítulo apresenta ainda paralelos importantes entre a figura do *rogue* e o conceito norte-americano de *confidence man*. O segundo capítulo parte da análise de seis romances para observar, aprofundadamente, a sobrevivência desta figura na segunda parte do século XX. Joyce Cary's *The Horse's Mouth* (1944) e Iris Murdoch's *Under the Net* (1954) apresentam a figura do *rogue* como artista, capaz de interrogar simultaneamente conjecturas estéticas e sociais. John Wain's *Hurry on Down* (1953), Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954) John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957), Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958), romances hoje pouco estudados, revelam aqui muito eficazmente a versatilidade do *rogue*: o modo como esta figura personifica o desânimo decorrente do pós-guerra e as novas formas de estratificação social e cultural que caracterizam os anos cinquenta na Grã-Bretanha.

A adaptação desta ficção ao cinema da nova vaga é examinada numa subsecção deste capítulo, onde a autora discute o filme de Jack Clayton's *Room at the Top* (1958) e o filme de Karel Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960). A autora reforça esta análise intermedial, discutindo várias adaptações e *remakes* da peça de teatro radiofónica *Alfie Elkins and His Little Life* (1962), revelando as mutações sociais associadas a esta personagem de 1960 a 2000. O terceiro capítulo examina a ficção produzida nas duas últimas décadas do século XX e início do século XXI, nomeadamente através de várias obras de Martin Amis e Irvine Welsh. Nos romances destes autores, especialmente *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984), *London Fields* (1989) and *Yellow Dog* (2003) de Martin Amis e na triologia de Welsh, constituída por *Trainspotting* (1993), *Glue* (2001) e *Porno* (2002), a representação do *rogue* permite um questionamento incisivo de valores e práticas da sociedade contemporânea.

Para além de oferecer uma revisão dos vários capítulos, a conclusão aponta para importantes debates, por vezes implicitamente. Entre estes, vale a pena discutir, por exemplo, o modo como deveremos caracterizar o *rogue* contemporâneo: fará sentido dizer que o *rogue* contemporâneo, exemplificado pela figura do *Alfie* do novo milénio, não pertence a qualquer

classe social? Ou será que, pelo contrário, não é o próprio *rogue* contemporâneo que é vigarizado e levado a crer que habita uma sociedade desprovida de classes, como é proposto pelo discurso político desde os anos 80? Estas nuances não são aprofundadas no livro, mas o livro ajuda-nos a pensar sobre elas e sobre os importantes debates que suscitam. Isto porque, este estudo conversa connosco de forma solta, confiante no seu contributo: é um livro dialogante, cuja leitura não é totalitária, isto é, não nos obriga a subscrever todas as palavras, conceitos ou visões da autora para compreendermos muitos dos seus valiosos argumentos. É desta mesma forma que a conclusão do livro sugere espaços para pesquisa futura: o *rogue* no feminino dentro da literatura contemporânea, a análise dos diferentes géneros que acolhem esta personagem e o estudo do *rogue* na intersecção da literatura com outras áreas de conhecimento.

É, acima de tudo, o equilíbrio entre clareza, versatilidade e arrojo, que eu quero salientar neste estudo. Este é um livro que deseja comunicar com entusiasmo sincero, com prioridades bem definidas e, por isso, sem complicações desnecessárias. Ao contrário de muitas primeiras obras ou teses, este livro não cruza os braços sobre si próprio em poses superiores de monografia académica, mas abraça o mundo. É um livro directo e mais preocupado em ver bem e ver longe do que em ser visto ou vistoso. É um trabalho que explica, clarifica, ilustra com convicção. Este é um livro didáctico sem ter vergonha de o ser. Uma obra que nos mostra que ainda temos muito a aprender e que nós (a nossa sociedade, a nossa organização social, o nosso espaço colectivo) deveremos ser a própria matéria de aprendizagem. Tudo isto, sem a angústia auto-reflexiva e pós-modernista, que assombra tantas obras académicas nas Humanidades.

Por fim, eu gostaria de sublinhar o papel desempenhado pelo *rogue* na minha relação com a sua autora. Foi precisamente por saber que Ana Raquel Fernandes tinha concluído a sua tese de doutoramento sobre a figura do *rogue*, que a convidei a fazer parte de um projecto que coordeno, chamado CILM, que explora representações da cidade e de (in)segurança na literatura e nos *media*. A figura do *rogue* parecia ter muito em comum com as personagens que eu vinha a analisar nos romances urbanos contemporâneos do pós 11 de Setembro (os chamados *9/11 novels*). De facto, a personagem do *rogue* tem conotações políticas, que vão para além do contexto inglês. Em *Deux essais sur la raison* (2003), Jacques Derrida

salienta a relação entre os conceitos franceses de *roué* e *voyou* e o conceito inglês de *rogue*, demonstrando que vivemos numa época de, chamados, *rogue states*. No seu livro, Ana Raquel Fernandes analisa as palavras de Derrida sem nunca perder de vista o seu objecto de estudo — a ficção britânica. Para o projecto CILM a relação entre a personagem do *rogue* e as suas projecções internacionais é também muitíssimo relevante e merece ser examinada comparativamente. Para mim, porém, ainda há mais: o “meu” *rogue* vai ser sempre o *alter-ego* dessa figura de voz doce que é a sua autora, Ana Raquel Fernandes. O *rogue* é uma personagem que assombra a nossa cultura porque tem o poder de a desassombrar: é quem nos que diz o que tem de ser dito, por vezes de forma desconcertantemente clara.

Susana Araújo

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